



**PARENT HANDBOOK**

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## Center Philosophy and Goals

The Gainesville Circus Center's mission is to build community through social circus. As a social circus, we aim to provide circus arts experiences to all, especially at-risk youth, who stand to benefit the most from circus arts. We understand at-risk youth as those facing challenges based on socioeconomic status, race or gender identity.

Circus arts have the power to build strength on physical, emotional and mental levels; and to promote cross-cultural and inter-generational collaboration. Gainesville Circus Center is dedicated to teaching circus arts to anyone willing and interested in learning for the purpose of bettering their physical, mental, social and spiritual self.

Gainesville Circus Center offers classes for kids and adults, camps, workshops, and performances. Both our youth and adult programs employ highly skilled instructors who adhere to our code of ethics to ensure a fun and safe learning environment for all students. We encourage self-expression, physical discipline, collaboration and cooperation through the practice of circus arts. Our school accepts both recreational and professionally minded practitioners of circus arts.

## Admission to the program

We admit students between the ages of 6 and 13. We have extremely limited enrollment, so be sure to inquire early for the upcoming semester. To enroll a child, parents must fill out the childcare enrollment form, Liability waiver, Photo, media and evaluations waiver. Parents must also download the FitDegree App on their smart phone or other mobile device (if they have one). Parents will receive login credentials to access their child's account once it has been created.

## Fee schedule

### **Afterschool Program**

With school pick-up

\$700/month + \$35 registration fee

\$60/day

No school pick-up

\$500/month + \$35 registration fee

\$50/day

### **Circus Kids 60 min class**

\$25 Drop-in

\$100 5-class card (30 day exp)

\$180 10-class card (30 day exp)

Memberships (3-month contract)

\$78/month for 1 class per week

\$145/month for 2 classes per week

\$180/month for 3 classes per week

\$250/month unlimited classes per week

Limited number of scholarships available for families within [400% of the U.S. Poverty Guidelines](#). Email us for a scholarship application if you think you qualify!

### **Late fees & Cancellations**

- All recurring memberships must be set-up with a credit or debit card for monthly auto-pay. Late fees of \$5/day will be added to past due accounts. Late pick-ups for afterschool and camp will be charged at a rate of \$10/hour or any portion thereof.
- Cancellations for daily participation must be made with a minimum of 24 hours notice to avoid being charged for class.
- Memberships require a 3-commitment. After the 3-month commitment is met, memberships are month-to-month.
- Any membership cancellations prior to the 3-month minimum will incur charges for the price difference between the daily and monthly class rate plus a \$10 processing fee.
- Cancellations of memberships must be made within 7-days of the next billing date to avoid being charged for the next month. Non-discrimination policy
- Monthly membership fees for afterschool and class memberships are charged at the full rate regardless of school holiday closures. We do offer 50% off school holiday camps for students on monthly *afterschool* memberships.

## Absences

Please let us know via phone call or email as soon as possible if your child will be absent.

Contact: [info@gainesvillecircus.com](mailto:info@gainesvillecircus.com) / 352-316-0682.

## Sick Policy

If your child is sick, please keep them home or arrange for alternative childcare. If your child has any of the following symptoms, we will not be able to admit them into our program until the symptoms have subsided: fever of 100.4 or more, vomiting or diarrhea more than once in two hours, lice, persistent coughing or difficulty breathing, severe pain (migraine or earache), severe sore throat, significant rash, large amounts of discolored nasal discharge, or pink eye.

## Missed Classes

Afterschool Program vs. Circus Kids group class

Students in the afterschool program are attended to the roster by GCC staff based on attendance agreements made at enrollment. Drop-in classes should be reserved by a parent/guardian through the FitDegree App. Regardless the program, GCC requires 24-hours advanced notice in the event of a cancellation to avoid forfeiting a class, i.e. become liable for the enrollment fee of that class.

GCC can adjust billing for *afterschool program* participants paying on a monthly basis if adequate notice of travel is given. We need to know *at least one week in advance* in order to adjust your billing. For example, if you are planning a trip July 6 – 10, we need to know by June 29<sup>th</sup>.

If you are *circus kids* class participant, you can make up classes if they are completed *within your current billing* cycle (within the expiration term of a class card or within the contract term of a monthly membership). This does not include make-ups for classes lost due to late cancellation.

## Medication policy

If your child needs medication of any kind, you must sign a medication authorization form which can be picked up in the office. The form outlines exactly what type of medication is to be given, dosage and frequency.

## **Guidance/Discipline policy**

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior management of children.

When children receive positive, nonviolent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief, Gainesville Circus Center uses a positive approach to discipline and practices the following discipline and behavior management techniques.

### **WE DO**

- Communicate to children using positive statements.
- Communicate with children on their level.
- Talk with children in a calm quiet manner.
- Explain unacceptable behavior to children.
- Give attention to children for positive behavior.
- Praise and encourage the children.
- Reason with and set limits for the children.
- Apply rules consistently.
- Model appropriate behavior.
- Set up the classroom environment to prevent problems.
- Provide alternatives and redirect children to acceptable activity.
- Give children opportunities to make choices and solve problems.
- Help children talk out problems and think of solutions.
- Listen to children and respect the children's needs, desires and feelings.
- Provide appropriate words to help solve conflicts.
- Use storybooks and discussion to work through common conflicts.

### **WE DO NOT**

- Inflict corporal punishment in any manner upon a child. (Corporal punishment is defined as the use of physical force to the body as a discipline measure. Physical force to the body includes, but is not limited to, spanking, hitting, shaking, biting, pinching, pushing, pulling, or slapping.)
- Use any strategy that hurts, shames, or belittles a child.
- Use any strategy that threatens, intimidates, or forces a child.

- Use food as a form of reward or punishment.
- Shame or punish a child if a bathroom accident occurs.
- Embarrass any child in front of others.
- Compare children.
- Place children in a locked and/or dark room.
- Leave any child alone, unattended or without supervision.
- Allow discipline of a child by other children.
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child's parents, families, or ethnic groups.

### **Student Code of Conduct Contract**

We ask all students of the afterschool program to sign the Student Code of Conduct Contract.

The Student Code of Conduct Contract states the child agrees to: follow directions and listen to Coaches the first time; be kind to everyone; only touch others with consent and without violence (real or play); always try their best; and to ask for help when they need it. The consequences of not following the Student Code of Conduct Contract are: verbal warning; time-out to cool off; call home to parents, which may or may not result in removal from the program for the remainder of the day. If a student's negative behavior is directed at another student, the child exhibiting negative behavior will be required to apologize to the other student before returning to normal activity.

In addition to the consequences outlined above, a student reaching the third tier of discipline (call home to parents) 3 times in a semester will face suspension from the program. The length of suspension will be evaluated on a case by case basis congruent with the severity of the behavior.

Conferences will be scheduled with parents if excessive disciplinary problems occur. If a child's behavior consistently endangers the safety of the children around him/her, then the Director has the right, after meeting with the parents and documenting behavior problems and interventions, to terminate childcare services for that particular child.

Note: If, at any point, there is an indication/suspicion that a child may have special needs, Gainesville Circus Center will inform the child's family and make contact with the [Early](#)

[Learning Coalition of Alachua County](#) for assessment and assistance.

### **Biting policy**

We understand that biting may be a demonstration of frustration from a child who cannot articulate their needs. We will do our best to understand the child's frustration, while protecting other children from harm. If the biting behavior is severe, a parent-teacher conference will be scheduled to address the best course of action.

### **Bathroom Policy**

As an afterschool program for school-age children, all students enrolled in our program must be toilet trained.

### **Child Abuse policy**

As childcare providers, Gainesville Circus Center staff are obligated by law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Florida Child Abuse Hotline / Department of Children and Families. As mentioned in the discipline policy above, we do not practice any form of withholding of food, sleep, or rest. These forms of disciplinary action are considered child abuse.

### **Lunch and snacks**

As an afterschool program we offer children enrolled with us for more than 1 hour at least 1 snack. If they are enrolled for more than 2.5 hours, they will be offered a second snack. We do not provide lunches. If your child is participating in our school holiday day-camp, we ask that you provide lunch + 1 snack. We will also supplement with snacks on camp days. Our snacks consist of a variety of granola bars, fruit, vegetables, hummus and juice or flavored carbonated water.

### **Clothing requirements**

Our program is active. We ask that children dress in well-fitted athletic wear. T-shirts and cotton pants (preferably with an elastic waist) are fine as long as the t-shirt is long enough to be tucked in or fitted enough not to fly up in the child's face when upside down. Leotards, tights and leggings are also great, but not required. Do not use clothes with buttons, zippers or metal adornments, as it can get caught on the equipment. Children must remove all jewelry before participating in circus activities. Long hair must be tied back. We do not wear shoes on the



training floors, however, children must wear close-toed shoes on field trip days (school holiday camps only).

### **Birthday celebrations**

If your child is celebrating a birthday with us, please let us know! We are happy to accommodate if you want to bring in or drop-off any food items to be shared with the class. Please do not bring items with common food allergens such as: nuts or shellfish. Additionally, please advise or include the ingredients of the food item, so we can advise of any other dietary restrictions.

### **Rest times**

We do not have a designated nap time in our afterschool program, however, we do have quiet time and allow children to rest, as needed. We have couches and mats where children can lie down, out of the way of other activities, if they need a break. We also have games and art supplies for kids who prefer to do a quiet activity while other kids are doing more active activities.

### **Bringing items from home**

We don't mind if children want to bring favorite items from home, such as a blanket, stuffed animal or action figure. We do not allow electronic devices brought from home. Furthermore, your child will be able to keep their item with them during some, but not all activities.

### **Volunteers/Family Involvement**

We encourage parent involvement in our events. We always need parents to help backstage, before and after performances. Volunteer jobs include: Costume manager (making sure costumes get hung and put away post-performance); door greeter; concessions; setting up / breaking down chairs and mats; running lights; pre-show production (making props); etc. Please email [info@gainesvillecircus.com](mailto:info@gainesvillecircus.com) if you would like to help with any of the shows listed in our event calendar. Make sure you are added to the "Performers" mailing list to be notified of when we need help pre and post-production.

### **Emergency Plans**

Our facility practices emergency drills for fire, lock-down and shelter-in-place on a monthly basis.

### **Shelter-In Procedures** (Tornado/Severe Weather i.e. thunderstorm, etc.)

1. An emergency radio with extra batteries is located: with the sound equipment in the storage area of the Gainesville Circus Center and on the GCC bus.
2. If a severe weather watch is issued staff will gather children at the shelter-in place located in the dance area at the Gainesville Circus Center.
3. Lead teachers will take a head count to ensure all children are accounted for. Names of any missing children or missing personnel must be given to the Director.
4. Children will sit with their backs to the wall and heads tucked between knees during a tornado warning.
5. Staff will keep children calm by reading books and singing songs.
6. Ensure the Director or designee has a fully charged, working cell phone. If possible, the Director will make contact with all parents to let them know of the situation.
7. No children are allowed to leave the Center while a severe weather watch is in effect without the legal parent or guardian.
8. When the threat has passed, staff may continue with the daily schedule.

### **Relocation**

1. The Director or designated person in charge will contact 911.
2. Children's emergency contact numbers will be taken to the evacuation area and parents will be notified of the situation.
3. Post a message on the front door of the facility or on the answering machine telling parents where the children have been relocated.
4. Use the nearest clear exit to evacuate the building during all continuous alarms.
5. Ensure the Director or designee has a fully charged, working cell phone to contact parents and/emergency personnel.
6. Know two evacuation routes.
7. Calmly walk to the outside assembly area located at the West parking lot unless the wind is blowing smoke or other hazards in that direction. If so, assemble inside at the East parking lot. Be cautious and yield the way for emergency vehicles entering the property.

8. At the assembly area, staff will immediately take a head count of each classroom to ensure that everyone is present and accounted for. Lead teachers shall report the final head count to the Director or designee. Names of any missing children or missing personnel must be given to the Director and emergency official.
9. Staff and children will relocate to Two Hawk Hammock, 17950 NE 53<sup>rd</sup> Ln, Williston, FL 32696 via the GCC bus.
10. When arriving to relocation site, lead teachers shall report the final head count to the Director or designee. Names of any missing children or missing personnel must be given to the Director and emergency official.
11. All parents and emergency contacts will be contacted via phone to arrange for pick-up.
12. Child Care Regulations will be notified with-in 24 hours by the Director or designated person in charge.
13. Medical supplies including children's medication and emergency contact information should be taken when facility relocates.

### **Lockdown (Intruder on the premises)**

1. Lock outside doors and windows.
2. Close and secure interior doors.
3. Close any curtains or blinds.
4. Turn off lights.
5. Keep everyone away from doors and windows. Stay out of sight, preferably sitting on floor.
6. Maintain calm atmosphere in room by reading or talking quietly to children.
7. If phone is available in classroom, Director or designated person in charge will call 911 to ensure emergency personnel have been notified.
8. Remain in lockdown until situation resolved and police give the all clear.
9. DCF will be notified with-in 24 hours by the Director or designated person in charge.

\*Notify parents/guardians about any lockdown, whether practice or real.

### **Inclement Weather**

1. If outside- move indoors immediately.

2. Avoid use of telephone, electrical appliances, and plumbing as much as possible. (Please note: wires and metal pipes can conduct electricity)
3. Move away from windows. Cover windows with shades or blinds, if available.

### **Reunification at facility/with family members**

#### **When returning children to the facility:**

1. Calmly walk in a single file line. Be cautious and yield the way for emergency/parent vehicles entering the property.
2. Once inside the facility, staff will immediately take a head count of each classroom to ensure that everyone is present and accounted for. Lead teachers shall report the final head count to the Director or designee. Names of any missing children or missing personnel must be given to the Director and emergency official.
3. Pick up routines of children by parent(s) should remain as close to normal as possible.
4. DCF will be notified with-in 24 hours by the Director or designated person in charge.

#### **When returning children to families at evacuation site:**

1. Children should be grouped together by classrooms. Be cautious and yield the way for emergency/parent vehicles entering the property.
2. The center will communicate its location to parents by: Email and Phone.
3. Staff will periodically take a head count of each classroom to ensure that everyone is present and accounted for. Lead teachers shall report the final head count to the Director or designee. Names of any missing children or missing personnel must be given to the Director and emergency official.
4. When children are picked up, release signatures from parents should be recorded in a notebook/clip board.
5. DCF will be notified with-in 24 hours by the Director or designated person in charge.

#### **Special Accommodations**

- Medical supplies including children's medication and emergency contact information should be taken when facility relocates.

- The Director or designated staff person shall have a fully charged, working cell phone with them at all times.
- Keep a weather radio with extra batteries in a central location.
- Maintain an emergency or “ready-to-go” file which includes copies of sign-in/sign-out forms, medication administration forms, and incident/injury forms. The Director or designated staff should be responsible to take the emergency file. Additionally, there must be a designated back-up staff person should they be off site or unable to fill this responsibility.
- Take and maintain a current digital photo of each child enrolled in the program that can be used if it is necessary to post the child’s photo to aid in reunification.
- Become familiar with the National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System (NEFRLS) and the National Emergency Child Locator Center which have been developed to help reunite families who are separated during an emergency.

### **Injuries**

Any minor injury will be addressed with appropriate first-aid treatment: band-aids, ice and rest. An incident report will be filed by the child’s instructor and parents will receive a copy. Parents will be notified immediately of any injury significant enough to prevent your child’s further participation in program activities. In the event of an emergency, all of our staff are CPR/First-Aid certified. Your child’s doctor or emergency care provider will be contacted if medical treatment is necessary.

### **Field Trips**

We take field trips to our satellite school (Two Hawk Hammock) during our 3-day and week-long day camps. We travel on the GCC bus to and from our downtown location to our satellite school to practice flying trapeze and enjoy outdoor fun. Parents are always welcome to help chaperone these trips. These trips are taken on the Wednesday of 3-day and week-long camps.

### **Taking of Photos**

We often take photos of our students in action to document our work for various reasons. Your enrollment forms include a photo release form to allow GCC to use photos of your child for promotional purposes. You are not required to agree to this form, however, it is required if your

child participates in public performances with GCC. Your child can participate in the program without participation in performances if you do not wish to have your child photographed.

### **Arrivals and Departures**

You must use the sign-in/sign-out sheet kept on the staff table in the training area when dropping off or picking up your child. Please notify the office staff (or teaching staff if office is empty) of your child's arrival so they can be checked in on our studio app.

Only people listed on the enrollment form as contacts / emergency contacts will be allowed to pick-up your child from GCC. Any additional people must be added by the parent/guardian before pick-up will be allowed. Authorized individuals must use the sign-in/sign-out sheet when picking up a child.

### **Student Notes & Communication with Staff**

We ask students and families to refer to our staff by the title "Coach Name". Many of our staff have non-binary pronouns, which are listed under their names and photos on the lobby wall. We strive to foster an environment open to diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender identity and gender orientation.

Our staff take weekly notes on each child's progress and report to parents on a monthly basis. In the case of any extreme behavioral or health concern, parents will be notified within 24 hours via phone, text or email and a parent-teacher conference will be scheduled, if needed.

You are welcome to exchange phone numbers with your child's primary instructor. We do ask that you respect their personal time (off duty), but you are allowed to text them questions or concerns about your child *while they are in our care*.

### **Emergency Contacts**

We require 2-4 emergency contacts on your child's enrollment form. In the event a parent or guardian cannot be reached in case of an emergency, the emergency contacts on your enrollment form will be used.

### **Performances**

GCC maintains an active annual performance schedule full of student showcases and community engagements.

- Afterschool Showcase – held at the end of Fall & Spring semesters. Participation fees included as part of your afterschool program payment (weekly/monthly participants). Additional fees are required for drop-in participants.
- Camp Showcase – held on Fridays of all week-long camp sessions. Participation fees are included as part of your camp payment.
- All other performances – community engagements including, but not limited to: Artwalk, Gainesville Downtown Festival & Art Show, and Christmas Circus. Participants must pay a participation fee based on the number of performances they sign-up for each year. Parents *and* students must sign a performance contract. Performance contract and event schedule can be picked up in the office or downloaded from the website.

### **Staff Contacts**

Corey Cheval, Executive Director / [corey@gainesvillecircus.com](mailto:corey@gainesvillecircus.com) / 352-214-2017

Isabel Brazzel, Administrative Assistant / [izzy@gainesvillecircus.com](mailto:izzy@gainesvillecircus.com) / 352-316-0682

### **Conflict Resolution**

Our staff work hard to resolve students conflicts swiftly and with the utmost respect for all parties involved. If you feel that you or your child have been treated unfairly by a fellow student. Parent or team members, please don't hesitate to reach out to our administrators (above) to request a meeting. If you do not feel your conflict has been resolved, the problem may be escalated to the Board of Directors for review.