



## Parent Handbook

The Firs  
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[www.afterschooladventure.org](http://www.afterschooladventure.org)

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## INTRODUCTION

*The Firs* is a non-profit, non-denominational Christian camping organization. For over eighty years, The Firs has risen to the challenge of serving many groups, organizations, families, and campers young and old. Through its programs and dedicated staff, The Firs has labored to proclaim Jesus as Savior and Lord and continues to fulfill its mission with a variety of retreat facilities to meet the needs of all guests.

Offering a variety of programs for youth has been a long-standing tradition at The Firs, with Camp Firwood, Fircreek Day Camp, and the Block Group Winter Camps. Keeping with that tradition, the After School Adventure Program was established.

## AFTER SCHOOL ADVENTURE PURPOSE & COMMITMENT

The purpose of the After School Adventure Program is to provide a safe, warm, and loving environment, through recreational and educational care for children of working parents. The program is designed for children in kindergarten through fifth grade and the schedule follows the Bellingham School District calendar.

Each and every child in our program is unique and precious to us. Therefore, we provide a nurturing environment that focuses on individual progress, development, and satisfaction. We carefully select and train our staff members, who are dedicated to the care and support of your child.

We also believe each child is important to God. Although we do not focus on denominational or religious distinctions, we are consistent with our mission by presenting the Biblical message of Jesus. Many lessons and activities in The Firs After School Adventure will include references to this foundational focus. At the same time, you can be assured that we will respect your child's beliefs and freedoms.

Your child's safety is our concern. We will maintain a safe, comfortable, and supportive environment, for your child. You are welcome to visit with the ASA Director, regarding any concerns you may have about your child or the program.

## ADVENTURE DESCRIPTIONS

### Staff:

The After School Adventure staff (Adventure Guides) are carefully selected through an application and interview process and are cleared via background check and fingerprints through Washington DCYF. The Firs provides ongoing training and development to work with

elementary-age children. Each staff member is expected to model high moral values and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Staff interact with the students through curriculum, games, music, and stories. ASA staff are trained and Mandatory Reporters of child abuse. They are certified in First Aid, CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens and are registered through the Washington State STARS program.

**Program Setting:**

Since the program is in a camp setting, it allows for unique opportunities. We enjoy many of the activities usually only found at summer camps, such as outdoor living skills, a climbing wall, and adventure recreation. The Firs is a Christian organization, so in addition to modeling Christian values, we integrate lessons from the Bible during our “JAM” time.

Each “Adventure” starts when the children arrive at The Firs. We offer healthy snacks and fun chats. There are activity classes for students to choose from each day. These may include drama, sports, dance, or forest games. We have a homework table for those students who need help getting their studies done.

## **ADVENTURES OFFERED**

**BEFORE SCHOOL ADVENTURE:**

The Before School program begins at 6:45 a.m. Parents sign children in when they arrive. A “breakfast snack”, which includes cereal, milk, fruit or yogurt, juice, and muffins, is served to the students, from 7:30-8:00 a.m., every morning. Organized games, as well as supervised free play, are offered during a.m. hours. The morning Adventure Guide staff walk students to Geneva Elementary School through The Firs grounds. Vans will leave 20-30 minutes prior to school start time. **Not Offered at this Time.**

**AFTER SCHOOL ADVENTURE:**

The afternoon Adventure begins when school is dismissed. An Adventure Guide will be at your child’s school to greet and transport your child to The Firs. When students arrive, there will be time to debrief about their day at school, along with snacks and planned activities.

**EARLY RELEASE & PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES:**

When school schedules are modified for these days ASA will offer care to correspond with a student's dismissal. Special trips and programs are planned with your child’s interest in mind for these extended days.



## **SPECIAL DAYS**

### **SCHOOL BREAKS:**

#### **All Stay Adventures:**

The ASA Program offers an All Stay Adventure (formerly known as All Day Adventure) on weekdays that the Bellingham School District has scheduled as staff planning days, in-service days, and on some holidays. There are often field trips planned to coincide with these days. These days are not included in the regular tuition fees, students must be signed up in addition for these days.

#### **School Closures Due to Weather:**

When any of the schools close unexpectedly, The Firs ASA Program will continue, as long as we can safely transport and care for your child.

When school is canceled, due to weather or natural disaster, we will remain open as long as we have adequate staff, heat, electricity, and a secure environment. If we are lacking in any of these necessities, we will make every reasonable effort to contact you to inform you of our closure. Please call The Firs office (360-733-6840) or the ASA Adventure Center cell (360-820-2031) on snow days to determine if the ASA Programs will be open; if you call before office hours, a recording (at 360-733-6840) should inform you of what we will be able to offer that day. Additional fees may be required for these days.

If school closes early, we will continue to care for your child until you pick them up from ASA. If we cannot safely transport your child, due to environmental conditions or equipment, we will make every reasonable effort to inform you of the circumstances.

#### **DAYS ASA WILL BE CLOSED:**

The After School Adventure program follows the Bellingham School District schedule, beginning on the first day of public school and ending on the last day of school.

#### **HOLIDAYS WITH NO ASA SERVICE:**

- ◆ Labor Day
- ◆ Thanksgiving and the day after
- ◆ Christmas Eve and Christmas Day
- ◆ Other days during Christmas break, if staff are not available.
- ◆ New Year's day
- ◆ Memorial Day

## ENROLLMENT

### **Who May Attend?**

All Children K-5<sup>th</sup> grade, transportation for our Before and After School program is only provided for schools who meet the transportation criteria; Three or more enrolled students per School and located within a reasonable distance from school to center.

### **How do I Enroll my child?**

To secure a spot you can fill out a registration form online or email or mail in your completed Registration Forms and a non-refundable, yearly registration fee.

### **Forms Needed:**

*(Please keep this information current throughout the year and notify us in writing with any changes.)*

Enrollment is on a year-to-year basis. Each year March to June, you will need to fill out a re-enrollment form if you plan to have your child attend the following school year.

You may enroll your child throughout the school year. However, space is limited and you may be placed on a waiting list until a spot is available!

## TUITION & FEES

### **Registration Fee:**

There is a \$100 annual, non-refundable fee required to enroll your child in our programs each year. A new registration fee will be due for all programs beginning the Fall of each year. If your child has siblings that you are also enrolling the Registration fee is \$20 and \$10 for any additional children. This payment must be received before a child may start. Students enrolling for the first time (i.e. Kindergarteners) do not qualify for any discounted registration fees.

### **Monthly Tuition:**

Tuition is based on the days the Bellingham School District has deemed as a “school day”, therefore, the fees are determined and calculated by the number of days a child could be in school, then averaged out depending on your personal program plan. Months with school vacation of 5 or more consecutive days will be charged a prorated monthly fee. We reserve the right to increase fees due to school district schedule changes.

### **Past Due Tuition:**

If the monthly tuition is not paid in full by the designated due date then after a 7 day grace period a \$25 late fee will be applied. If payment is not received, enrollment could be suspended until the balance is covered.

### **Late Pick-Up Fee:**

Students must be picked up by 6:00 pm. If not, a fee will be charged of \$1 per minute for pickup past 6:00 pm. Please call **(360) 820-2031** if you are going to be late, so we can assure your child of your safety and imminent arrival.

### **No Call No Show:**

We require notification if your child is going to be absent for any reason that day ASA must be notified 1 hour before my child is expected to arrive. There is a \$5 fee per day if we are not notified. Please use the Procure App to notify staff of daily schedule changes.

### **All Day Adventure:**

For All Day Adventure days, you must register your child at least 24 hours before that day. The payment for the All Day Adventures is not included in monthly tuition but may be paid at the same time as tuition payments. Refunds are awarded when cancelations are made 24 hours prior to the All Day Adventure.

### **Payment:**

Invoices are emailed on the 20th of the month for the next month of service. Tuition is due by the 1st of the month (ie: a bill for September will be emailed around August 20th and payment is due by September 1st). You are responsible for payment even if you do not receive a bill. If payment has not been received 7 days past the due date then a \$25 late fee will be charged and future enrollment of your child may be suspended.

**Payment options:** credit card, check, money order, or direct withdrawal. Cash payments can be made in person and with exact cash amounts. You can also access your account online at [www.myprocare.com](http://www.myprocare.com). If paying by direct withdrawal, remember that some months may be prorated due to fewer school days and we will need an authorization form on file. Email [hannah@thefirs.org](mailto:hannah@thefirs.org) to get a form. You may also place your payment in the "payment box", located in the Registration Office located at 1150 Geneva Street.

### **Drop-in:**

If you need an additional day that you aren't normally scheduled for you may reach out to [hannah@thefirs.org](mailto:hannah@thefirs.org) to see if there is space available for your child that day and be charged a \$25 fee for regular school days and \$35 for early release days. These are due in full when you request the day and are non-refundable. A request for a drop-in day must be made the week of.

### **Credits for Absences:**

The ASA Program and license law require The Firs to hire staff based on the number of children enrolled. Your monthly tuition pays for this operating cost of the program, such as staff, snacks, and materials. All of these must be available to your child. When you enroll you are reserving the time, space, staffing, and provisions for your child whether the child attends or not. For these reasons, we cannot give tuition credits for days your child is absent. If there is a prolonged illness or other serious matter, please contact the ASA Director for consideration, [stacy@thefirs.org](mailto:stacy@thefirs.org)

### **Withdrawal from Program:**

Payment for your registered child is due until written notice of cancelation is received. Discontinued attendance without prior notice of canceling will not result in credit. Your final month's payment will be calculated on a prorated basis after the first of the month and if there have been two weeks' notice given.

## **Payments From Third-Party Subsidy**

### **DCYF and Working Connection Families:**

ASA gladly welcomes all families paid through Working Connections, DCYF, or other 3rd party options.

**Copay:**

Co-payments must be made monthly; failure to make monthly payments may result in termination of program space. You will be responsible for the co-payment that is determined by the 3rd party, even if it is not reflected on your monthly statements, as we do not always receive notification of additions or changes until after statements have been emailed. Payments are due by the 1st of the month of service and will be given the same 7 day grace period as monthly tuition.

**Termination or Interruption of Authorization:**

If valid 3rd party authorization is terminated, interrupted, or cannot be confirmed by The Firs, even if you are in the process of re-application, The Firs will require you to pay the full fee until authorization is received, in writing. If authorization is retroactive to the first day after the interruption, we will be happy to issue a full refund (minus co-pay) in a timely manner.

**DAILY ATTENDANCE**

**Transportation To & From School:**

Geneva Elementary students enrolled in the ASA Program are walked to The Firs by Adventure Guides. We walk the Geneva students through The Firs grounds, rather than down the streets.

All other schools (Carl Cozier, Wade King, Roosevelt, and Silver Beach, Northern Heights) will be transported by an Adventure Guide in one of The Firs After School Adventure vans. For The Firs to provide van transportation, each school or route needs to have at least 3 participating students enrolled in the ASA Program.

It is important that students exit school quickly and come directly to the designated pick-up area, where the van or staff is waiting to transport them to The Firs. The ASA staff will wait ten minutes for students to come to the designated loading area, if a student has not reported to the driver and The Firs has not been notified of the child's absence, the driver may leave to gather students from another school. If the student has gotten on the school bus to go home by accident, the school will make every effort to contact school transportation and the child will be returned to the school. At that time, ASA will return to the school to pick the child up.



### **Attendance Options:**

You may customize your attendance plan, to meet the needs of your family, by choosing one or more schedules listed below. We understand that the need to change an attendance plan may arise and we will do our best to accommodate those needs but will base those changes on availability. Attendance options may be negotiated before the next billing period and the new schedule will be in effect the first school day of the new month.

#### **BEFORE SCHOOL 6:45 a.m. – *School start time* **No Availability****

4-5 days/week  
2-3 days/week

#### **AFTER SCHOOL ADVENTURE *School dismissal time. - 6:15p.m.***

4-5 days/week  
2-3 days/week  
1 day (ER)/week

### **Absences:**

We are prepared to care for your child each scheduled day of the ASA Program. If your child will be absent for any reason (appointment, vacation, lesson, sick, etc.), we must be notified no later than one hour prior to the beginning of your child's scheduled program.

### **To Notify ASA of Your Child's Absence:**

- ◆ Leave a message on the ASA site phone: **(360) 820-2031**. Messages will be checked prior to picking up students.
- ◆ Send a message in our Procare app. We will check messages before picking up students.

### **Important:**

If someone else is going to provide transportation from school or ASA, please let us know. We need your written permission to release your child to any individual you did not already give consent to on your Authorization Form.

### **Signing Students In and Out:**

- ◆ If enrolled in the **Before School Adventure**, a parent or guardian must sign students "IN".
- ◆ If enrolled in the **After School Adventure**, a parent or guardian must sign students "OUT".

Parents or Guardians are required to sign children in or out on the Procare app. Only authorized adults can sign students out. They must be 18 years or older. ASA will only allow each student to leave with an individual for whom you have given permission on the Authorization Form or in some other written correspondence. If a student is leaving with someone other than you or another parent/guardian, that individual will be asked to validate their identity by showing their Driver's License or another valid form of picture identification. This precaution is for your child's safety and security while attending the ASA Program.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

### **Required Reporting Standards:**

If any of The Firs staff members suspect child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, we must immediately report it to Child Protective Services (according to the Washington Administrative Code # 388.150.480). We will make a report if we suspect an injury or a bruise is not accidental and if we see signs of emotional or sexual abuse or physical neglect. Child Protective Services has the right to interview any child and/or staff member of The Firs After School Adventure Program and look through any of our files (according to Chapter 26.44 of the Revised Code of Washington).

We will also make every effort to prevent your child from leaving the ASA Program with you, a guardian, or authorized person who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or is extremely sick. We have a legal and moral obligation to retain your child if we feel that releasing him or her would be dangerous in any way. Should this situation arise, we will call an emergency contact person off your Enrollment sheet or a cab. If the person attempting to pick up your child persists, we will call the police and Child Protective Services.

### **Personal Property:**

We encourage sharing and will help your child safeguard toys by encouraging safe and appropriate play. If personal property is accidentally damaged through the course of normal play and activities, The Firs After School Adventure Program will not be held responsible. We discourage the bringing of toys to any ASA Program. If they are brought, we encourage the children to keep them in their backpacks. If damage occurs due to inappropriate action by another child, we will inform the parents of all children involved.

### **Lost & Found:**

Items that are lost will be put in a "Lost & Found" bucket placed by the entrance to ASA. Periodically, the bucket is brought to the office across the street and stored.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### **Nutrition:**

The Firs will provide a "breakfast/snack" to those children arriving before 8:20 a.m. Snacks will be provided in the afternoons at 3:00 p.m. Snacks are nutritionally sound and balanced to provide at least 1/3 of the RDA for your children. If your child requires a special diet, please discuss this with the director at the time of enrollment to determine if we are able to provide adequate substitutions.

### **Sample Breakfast/Snack: (Menus will be posted)**

A typical Breakfast would include Cereal, Milk, fruit, or yogurt.  
A typical Snack would include mini bagels, cream cheese, juice.

### **Adventure Store: *is currently closed.***

Twice a week, the Adventure Store is open for students to spend "quality coins" they have received throughout the week for "jobs well done". They may also bring up to \$2 to spend if they wish. The Adventure Store offers candy and other non-food items. This has been a favorite

feature of the ASA program. If you would prefer your child to not purchase candy, please let the director or program leader know of your wishes.

### **Extra Clothing:**

Accidents do happen for various reasons. For the comfort and health of your child, The First After School Adventure Program requires that all children seven years and under have a complete change of clothes at all times in the Adventure Center. These should include pants, shirts, socks, and two pairs of underpants.

The Center keeps a small number of extra clothes on hand in case of emergencies. If your child should go home with some of these clothes, we ask that you wash all items and send them back as soon as possible so others may use them if needed.

Remember, children are exposed to many active, outside activities, as well as messy art activities; please send them in active play clothes ready for anything!

Please label all your child's belongings, especially clothes and coats. We will try to place misplaced items in the respective cubbies, whenever possible before they go to the "lost and found".

### **Medication Management:**

Written parental consent is required to administer any medication. All medication, including Epipens and inhalers, must be in its original container and properly labeled with the child's name, date prescription was filled or medication's expiration date, and legible instructions for administration (such as manufacturer's instructions or prescription label). Children may not carry medication (of any kind) in their backpacks or administer the medicine themselves.

### **Non-Prescription Medication:**

The following medication can be given with written parental consent, only at the dose, duration, and method, of administration specified on the manufacturer's label appropriate for the age or weight of the child needing the medication:

1. Antihistamines
2. Non-aspirin fever reducer/pain relievers
3. Decongestants
4. Anti-itching ointments or lotions, intended specifically to relieve itching
5. Sunscreen
6. Cough Drops

A physician's written authorization is required for non-prescription medication that 1) is not included in the above list; 2) is to be taken differently than indicated on the manufacturer's label, or 3) lacks labeled instructions.

Parents must fill out a Medication Administration Form and specify the day(s) & time(s) that the medication is to be administered. Medication that needs to be administered on a long-term basis will need to have a health care plan completed (see director for details).

All unused medication will be returned to the parent or will be disposed of properly.

### **Illness & Accidents:**

The goal of our illness policy is to prevent the spread of communicable disease among children and staff and to make sure each child gets the care they need. These guidelines are consistent

with the Whatcom County Department of Public Health's Childcare Health Handbook. We ask you to adhere to the following guidelines.

**Please keep your child home if they have the following symptoms:**

1. Diarrhea, more than one loose stool per day.
2. Vomiting, twice or more in the past 24 hours.
3. Rash, any not associated with heat or allergic reactions to medicine.
4. Drainage from the eye, redness of eyelid lining, swelling, and discharge of pus.
5. Unusual appearance/behavior: unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, difficult to wake, confused, irritable.
6. Sore throat, especially with fever or swollen glands.
7. Head lice, nits, or scabies.
8. A fever of 100.3

Each child will be observed upon arrival for any signs of illness. Children are not allowed to remain at the center if any of the above occurs or if they have a fever of 100.3 degrees or more. For the health of all of the children and staff, we ask that your child be free of symptoms and/or fever for 24-48 hours before returning to ASA. If a child becomes ill while at the center, they will be isolated from the rest of the group until they are picked up.

Please arrange for prompt pick up of your child so as not to jeopardize their health or the health of the other children and staff. It is critical that we are able to contact you or someone on your emergency contact list; **please keep information up-to-date**. Another way we try to stop the spread of illness is by requiring that staff and children wash their hands upon arrival at the center, before eating, before participating in food activities, and after toileting.

Please be sure to contact ASA if your child will be absent. This will help avoid unnecessary searching and phoning. Voicemail is available 24 hours a day to record your message on the ASA center's cell phone: **(360)820-2031**.

In the event of a major injury, ASA staff will administer first aid and fill out a report for the parent. If medical attention is needed, the parent and the child's physician will be notified and consulted for proper actions to take. If necessary, we will contact 911 and first aid will be administered until medical help arrives. The child will then be transported to the nearest hospital unless other arrangements have been made.

If your child requires medical assistance by an Adventure Guide (band-aid, ice pack, etc.), it will be recorded in an "Incident Report Book" and available for your viewing.

**Emergency Information:**

It is very important that you inform the ASA center staff or director about changes in address and telephone numbers for yourself and your designated emergency contacts. Keeping the information current will ensure fast notification in the event of an emergency.

**Pesticide Policy:**

At ASA we follow public health standards for pest control. We will strive to use alternative pest control methods and chemicals as a last resort. When we must resort to chemicals you will be given notice of application at least 48 hours in advance. The pesticide will be applied when children are not present in space.

## **Discipline & Child Guidance Policy:**

Discipline is a way of teaching children appropriate forms of behavior. **It is not punishment.** It is not enough to tell children what behaviors we find inappropriate; we must also teach them acceptable ways of handling difficult situations. There are many ways we attempt to accomplish this:

1. Creating a warm and loving atmosphere.
2. Using prevention techniques (i.e. careful planning of activities and the environment, adhering to a consistent daily routine).
3. Noticing the positive behavior of each child.
4. Offering choices to children.
5. Being a role model by dealing with situations in a calm, controlled and caring manner.

There may be times when intervention is necessary. We discuss the situation with the child on a level he can understand. We then redirect the child to a positive behavior. If the child persists in disruptive behavior, we offer the choice to correct the situation or to accept the consequences of the behavior. This may involve picking a “job” from the “job jar”, to help with remuneration of the time spent trying to correct the behavior, or a restriction from play for a few minutes, or “thinking time”.

If a problem persists over a period of time, parents will be involved in developing a plan of action (stated in the Behavior Management Policy, which can be found in the Policies and Procedures Binder on the Parent Connection Table). The Firs ASA philosophy and program policies explicitly forbid the following forms of discipline: spanking, shaking, scolding, shaming, corporal punishment, labeling (with terms such as bad, naughty, etc.). All forms of physical punishment are strictly forbidden.

## **Policy of Exclusion from ASA or Behavior Management Policy:**

When a child’s behavior in The ASA program is inappropriate or dangerous to self and others, the following steps will be taken.

1. A verbal request for a meeting with parent(s)/guardian(s) will be made to discuss behavior issues. Minutes of the meeting will be recorded of the child’s issues and placed in his/her file.
2. If behavior issues persist, a registered letter will be sent to parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform parents of an upcoming meeting. During this meeting, a behavior plan will be drafted and approved by signature of both parent(s)/guardian(s) and director.
3. A follow-up meeting, time, and date, with parent(s)/guardian(s), will be set to review behavior conduct, within 2-3 weeks of the second meeting. Continued enrollment or un-enrollment will be determined at a follow-up meeting

## **Family Involvement:**

We believe that parents provide the most important influence in a child’s life. The more involved parents & guardians are in our program and the more frequent the communication between parents and teachers, the greater will be the child’s opportunity for successful development. We have created a few avenues for family involvement and encourage the whole family to participate in these fun events:

- **ASA Open House:**

The Open House is a great time to meet the Adventure Staff and find out about the upcoming year's THEME and the exciting activities planned for your child. This event takes place early in the school year.

➤ **Family Matters:**

These are events planned by the staff which occurs every one or two months. Family Matter nights include dinner and special activities; something special for everyone to enjoy. Dinner is by donation and the event will be posted in the monthly newsletter and at the Parent Connect Table.

➤ **ASA Family Overnight:**

Come away, the first weekend in June, with ASA friends, families, and staff, for an overnight excursion to The Firs Ski Chalet on Mt. Baker, or one of our other properties. Sign-up and a minimal fee are necessary for this event, due to limited space. This has become a tradition for many ASA families, making great memories!

## CONCLUSION

Thank you for choosing The Firs After School Adventure Program to serve you and your family. We believe it is a privilege to care for your child and will do our best to serve you and your family, in Christ's name to honor Him.