

## YMCA says it will offer after-school programs this fall

Woonsocket YMCA says it will be open even if schools are not

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While there's still plenty of uncertainty lingering about how schools will reopen in Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Lincoln, and Coventry, or what reopening schools will even look like as the state continues to plan for the first day of classes on Sept. 14, one thing is certain - however schools welcome back students this fall, the YMCA of Pawtucket will be there to continue to offer programming to complement whatever option the state chooses.

The YMCA of Pawtucket, which typically offers before- and after-school care to children, will offer programming this fall to support parents and their children amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic regardless of whether students are being educated in the classroom or in their homes.

If schools return to regular in-person classes, the YMCA will plan to offer its regular school enrichment programming. However, if schools opt for a hybrid model, alternating in-person and at-home days, or if schools are forced into a fully virtual distance learning model, the YMCA of Pawtucket says it will still offer programming for children during the days that they are out of school.

The out-of-school programs will consist of traditional enrichment activities including swimming, sports, art, STEM, and academic support. The YMCA has been working with the state's Department of Human Services and the Rhode Island Department of Health to ensure it is following all guidelines on capacity limits, social distancing, and disinfecting for

### COVID 19

The programs will be available for children from kindergarten to sixth grade.

According to Jeanne Achin, the Chief Operations Officer at the YMCA of See YMCA, page A2

Pawtucket, this sort of programming is what the YMCA has stood for going back for generations.

That's what the Y has stood for, for hundreds of years, is being that community resource and providing the community support," Achin said in a phone interview on Tuesday. "We were able to put in a very successful, with all the state guidelines, summer program. There's plenty of parents who don't have the option to work from home, who don't have the resources to do the virtual learning. Based on the feedback, it's very much needed."

The YMCA of Pawtucket typically offers before-school care beginning at 6:30 a.m. until schools open, providing care and transporting children to school. After-school care usually entails tutoring, snacks or a meal, and activities such as swimming, sports, and academic enrichment between the end of the school day and 6 p.m., according to Achin.

"If the school's in a hybrid or virtual, we're able to offer a full day similar to what we've been doing in the summer," Achin said, explaining it will have a portion of virtual learning that the Y is currently working on with the Rhode Island Department of Education. "All in that safe pod setting so each school stays with its own school."

"If COVID has taught everybody one thing, it's that you have to be able to pivot, there's going to be an element of choice for parents. We are

poised to be able to accommodate whatever those needs are," Achin said.

According to Achin, the YMCA of Pawtucket typically serves well over 1,000 children a day at its five branches across the state - Pawtucket Family YMCA and Heritage Park YMCA Early Learning Center in Pawtucket, MacColl YMCA in Lincoln, Woonsocket YMCA, and Westwood YMCA in Coventry.

"We've been able to offer 11 or 12 weeks of camp at all of our locations, it's been very well received, we actually had waiting lists," Achin said of the summer camps at the YMCA of Pawtucket's five branches. "The kids were really happy to have that social interaction, you could tell they really missed it. We got a lot of positive feedback from it and the need was there for it."

The YMCA is also offering its other regular programs and services, following all state guidelines on social distancing and cleaning. Its indoor and outdoor basketball courts, swimming pools, and gym facilities are all open, and the YMCA has resumed offering fitness classes, as classes are available both indoors and outdoors at a distance of 14 feet at which masks are not required.

In addition, the YMCA is taking extra steps for families in need by providing food and essential personal items to those in the community who request them through deliveries or grab-and-go's. The YMCA has also set up a lending library of donated books, puzzles, and children's games which are disinfected before they are put into circulation.

If you need before-school, after-school, or full-day virtual learning care, the YMCA is asking that parents fill out a questionnaire on its website and be placed on its fall registration waiting list. The questionnaire can be accessed on the YMCA's homepage: <https://ymcapawtucket.org>. For more information regarding programs and services, or to become a member, visit [ymcapawtucket.org](https://ymcapawtucket.org) or call 401-727-7515.

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