

Summer Parks and Recreation  
for the Kids  
S.P.A.R.K.  
Family Handbook



City Services  
634 Webster St.  
Huntington, IN 46750  
260-358-2323

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The SPARK program is more than just a summer camp—it's an experience that lasts a lifetime. Through games, activities, and shared adventures, children build lasting friendships, develop new skills, and gain confidence that extends far beyond the summer months.

For years, the Huntington Parks and Recreation Department has provided hundreds of children in our community with a safe, supervised, and exciting program led by caring and responsible staff. Each park offers a variety of enriching experiences tailored to children of all ages and abilities.

Every child takes away something unique from SPARK—whether it's making new friends, discovering independence, learning teamwork, or stepping into leadership. Whether your child is joining us for the first time or returning for another summer of fun, they'll leave with memories to cherish and skills that will serve them for years to come.

Join us for a summer filled with adventure, growth, and lifelong friendships! This parent handbook has been designed to answer your questions, promote communication between our staff and your family, and to assist you in understanding our policies and procedures. The policies outlined in this booklet are intended to protect your child(ren) and to ensure that his/her experience at the program is positive and rewarding.

Please read the handbook carefully with your child(ren) and refer to it as needed. We look forward to a great summer!

Sincerely,

Megan Thompson  
Park Programs Director  
[Megan.thompson@huntington.in.us](mailto:Megan.thompson@huntington.in.us)

Steve Yoder  
Park Superintendent  
[Steve.yoder@huntington.in.us](mailto:Steve.yoder@huntington.in.us)

## General Information:

### About Huntington Parks and Recreation Department

Our desire is to develop and maintain excellence in our parks while conserving the environment and promoting health and well-being through our recreational programs for Huntington residents.

### SPARK Locations

1. Drover Park – 1255 Etna Ave. Huntington, IN 46750
2. Memorial Park – 1200 W. Park Dr. Huntington, IN 46750

### Staff Qualifications

The quality and effectiveness of this program for children are directly related to the skills and personal characteristics of the staff. Recruiting, selecting, training and supporting the staff are essential, interrelated processes in ensuring the success and integrity of children's programs. The directors are required to have experience in working with children, knowledge of recreation activities, and must model the Park Departments' core values. Background checks are conducted on all staff members. Staff members must pass a drug test. Each director is interviewed. At least one director at the park is CPR certified and First Aid certified.

We take pride in our staff training, which includes emergency procedures, program planning, child abuse awareness, and other areas pertaining to child development.

### Admissions Criteria

Participants in our program must be ages 4 – 14. It is also our policy that every child be fully toilet trained and capable of using the facilities without assistance. We understand that accidents can occur, in which case, we would require that parents pick up their child(ren) immediately or provide clean attire. Due to staffing policies and training, if accidents begin to occur on a regular basis, the child will not be able to attend our program.

## Program Information:

### Program Goals

- Create a community by building relationships among participants and staff
- Create a safe, nurturing, welcoming environment where participants will quickly realize SPARK is a place where they belong and can be themselves

- Provide positive role models that will support and guide participants through curriculum that will allow them to discover and learn new skills, talents, and interest
- Show participants that they can accomplish anything when they believe in themselves
- Immerse participants in an atmosphere that inspires them to live healthy, help others, work together, and make strong friendships that will last a lifetime
- Our goal is to help participants flourish socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically

### Session and Date Times

SPARK will run Monday through Friday. SPARK will NOT meet on June 19, June 20 and July 4. SPARK day begins at 9:00 am and ends at 3:30 pm. You are welcome to drop your child off in between those times but must sign in with a director. Closed on Saturdays and Sundays. If the time should change due to weather, the contact on the REMIND app will be notified. On Fridays, all participants will report to one park.

#### FRIDAYS:

June 6 – Memorial Park

June 13 – Drover Park

June 18 – Memorial Park (Wednesday)

June 27 – Drover Park

July 3 – Memorial Park (Thursday)

July 11 – Drover Park

Due to the holidays in 2025, two days will not fall on Friday, but will be the last day of SPARK for the week.

### Transportation

SPARK kids can walk/bike to the park by themselves if approved by the parent/guardian.

Parent/guardian must mark what time the child(ren) is able to leave during the day.

Whether it be only at the beginning and end of the day, or at any time.

If the child(ren) can not walk/bike to the park, they will need to be dropped off and picked up by someone on the list.

### Daily Needs (be sure to label all items)

- Sunscreen
- Water bottle
- Swimsuit – Drover Park or Field Trip Fridays
- Towel – Drover Park or Field Trip Fridays

### What NOT to bring

We do not allow participants to bring personal items from home (including electronic devices, sharp objects, weapons, firearms, explosives, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes and drugs etc.). We are not responsible for any of these items should a participant make the poor decision to bring them. Due to the nature of our program, damages and theft of personal items is possible. If participants are caught with any of the above items, the directors reserved the right to confiscate them. In the case of weapons, firearms, explosives, alcohol, or drugs, expulsion from the program will result and appropriate authorities will be contacted.

### Cell Phones

Your child(ren) may bring their cell phone to the park, but they are not allowed to be on them during the day. They may only receive permission from the directors to be on them or to call a family member. Phones will need to be kept in a bag or the pocket of the participant.

### Marketing

On occasion, the Parks Department takes photographs, film footage, or tape recordings of our programs. This media may include your child's image or voice and is used only for purposes of promoting or interpreting programs. On the registration form you will be asked for permission to include your child in these promotional materials.

### Inclement Weather

SPARK is held outside all summer long. Inclement weather is very possible. Please dress your child accordingly. A light jacket may be needed in the mornings.

### Heat/O-Zone Advisories

We are committed to the safety of the participants. All precautions will be taken to prevent heat-related injuries. Staff are trained to do the following for the participants.

- Make sure there are frequent water breaks
- Lower physical activity
- Act as role models, applying sunscreen & wearing hats outside
- Make sure participants are in the shade or cooling off in water games
- Make sure there are opportunities for children to reapply sunscreen
- Watch for signs of heat exhaustion

### Rain/Thunderstorms

If it rains, SPARK will run as normal. Participants will stay under the pavilion and play games accordingly. If there is thunder or lightning we will dismiss if participants are already at the park. If it is before 9:00am, the Park Programs Director will determine to cancel or delay the start time. Reminders and notifications will be sent to the parent/guardian with the REMIND app and posted on the Huntington Parks and Recreation Department's Facebook page. Parents can decide not to send their child(ren) to SPARK due to weather.

### Payment Procedures

SPARK is \$25 for one child for 6 weeks. Once the registration is completed, the Park Programs Director will call and can take a payment over the phone. Payments will need to be made 2 weeks prior to the start date of SPARK. All requests for cancellation must be made in writing no later than two weeks prior to the week cancelling payment due dates. Only ½ of the fee will be refundable if this registration is cancelled less than two weeks prior to the payment due date. No refunds are given if cancellation is on or after the start date of SPARK.

If you need to make a payment in person, you can do so at City Services, 634 Webster St, Huntington, IN 46750 between 7am and 3pm.

### Sign in/Sign Out Procedures

The safety of every child is a priority to the Huntington Parks Department. Following sign in and sign out procedures helps ensure the safety of your child and allows staff to determine which children are present at any given time.

### Sign-In

For your child's safety, please park in the parking lots by the pavilion. Do NOT park on the street. An adult (or sibling at least 16+) must walk all children to the designated area. The adult must sign the child into the program by signing the child's name and who dropped off on the clipboard. Exceptions can be made through the Park Programs Director if notified.

Under no circumstances may a child be dropped off without being signed into the program by an adult. If this occurs, the parent/guardian will be called and required to come to the site to sign their child into the program.

\*If your child is allowed to walk or bike to the park (under your permission on the registration form) they will be required to sign in and out.

## Sign-Out

All children must be signed out of the program by a parent/guardian or an authorized adult (at least 16+). When a child is picked up from the program the parent/guardian or authorized adult must come to the designated area and sign the child out of the program by writing their first and last name and signing their name on the clipboard. No child will be released from the program without an adult signature. All adults picking up children must be prepared to show I.D. so staff can verify their identity. For your child's protection, anyone without proper I.D. will be stopped from taking the child from the program and the parent/guardian will be contacted.

If someone other than the parent/guardian or those on the authorization list need to pick up your child, you must notify the Park Programs Director AND Lead SPARK Director. **Any restricted individual must have the appropriate paperwork on file with the Park Programs Director (restraining order, court documents, etc.)**

## Late Pick Up

SPARK ends at 3:30 p.m. and our staff is scheduled to leave. If you are running late, you will need to notify the Park Programs Director. Each day you are late, you will receive a mark on your file. After being late three times, your child will be asked to leave the program.

- 3:30 p.m. – Program ends. Directors will check with the Park Programs Director to see if any communication with the parent/guardian was made. Directors will call parent/guardian on file.
- 3:45 p.m. – Park Programs Director and Lead Director will call the emergency contact on file.
- 3:50 p.m. – If there is no contact from the parent and no other safe option, dispatch will be notified, and the child will be turned over to the city police department.

You risk dismissal from the program if:

- You are late picking up your child three times within the span of SPARK

PARENTS MUST KEEP THE PARKS DEPARTMENT AND DIRECTORS NOTIFIED OF PHONE NUMBER CHANGES FOR HOME OR EMERGENCY CONTACTS ALWAYS.

## Health and Safety:

### Medication During Program

Any medication that needs to be administered during programming hours must:

- Be accompanied by “Medication Dispensing Information, Permission, and Waiver” form
- In consideration of the Huntington Parks and Recreation Summer Parks for the Kids, SPARK, a program provided by the City of Huntington, Indiana, I do hereby fully release or discharge the City of Huntington, Indiana, the City of Huntington Parks and Recreation Department and the officers, agents, volunteers, and employees of each from any and all claims from injuries, damages, and losses I or my minor child may have (or accrue to me or my minor child), and arising out of, connected with, incidental to, or in any way associated with the administering of medication.

### Child Illness

For the sake of your child and others, if a child has a temperature of over 100 degrees, is vomiting, or shows other signs of illness parents must keep the participant at home. Your child should not return to SPARK after an illness until they have been symptom free for 24 hours, or are otherwise cleared by a doctor’s note. If this happens during program hours, we will call you and ask that you pick your child up within the hour.

### Illness/Injury Occurring During Program Hours

If your child becomes ill, sustains an injury, or needs medical assistance beyond basic first aid, they may be isolated from the other children, and you will be contacted to pick him or her up with in one hour of notification. The Parks staff is not equipped to handle ill/injured children beyond securing their immediate comfort (basic first aid). If you cannot be reached, we will contact someone you’ve authorized (emergency contact) on the registration form for immediate pick up. Please be sure to keep the Parks staff informed of any changes in your work or emergency phone numbers. In an emergency, medical aid will be sought immediately.

### Confidentiality

Students’ records are kept within groups, as staff need to access them regularly. Any information in a child’s record that is sensitive will be kept in a secure place.



## Behavior Management Procedures

### Children's Rules

It is our intent that each child enjoys the planned activities by understanding that they are responsible for their actions. With prior knowledge of our basic rules of safety and good conduct, each child is made aware of how to exercise self-discipline and to understand that we are here to assist her or him and that we expect them to succeed. Rules for behavior are told to the participants during SPARK.

### Process

- **Redirection** – Every effort will be made to help the child understand the inappropriateness of his or her actions and agree to an alternate form of behavior. When the conflict is child to child, every effort will be made to have them reason together face to face with facilitating.
- **Removal from the Specific Activity** – When redirection has been pursued and behavior has not changed, removing the child from the activity involved for an appropriate amount of time is necessary. The removal time will be age appropriate.
- **Behavior Communication** – When the child is not successful in correcting the behavior, or the behavior is of a serious nature, a behavior write-up will occur. This write-up will be discussed with the child and parent and requires a parent signature. Depending on the severity, a Parent Conference may be required.
- **Removal from the Program** – If the above process has not resulted in corrected behavior, the child may be removed from the program.

### Serious Behavior Issues

When a child has a serious discipline problem, on any one occasion. The parent may be called by staff and asked to pick up the child within one hour of the call. Should it be decided by the Park staff that a child poses a serious problem, the child may be suspended from the program for a period of one to five days or may be removed from the program entirely. No child will be allowed to continue in the program who becomes a safety hazard to him/herself or others. In addition to behavior management procedures outlined above, parents must be aware that a child may be released from the program, without refund, for the following misconduct (but not limited to):

- Leaving the park without permission
- Using foul language, being rude or discourteous to staff and other children
- Defacing property

- Physical violence (fighting, biting, putting hands on another child, threatening)
- Bringing or using tobacco products or any illegal substances and weapons
- Any demonstration of sexual contact/words
- Any behavior that jeopardizes the safety of staff or participants
- Stealing
- Bullying

### Other Behavior-Related Issues

No staff member will ever strike, swear at, abuse or threaten with physical intimidation either a child or a parent. No staff member will allow a child to be struck, sworn at, abused, or physically intimidated by anyone else in the program. No staff member will ever solicit or accept gratuities in consideration for any treatment of a child.

### Parent/Guardian Conferences

Informal and formal conferences may be requested by staff or parents regarding their child's behavior. Typically, conferences are requested after multiple behavior reports or extreme changes in a child's demeanor. We cannot empathize enough how important it is that you share changes occurring at home. Staff can better provide for a child's needs when we are aware of changes. The Parks Department partners with local agencies to provide you with resources (skills coaches, counselors, etc.). You will be provided with these resources at the time of the conference if needed.