



## FAMILY AND YOUTH HANDBOOK

Updated July 2025

# INTRODUCTION

At Next Step To Success (NSTS), we believe all youth want to succeed, all youth can succeed, and all youth deserve the opportunity to earn success.

Our mission is to help youth in Norfolk build the independent, resilient character they will need to earn success and enjoy happy, fulfilling lives as adults.

NSTS provides structured after-school and full-day summer programs for Norfolk youth, ages 13 –18. Youth who are 18 years old must be in high school. Activities include, but are not limited to boatbuilding, visual and performing arts, academic support, career exploration, mentoring, character education, skill development, hands-on field trips and much more. We expect our participants to actively participate in our program, which includes working independently in a group setting that is supervised by NSTS staff and/or partnering organizations.

Our youth have tons of fun, but each activity has a purpose, and the fun is planned with an overriding goal in mind. Job 1 is raising personal expectations for what our youth can accomplish. Our goal is to get Norfolk youth ready for their adult years. We do this by raising the bar high for them so that they can build character skills such as grit, growth mindset, learned optimism, and resilience-- skills they will need to be successful in work and in life.

By surrounding youth with the supports they need, we equip Norfolk teens to achieve success and self-sufficiency not only today, but for many years to come.

Our goal is to prepare Norfolk teens for adulthood by promoting personal growth and success. We follow The Success Sequence, which involves graduating high school, pursuing further education or employment, and delaying parenthood until after marriage.

To point youth in this direction, NSTS challenges our participants to be open to new opportunities, experiences, and personal relationships. We empower our NSTS youth to take the next and future steps that will build their interests and talents into lifelong skills. In turn, youth will come to believe and demonstrate that they are future Success Stories.

NSTS's professional staff provide top-quality service and care, with a primary focus on participant safety. All youth must be able to engage independently and work well in a group setting. If a participant struggles with our program or safety guidelines, NSTS leadership will discuss with family to reach a decision about next steps for improvement.

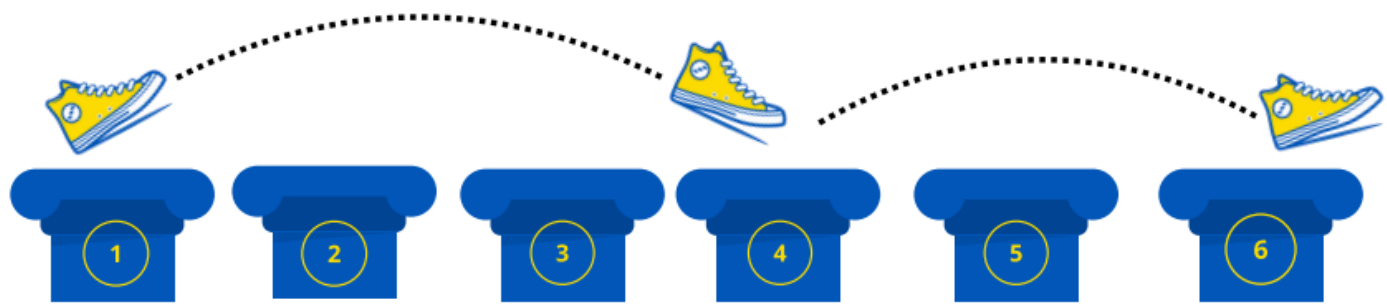
NSTS is a program where youth participate in both on-site and off-site structured, well-planned learning activities. We encourage youth to develop new friendships, but to do so in tandem with the planned lessons and activities prepared each day. To ensure active participation, we require every youth to submit and store their cellphones upon arrival at NSTS. This time away from their phones allows them to better focus on the activities they are engaged in.

This handbook has been created as a reference guide for families to become more familiar with NSTS procedures and policies. Your child's safety is our top priority, and we take this responsibility very seriously.

This handbook serves as a comprehensive guide to NSTS procedures and policies. We ask that you review the handbook in its entirety and return the signed last page to our staff. Your cooperation is crucial in ensuring a positive experience for your family. We are here to answer any questions and provide additional information to help you and your child make the most of this program. We look forward to a successful partnership with you.

# NEXT STEP TO SUCCESS

## 6 PILLARS OF EARNED SUCCESS



GROWTH MINDSET	OPTIMISM	CONFIDENCE	AGENCY	SERVING OTHERS	GRIT
<p>I love challenges, I love learning new things, and I believe in the power of effort. I can learn from setbacks and gain strength from failures with the belief that I will improve with effort to achieve my highest potential.</p> <p>"Our problem is not that we aim too high and miss. Our problem is that we aim too low and hit." – Aristotle</p> <p>"Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles . . . overcome while trying to succeed." – Booker T. Washington</p>	<p>Setbacks in life are not the result of something inherently or permanently wrong with me but actually learning opportunities enabling me to build upon strengths through renewed effort.</p> <p>"Whether you think you can or you think you can't you're right." – Henry Ford</p> <p>"My hunger is not for success, it is for excellence. Because when you attain excellence, success just naturally follows." – Coach K (Michael Krzyzewski)</p>	<p>I will set my personal expectations high and overcome my fears and self-doubts through purposeful effort to achieve my full potential.</p> <p>"I am not throwing away my shot." – Hamilton the Musical</p> <p>"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." – Eleanor Roosevelt</p>	<p>I am not a passive victim of circumstances. I believe that I can change my life and my world for the better. In fact, I am the only person in control of my direction in life.</p> <p>"I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." – William Earnest Henley</p> <p>"The man who will get up will be helped up; and the man who will not get up will be allowed to stay down." – Frederick Douglass</p>	<p>I will display strengths of the head, gut and heart necessary to never compromise my integrity while always considering the needs of others.</p> <p>"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'" – Martin Luther King, Jr.</p> <p>"The only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." – Albert Schweitzer</p>	<p>I will exhibit passion and perseverance in the pursuit of my long-term goals through the daily discipline of deliberate practice, with the gritty determination not to give up when the going gets tough.</p> <p>"The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear." – Nelson Mandela</p> <p>"Talent X Effort = Skill Skill X Effort = Achievement" – Angela Duckworth</p>

# General Policies & Procedures

## Staff Responsibilities

Our staff is dedicated to being capable, caring role models who motivate and inspire youth to be their best. Our staff is committed to creating a healthy and secure environment for youth in a group setting. If a youth cannot participate safely, we may need to remove them from the program, as NSTS cannot tailor to individual needs.

Our philosophy, "Connection before Correction," emphasizes building strong, nurturing relationships with each young person and their family. This intentional and positive way of engaging with our young people focuses on the power of love over lecturing. Our goal with this approach is to equip our youth with the tools to make positive decisions at NSTS, in school, at home, and in their communities.

## Ages of Youth

NSTS serves youth aged 13-18 (18-year-olds must be in high school) who permanently reside in Norfolk, VA.

## Parent Responsibilities:

1. Provide accurate and complete information about your child, including medical history, needs, and any special considerations related to their wellbeing.
2. Ask staff for clarification if you have questions about any aspect of the program, such as hours, field trips, transportation, or meals.
3. Participate in NSTS orientations, open houses, and other family-related events.
4. Please be aware that if you or your child do not adhere to program rules, there may be consequences. These could include discharge from the program or referrals to other services better suited to meet your child's needs.
5. Adhere to NSTS rules, including program hours, dress code, and technology use.
6. Show mutual respect to NSTS staff, other participants, families, partners, and property.

## **NSTS Address and Hours**

### **Location:**

Next Step To Success is based at Christ the King School, 3401 Tidewater Drive, Norfolk, VA 23509. Some activities also occur at partner locations and various sites throughout Norfolk and Hampton Roads.

### **Hours:**

- **Summer Session:** 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM, Monday - Friday
- **Fall/Spring After-School Sessions:** 2:00 PM - 5:30 PM, Monday - Friday

NSTS follows the Norfolk Public Schools calendar and the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church schedule. We are closed if schools or the church close early due to inclement weather or other reasons.

### **Drop-Off/Pick-Up:**

- **Fall/Spring:** Drop-off by 2:00 PM; Pick-up by 5:30 PM
- **Summer:** Drop-off by 9:00 AM; Pick-up by 3:00 PM

If you are late, please contact the Director of Operations at (757) 404-1818.

### **Youth Expectations:**

**Show up regularly!**

**Be Kind!**

**Do Your Best!**

**Have Fun!**

## Attendance and Safety:

NSTS is committed to providing a safe, supportive, and enriching afterschool program for Norfolk teens. Central to our mission is fostering engagement, learning, and personal growth among our participants. Regular attendance and engagement is essential for creating a positive and effective learning environment.

**Attendance Expectations:** All participants are expected to attend regularly scheduled program sessions when able. Regular attendance ensures continuity of learning, fosters a sense of community, and maximizes the benefits of our program offerings. Program staff will maintain accurate attendance records for all participants.

**Youth Engagement:** Participants who lack to engage in the program schedule will meet with NSTS staff to ensure expectations are followed. An additional meeting with family members may be requested as needed.

**Parental Engagement:** For parents, we ask that you attend all scheduled parent meetings, parent workshops, and family night events to ensure you are up to date with all NSTS programming policy and procedures. By working together, we can create a vibrant and engaging learning community for all Norfolk teens involved in our program.

### Late Pickup

If your child is not picked up by closing time, staff has been instructed to:

- 1) Attempt to contact you.
- 2) Attempt to contact individuals listed as emergency contacts.
- 3) After **1 hour** and unsuccessful attempts to reach you and emergency contacts, the Norfolk Police Department will be notified.

We are not allowed to drive any child home in personal vehicles.

### Children At Risk

Parents who arrive at NSTS in an incapacitated condition (i.e., alcohol, drugs) present a risk to their child. The staff in charge will advise the parents of their options regarding the transportation of their child to his/her home. Some options that may be exercised are:

- Call another person on the child's emergency contact list.
- Call the other parent.
- Call a nearby neighbor/friend.

If a reasonable conclusion cannot be reached, the parent will be advised that staff will contact the local police department and/or child protective services.

## **ABSENCE**

If your child does not attend NSTS on a scheduled day due to illness or other circumstances, please contact NSTS Leadership. You can reach NSTS Leadership at 757-404-1818. This is especially important on field trip days and if illness symptoms are due to Covid-19 or other communicable diseases.

## **SNOW AND INCLEMENT WEATHER**

**NSTS follows the Norfolk Public School System's snow and inclement weather policy.** Please listen to local radio and television news stations for announcements. You may also call the program or your child's school to find out if your child's school is closed or closing early due to inclement weather.

Snow and Inclement Weather may necessitate us calling you to pick up your youth or have your child dropped off early by one of our NSTS vans. We will do our best to notify as soon as possible if this were to occur.

## **NSTS CLOSURES AND HOLIDAYS**

NSTS is closed for scheduled holidays and staff breaks. The NSTS yearly calendar is in the back of this handbook. Please review this calendar so that you know when NSTS is closed.

## **MEALS AND SNACKS**

During the summer, breakfast, a snack, and lunch will be provided for free daily during NSTS Summer camp. During the fall and spring, NSTS will provide a free snack and dinner.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

The program is designed to assist all children with building such skills as decision-making, grit, resilience, problem-solving, teamwork, growth mindset, learning optimism and other skills that will help your child have a successful transition into their young adult years. Examples of such activities include:

- Rotating enrichment and leadership development clubs
- Activities which strengthen social and emotional learning
- Cooking, gardening, and special activities
- College awareness workshops and college tours
- Science, aviation, and trade industry-related, hands-on workshops
- Structured game-based activities.
- Visual art, modern dance, and other enrichment classes
- Educational and culture-enrichment field trips
- Career and job readiness workshops
- Outdoor sports
- Guest speaker assemblies

**NSTS leadership and staff reserve the right to change the NSTS schedule, assigned groups of youth, and/or activities.**

### **FIELD TRIPS**

We organize free field trips whenever possible to enrich our students' experiences. If trip is after programming hours, a permission slip will be sent home detailing the trip information and supporting details. NSTS will provide transportation for all agency-sponsored field trips.

#### **During Field Trips:**

- **Supervision:** NSTS will ensure adequate supervision with a typical staff-to-youth ratio of 1:15. All children will be supervised in a group setting.
- **Identification:** Your child must wear the Center's identification badge and/or NSTS shirt on all trips.
- **Group Conduct:** Your child is expected to stay with the group, adhere to their signed commitment letter, and follow program guidelines.
- **Bus/Van Safety:** While traveling, children must keep arms, legs, and heads inside the vehicle and remain seated with seatbelts fastened.
- **Attendance:** Staff will routinely take attendance to ensure all youth are accounted for.

### **HEALTH GUIDELINES**

To ensure the well-being of all participants, please ensure your child does not attend the program if they:

- Have a temperature of 101 degrees or higher.
- Have a communicable disease, symptoms of COVID-19, or have tested positive for COVID-19.
- Exhibit symptoms such as discharge from the eyes or ears, diarrhea, vomiting, or rash.
- Have not waited the required number of days following diagnosis and treatment. A doctor's note is required for their return.
- Are unable to participate in program activities due to health concerns.

We adhere to CDC guidelines and a child may return when:

- Fever has been absent for 24 hours without the use of medication.
- Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea has subsided, and normal functions have returned.
- The stages of contagion for any communicable disease have passed.
- CDC guidelines for COVID-19 exposure or positive test results have been followed.

### **ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES:**

In the event of a non-emergent accident, first aid will be administered to your child. In the event of an emergency, NSTS staff will call 911 and contact the parent/legal guardian immediately to inform them of the situation and where their child is being provided with medical attention. If staff are unable to reach the parent/legal guardian, they will reach out to the emergency contacts provided on the Emergency Medical Form completed during registration.



## **Emergency Situations**

- NSTS staff members are trained and certified in CPR and First Aid.
- You may be called for minor bruises and or cuts.
- All pertinent data and health information will be transported with the child.
- An incident report for any incident/injury will be completed.
- A copy will be kept on file when any of the following occur:
  - An illness, accident or injury that requires first aid treatment; or
  - A bump or blow to the head; or
  - Emergency transporting; or
  - An unusual or unexpected event, which jeopardizes the safety of the children or staff, occurs.

## **PERSONAL BELONGINGS and TECHNOLOGY**

Your child should not bring valuable electronics to the program (i.e., hand-held video games such as the Nintendo switch, tablets, laptops, earphones, Chromebooks, or portable speakers).

Participants' cell phones are immediately stored in the NSTS locker upon youth arriving to the program. There are no exceptions. If your youth needs to contact you by phone, they may do so in the main office.

If you need to reach your child, please call 757-404-1818 to speak with your child.

NSTS is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal property.

## **PARENT NOTICES & INFORMATION UPDATES**

We will keep you informed through regular calls, emails, and texts about your child's engagement in NSTS, activities, field trips, parent meetings, and other updates.

Periodically, we will request that you update your contact information and emergency contacts to keep our records current. All information is kept confidential, except where we have your written permission to share.

## **ACADEMIC PROGRESS REPORTS AND GRADE REPORT CARDS**

NSTS is committed to helping your child be successful in their academic studies. To do so, we ask that you provide up-to-date and regular copies of your child's grade report cards as soon as possible. By having this information, our staff can help your child strengthen their academic skills and track their progress in their daytime studies. Please note that we do not offer academic assistance during the summer camp.

## **YOUTH DRESS CODE POLICY**

At Next Step To Success, we are committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all of our youth participants. Our dress code policy is designed to promote a respectful and focused atmosphere that aligns with our values and goals. We believe that appropriate attire plays a crucial role in creating a positive learning and social experience. We kindly request all youth participants and their guardians to adhere to the following dress code guidelines:

## General Guidelines:

1. **Appropriateness:** Clothing should be modest and suitable for a learning and social environment. Outfits that are excessively revealing, provocative, or offensive are not allowed.
2. **Safety:** Footwear that provides adequate support and protection is always required. Open-toed shoes, flip-flops, and high heels are discouraged due to safety concerns.
3. **Inappropriate Messages or Symbols:** Clothing with messages, symbols, or images that promote hate speech, discrimination, violence, profanity, or explicit content is strictly prohibited.
4. **Gang Messages or Signs:** Wearing clothing that displays gang-related messages, signs, or colors is not allowed. Our goal is to provide a safe and neutral environment for all participants.
5. **Initial Reminders:** If a participant arrives wearing attire that violates the dress code policy, our staff will provide a friendly reminder of the guidelines and help if necessary.
6. **Providing Alternatives:** In cases where a participant's attire does not comply with the policy, we will work with them and their guardians to find suitable alternatives, if available.
7. **Repeated Offenses:** If a participant repeatedly violates the dress code policy, our team will have a conversation with the youth and their guardians to address the issue and find a solution that ensures a respectful environment for everyone.

## BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS:

At Next Step to Success, we are committed to fostering a respectful, responsible, and safe environment for all staff, guests, family members, partnering organizations, and youth. Youth are required to adhere to behavior expectations and sign a commitment letter (located at the end of this handbook) to help create a space where everyone can feel safe, build positive relationships, and explore their growth.

Please review the following expectations with your child:

1. **Fighting** is prohibited.
2. **Bullying** is prohibited.
3. **Sexual misconduct**, including inappropriate photos, texts, and emails, is prohibited.
4. **Sexual harassment**, including soliciting any form of physical or sexual behavior, is prohibited.
5. **Respect** for each participant's and staff member's personal space and property is required.
6. **Profanity** and inappropriate language are prohibited.
7. **Theft** of property is prohibited.
8. **Weapons** or anything that can be used as a weapon are prohibited.
9. **Possession or use** of weapons is prohibited.
10. **Smoking, vaping**, and the use of substances or alcohol are prohibited.
11. **Respect** must be shown to other youth, NSTS staff, church staff, parents, partnering agencies, guest speakers, visitors, and volunteers.
12. **Youth** must always remain with NSTS staff and within their line of sight during program hours and field trips.

All NSTS rules apply during program hours and while youth are transported in company vehicles.

**To ensure behavior expectations are met, youth will adhere to the following four stages of accountability:**

\*These stages will be talked about and explained in further detail during all orientations.

**Stage 1:**

: Depending on the severity of the incident, each youth involved will participate in two Rupture and Repair Sessions with their designated coach and additional support from leadership if needed.

**Stage 2:**

: Youth who reach this stage will be sent home from the program and be required to attend a meeting with all coaches, program leadership, and their parent or guardian to address concerns and establish an action plan prior to return.

\*\*\* Both the youth and their parent or guardian will need to sign an agreement acknowledging the purpose of the meeting and outlining the next steps if the behavior is repeated.

**Stage 3:**

Depending on the severity of their behavior, youth at this stage will face consequences such as a 1-2 week break with a designated assignment that requires the parent or guardian's signature.

**Stage 4:**

For youth who have progressed through the previous stages, a collective meeting will be held to determine if a seasonal break and/or what further action is necessary to best meet the needs of the youth. This meeting will involve a parent or legal guardian, Success Coach, Coordinators, Program Director, and/or Director of Operations.

**Complaint Procedure**

**To address concerns effectively, please follow these steps:**

1. Talk to Your Child: Determine the nature of the concern, whether related to staff or peers.
2. Discuss with NSTS Leadership: Share your concerns with NSTS Leadership.
3. Avoid Confrontations: Do not confront staff or other children in front of youth. Request a private discussion with staff, keeping in mind that they may not leave youth unattended.
4. Let NSTS Handle It: Do not confront other children or parents directly. Allow NSTS Leadership to address the issue appropriately.

## MANDATED REPORTERS

Under the guidelines set by the state of Virginia, NSTS and its staff have the legal responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of the children enrolled in our program. In doing so, we are considered mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. It is our responsibility to report any suspected case of child abuse or neglect, should we witness and/or become aware of any possible cases.

NSTS, its programs and staff retain responsibilities to protect children enrolled in NSTS should there be allegations of abuse and/or neglect. This includes notification to parents/guardians if there is an allegation of abuse/neglect from a staff member and/or volunteer, as well as our zero-tolerance policy should there be an allegation that a staff member/volunteer abused or neglected a child.

## CONFIDENTIALITY:

Next Step to Success will maintain confidentiality and respect each family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of any confidential information. Your child's personal information (e.g., the NSTS application form) is securely stored and only accessible to NSTS staff who are working with your child. However, if we have reason to believe that your child's welfare may be at risk, we are bound by the law to share confidential information within Virginia state mandates and to necessary agencies (such as the local authorities) or individuals, who may intervene on behalf of your child.

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

Staff Name Address	Title	Cell Phone	Email
Janika Joyner	VP of Operations	757-404-1818	<a href="mailto:jjoyner@nextsteptosuccess.org">jjoyner@nextsteptosuccess.org</a>
Muhanma Ernesto Garcia	Director of Operations	757-404-1818	<a href="mailto:mgarcia@nextsteptosuccess.org">mgarcia@nextsteptosuccess.org</a>
Carly West Gelles	Program Director	540 836-6758	<a href="mailto:cgelles@nextsteptosuccess.org">cgelles@nextsteptosuccess.org</a>
Kaelyn Hundley	Middle School Youth Coordinator	757-408-0786	<a href="mailto:khundley@nextsteptosuccess.org">khundley@nextsteptosuccess.org</a>

## Physical Address of NSTS

Christ the King School  
3401 Tidewater Drive  
Norfolk, VA 23509

## POLICY CHANGES

This handbook was written for parents/guardians and youth participants to promote an understanding of the most current policies and procedures.

NSTS reserves the right to modify or change policies and procedures in this handbook at any time.



### Youth Participant Commitment Agreement

As a “Success Story,” a participant of Next Step To Success, I believe that:

*All youth can succeed.*

*All youth want to succeed.*

*And all youth deserve the opportunity to earn success.*

### Youth Participant Commitment Agreement

As a participant of Next Step To Success, I commit to making the most of every opportunity to succeed. I understand that success is earned through dedication, effort, and a positive attitude.

By signing this agreement, I pledge to:

- **Attend Regularly:** Commit to attending each week during the after-school program, and during the summer program.
- **Give My Best Effort:** Work diligently on at least one challenging goal and complete all activities I sign up for. I understand this is key to developing resilience and a growth mindset.
- **Set and Achieve Goals:** Participate in coaching sessions, create a personal action plan, and strive to meet my goals.
- **Respect Others:** Treat everyone—peers, staff, and volunteers—with kindness and respect.
- **Have Fun Responsibly:** Enjoy myself in a safe, healthy, and respectful manner.
- **Follow Electronics Policy:** Turn in my cell phone and other electronics at the start of each program day and retrieve them at the end.
- **Seek Support:** Reach out to NSTS staff for guidance and support in achieving my goals.
- **Stay Positive:** Maintain a positive attitude, even in challenging situations, to build my growth mindset and grit.
- **Be Accountable:** Understand and follow the “Stages of Accountability” to take responsibility for my actions.

I understand that my success is in my hands, and I fully commit to these principles. I acknowledge that failing to uphold this commitment may result in losing my membership in NSTS.

Because I am committed to succeeding both in life and at NSTS, I will adhere to the commitments outlined above. I recognize that my success is ultimately in my control, and I am dedicated to giving 100%. I understand that failure to uphold these commitments may result in the loss of my membership in Next Step To Success.

**Youth's Name (print):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Youth's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NSTS Staff Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Parent/Legal Guardian Sign-Off Sheet

My child and I have participated in the NSTS Open House/Orientation on  
(date)\_\_\_\_\_.

Based on my signature below and that of my child, I acknowledge that my child and I have learned about the NSTS policies and procedures, and we understand these policies and procedures. In addition, based on our signatures below, I have received and reviewed all the above written information outlined in the program handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian Name (please print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent/Guardian Signature / Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Name (please print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Signature / Date**

### Additional Children Enrolled

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Name (please print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Signature / Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Name (please print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Signature / Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Name (please print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Signature / Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Name (please print)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Youth's Signature / Date**

**FOR INTERNAL USE ONLY. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE.**

**NSTS Staff Signature**\_\_\_\_\_ **Date**\_\_\_\_\_