



Family Handbook 2023-2024



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Please note that we have an UPDATED ATTENDANCE POLICY this year:

If a student has 3 absences OF ANY KIND between September and December, or demonstrates a PATTERN OF TARDINESS, the parent/guardian and student must have a “Concern Conference” with their teacher to determine an ACTION PLAN.

Failure to meet the terms of this ACTION PLAN will result in a PROBATION MEETING with teacher and administrative staff.

Students who violate PROBATION may be removed from the program.

Music Haven Board of Directors

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Parent/Guardian Expectations

Learning to play an instrument is a wonderful experience, but it can also be a challenging one. Music Haven is about not only making music, but also building a strong community, and making sure all of our children and their families feel loved, supported, and respected at Music Haven.

As a parent or guardian, your role in this is absolutely central. Without your support, your child won't have the kind of rewarding musical experience he or she deserves. They need to get to lessons, practice every day, and have familiar faces (hopefully yours!) in the audience when they play. These sound like simple things, but we know they can sometimes be a struggle — not everyone has a car or a job that lets them leave early to pick up a child; kids will say they don't feel like practicing; life can get busy and it's hard to make time for attending concerts and recitals. No parent or guardian can do it alone, and we recognize that for some families, the obstacles are even more challenging.

Nonetheless, in order for your child to participate in Music Haven, you **MUST** make the following three commitments:

1) Transportation and On-Time Drop-off and Pick-Up

I will make sure my child gets to lessons, classes, rehearsals, and events on time. I will sign him / her out ON TIME, or arrange for him/her to be signed out by a trusted responsible adult — friend or family member — whose name and phone number I will provide to Music Haven on the Enrollment Form.

(PARENT/GUARDIAN INITIAL HERE :____)

We realize that transportation is an obstacle for some of our families, but for a child to participate in Music Haven, s/he must be able to get to and from lessons, events, and concerts. If you do not have access to a car, and your child is unable to walk or take public transportation to Music Haven programming, you must identify an adult friend or family member who can provide transportation for your child. We can provide a family directory and help arrange carpools.

We ask that you make sure your child is picked up promptly because we do not have additional staff available to wait with your child. A pattern of tardiness and/or late pick-up could lead to removal from program (see attendance policy).

In our registration packet, we ask you for an emergency contact number. The most common use for that number tends to be when a parent or guardian fails to show up for pick-up on time, and then fails to answer his or her phone. For this reason, and for the sake of your child's safety and peace of mind should we need an adult to come pick up or tend to your child for any reason, **we require that this emergency contact be someone besides yourself who can be contacted and would be able to come pick your child up should we be unable to reach you .**

2) Engagement and Participation in Your Child's Success

I will **make sure my child practices** every day at home, and I will **attend Triangle Meetings** (face-to-face meetings with my child, his/her teacher, and myself 3 times a year: in September, January, and June. I will **attend my child's concerts and recitals**, and make sure that—if I can't attend for reasons beyond my control—my child has another family member and/or family friend in the audience. I will provide my child with a quiet place to practice (even if that is just a quiet corner away from screens and other distractions). I will help them establish a practice routine, encouraging them to practice at the same time every day whether or not it is a day they come to Music Haven. I will also **fill out an online end-of-year comprehensive program evaluation** at the end of the year for each participating child, and make sure my child(ren) does the same.

(PARENT/GUARDIAN INITIAL HERE____)

Practicing and Attending Triangle Meetings: Our kids will only experience what it's like to learn an instrument and play wonderful music if s/he practices in between lessons. They will often say they're too tired / don't feel like it / would rather watch TV / or don't need to practice. It's our job as parents and guardians to remind them that this whole thing won't work if they don't practice (and also, of course, that if they DO practice, they will be able to do amazing things). By listening to them practice, by being excited about and interested in their music, and by asking them to play for you a little bit every day, you will help them become great musicians, and also go through the experience of learning the instrument with them. Sometimes it won't sound so great at first. Pretend it's the most beautiful sound you've ever heard ... until suddenly, one day, it will be. **NOTE: Teachers often send home practice charts or lesson notes. Ask to see them! Ask your child to explain them to you, and to play things from the list. If they ask you to sign off on a practice chart, ask to hear what they have practiced!**

Attending Concerts and Recitals: Dates for dress rehearsals and performances will be provided at the beginning of the year so you can write them on your calendar and make sure they are a priority for the whole family. If additional performance opportunities for your child arise, we make every effort to provide at least two weeks' notice.

Completing Program Evaluations: We require that you and your child each complete an online evaluation survey at the end of the school year. This not only helps us constantly improve our programming with your feedback; it is also absolutely crucial to collecting the data and information we need for continued grant support. It is so important that you may not be permitted to schedule your first fall lesson until we have your completed survey! **You must complete an online parent evaluation for each child enrolled, and each child must also complete the student evaluation.** Each should take no more than 15 minutes.

3) Volunteer

We have many volunteer opportunities at events and concerts throughout the year. Volunteers collect tickets, help with event set-up, serve refreshments at intermission, stuff envelopes, hold bake sales, help other families with transportation — and other things we haven't yet imagined. It is a great way to support Music Haven and meet other families. We realize every family's situation is different, but **we expect every family to volunteer in some way at least one time throughout the year**, whether at an event or concert, by contributing items from our "Snack/Supply Wish List," or by helping provide transportation for a student/family in need of a ride.

(PARENT/GUARDIAN INITIAL HERE _____)

Music Haven families have many opportunities to participate and engage in our community. You will find them listed in the “Family Participation and Engagement” section of this handbook. We hope you will take advantage of as many of these opportunities as possible. **HOWEVER, the THREE REQUIREMENTS ABOVE** are non-negotiable requirements. Families who are unable to consistently meet all three of these requirements will—at the request of the teacher—have a mandatory meeting with the Executive Director and will be put on probation, the terms and duration of which will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

During that time, if they do not demonstrate an ability to meet these three basic requirements, they will be asked to leave the program to make space for one of the many children on our waiting list.

By initialing the three commitments detailed above you are acknowledging your understanding of our program requirements, and indicating that you understand your child’s continued participation in Music Haven is dependent upon these requirements being met.

After you have reviewed and initialed each of the three sections above, please sign the **Handbook Signature Form** included in your enrollment packet and return it to Music Haven. Students will not be allowed to start lessons until their signed forms are in the office.

Student Expectations

*NOTE: We realize that student expectations are also parental responsibilities, and that we are relying upon parents and guardians to make sure our students understand what is expected of them and have the support and encouragement necessary to meet expectations. **PARENTS: PLEASE REVIEW THESE WITH YOUR CHILD.***

BEHAVIOR

All Music Haven students must adhere to our **code of behavior**:

1. I treat everyone the way that I want to be treated.
2. I keep my eyes, ears, and mind focused on what I need to learn without distracting others or letting others distract me.
3. I participate with positive energy, and I always give my best effort.

This code of behavior exists to protect the safety and well-being of everyone in the Music Haven community. While we strive to foster a creative, supportive, positive environment, we will take the following steps when students repeatedly fail to respect our code of behavior:

1. Notification of parent/guardian
2. Meeting with parent/guardian
3. Probationary period
4. Dismissal from program

PRACTICING and LISTENING

Studying a musical instrument requires patience and daily practice. Ask for a quiet place to practice at home, away from screens, siblings, and other distractions. Try to practice at the same time every day, whether or not it is a day that you come to Music Haven. It is also important to listen to your pieces every day. You have listened enough when you can sing the piece, visualize the music on the page, and play it on your instrument in your mind. Your teacher might send home a practice chart or lesson notes—show them to a parent/grandparent/sibling at home. Ask them to look at the notes from the lesson, and have you play things from the list! Your teacher will outline clear expectations for practicing, but you can expect a practice schedule that goes something like this:

First year: 20+ minutes a day, every day

Second year: 30+ minutes a day, every day

Third year and beyond: At least an hour a day, every day

PERFORMANCE ATTIRE

We ask that all students wear white shirts with black pants or skirts, or a black & white dress. Please: no jeans and no shorts or skirts above the knee. Girls who play cello can wear wide skirts that go below the knee, but they must allow for proper holding of the instrument. Also: Long fingernails and string instruments are NOT a good combination!

INSTRUMENTS

You will be loaned an instrument (violin, viola, cello, or bass) at no cost when you have demonstrated that you are ready to take an instrument home. At that time, we will set up a parent meeting so that everyone is aware of the responsibilities associated with borrowing an instrument. These instruments are valued between \$200-\$5,000 and are extremely fragile. They must be handled with care. Contracts outlining responsibilities must be signed before students take instruments home. **If you lose or break the instrument, your family (the parent/legal guardian), will be responsible for paying for the cost of the instrument. You must notify the teacher immediately if an instrument is damaged.**

Family Participation & Engagement

Stay Informed, Stay Involved, and Help Shape the Future of Music Haven

To make sure all of our students have a positive experience, develop as a young musician, and get the most out of their participation in the Music Haven community, we ask all of our families to:

Attend Student Performances

Each Music Haven student will have many performance opportunities throughout the year, including recitals, chamber group performances, end-of-year performance parties, and community concerts. Opportunities to perform are a crucial part of a young musician's development, and having the support of a parent/guardian, both logistically in helping make sure the student is at the performance on time, and emotionally, supporting and encouraging the student from the audience, is of the utmost importance.

Attend Haven String Quartet (HSQ) and Resident Musician Concerts

The Haven String Quartet and our Resident Musicians play a variety of concerts throughout the year, and you and your family can attend them **for free**. It is an excellent way to share the experience of live music with your child, watch our teachers in action, and hear what's possible for all of our kids if they keep practicing and playing!

Participate in Concert Trips

Throughout the year, Music Haven families have the opportunity to attend concerts of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra, free of charge. Other concert and theater tickets also become available from time to time. Usually families are responsible for getting to and from these events, and parents must accompany students. Tickets are made available on a first-come-first-serve basis, but consideration is given to whether or not a family/student has attended before, as well as student behavior and effort.

Follow us on Social Media—and Share Your Photos and Videos!

Music Haven Facebook: [facebook.com/musichavenct](https://www.facebook.com/musichavenct)

Music Haven Twitter: @musichavenCT

Music Haven Instagram: @musichavenct

Attendance Policy

BE HERE — No more than 3 absences each semester!

Music Haven is the only tuition-free program of its kind in New Haven, and it is in very high demand! We have a long waiting list of kids from throughout the city who would love to take your child's spot. For that reason — and because we know your child needs to be here consistently and be here on time to have a positive experience — we have a strict attendance policy.

If you have more than 3 absences between September and December, and/or between January and June, you and your child will be asked to attend a “Concern Conference” with the teacher. At that conference, you will work out an Action Plan for addressing attendance.

If you don't follow the mutually agreed-to Action Plan, your child will be placed on Probation, the terms of which will be determined in a meeting with the Teacher and Administrative Staff. If the terms of Probation are not met, your child may be asked to leave the program.

Of course, if a student has to miss an extended period of classes due to Covid-19 or any sort of required quarantine or isolation or illness, this will be taken to heart in any “Concern Conference.”

But wait — what if my kid is sick?

We understand that illnesses and emergencies happen. If for some reason your child will not be at a lesson or event due to illness or emergency, you must **notify the teacher before 2 p.m.** that day. This will still be considered an absence. (**NOTE:** If your child stays home from school due to an illness, s/he must also stay home from Music Haven — but you will need to **call, text, or email us** to let us know, as the schools do not notify us.) Illness is, of course, something that will be taken into account in the Concern Conference, and all situations are handled on a case-by-case basis.

BE ON TIME, BE READY TO PLAY, AND PICK UP ON TIME!

If your child demonstrates what the teacher considers to be a pattern of late arrival or arriving unprepared (without an instrument or music), you will be required to meet with the Teacher and the Executive Director to establish the terms of a probationary period. **More than two late pick-ups (10+ minutes late) will automatically result in a 4-week probation**, as late pick-ups put severe strain on the staff and on students. **If you have one more late pick-up during that six-week period, your child will lose his/her spot in the program.**

We realize that EVERY SITUATION IS UNIQUE

If regular attendance is hindered by poor health, injury, or other circumstances beyond a family's control, we will determine on an individual basis through conversations with parents/guardians and the student what forms of support / accommodations we can provide, and whether or not withdrawal from the program will be in the best interest of the student, family, and program.