



HIGGY CON 2026

DETAILS & PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

*Subject to change. Final scheduled will be emailed by June 1st.

Higgy Con Experience

Before You Arrive

Higgy Con is not something you simply attend — it is something you **experience as a family**.

This weekend is designed to support:

- your child
- you as a parent
- and siblings who are part of this journey

From the moment you arrive, our goal is for you to feel:

- 👉 welcomed
- 👉 supported
- 👉 and not alone

You will receive the **full final schedule by email by June 1st**, and you will also receive a **printed program** when you arrive with everything you need for the weekend.

Arrival & logistics

Please plan to be in the ballroom by **8:45 AM on Friday morning** so we can begin promptly at 9:00.

There is no traditional check-in line.
Instead, your first experience will *be* your check-in during ice breakers.

During your first session, your family will receive:

- Higgy Con t-shirts
- a water bottle, notebook, and pen
- your printed program

👉 Please plan to wear your **Higgy Con shirts on Saturday** for group photos.

Location & Amenities

Higgy Con takes place at **DeVos Place Convention Center**, with the **Amway Grand Hotel** serving as the Higgy Con hotel.

- The hotel and convention center are connected by a **covered skyway (2-5 minute walk)**
- There will be **security on site throughout the event**
- A **nursing room will be available for mothers**
- Water fountains throughout facility
- ADA accessible



Food & Dining

There are many dining options available:

At the Amway Grand:

- Panera
- Coffee shop
- Breakfast restaurant
- Wolfgang Puck's restaurant

Nearby:

- Many restaurants within walking distance

👉 There may also be concessions on site (depending on pricing- TBD)

👉 Families are encouraged to eat together

👉 We may partner with local restaurants to donate a portion of proceeds to Higgy Bears — stay tuned before making final plans!



Parking

- Hotel parking if staying at hotel: \$20/day
- Convention center parking: TBD



Helpful Links

DeVos Place- devosplace.org

Amway Grand Hotel: amwaygrand.com

Experience Grand Rapids- experiencegr.com (dining/attractions)

Your Group

Kids will be placed into **age-based rooms**, with approximately:

- **60 kids per room**
- **10 small groups of ~6 kids per table**

(Some variation may occur depending on attendance.)

Parents will also be placed into **corresponding parent groups** aligned with their child's group.

👉 Some kids have requested to be placed together — these will all be honored.

👉 Final group assignments will be sent by **June 1**

We encourage families to:

- connect ahead of time
- email or text their group
- coordinate lunch or dinner plans

👉 There will also be a **state/local meet-up** to help families build connections beyond the event.

Preliminary Schedule

*Subject to change- final schedule will be emailed by June 1st.

Friday Morning

 **9:00–9:15 (Arrive By 8:45)**

Welcome (Kids + Parents – Ballroom)

We begin the weekend together with a warm welcome that sets the tone for connection, support, and community. This is a chance to settle in, understand the flow of the event, and begin feeling part of something bigger. Families will hear what to expect and how the weekend is designed to support both kids and parents. This moment helps everyone feel grounded before diving into the experience.

 **9:15–10:00**

Ice Breakers (Kids + Parents – Whole Group)

Families participate in interactive activities together to meet others and ease into the experience. This is intentionally done with both kids and parents to reduce anxiety and build early comfort. It creates a shared starting point before transitioning into separate sessions later in the day. Many families begin forming their first connections during this time. It sets the foundation for the entire weekend.

 **10:00-10:30- Break**

 **10:30–11:15**

Panel 1: Lauren & Friends (Parents & Kids Together)

Mental Health, Encouragement & “You’ve Got This”

This panel focuses on emotional support, mental health, and how to navigate this journey as a family. You will hear real, honest guidance about what is normal, what is hard, and how to support your child through it. Lauren and others will share encouragement and practical ways to stay grounded. This is not clinical — it is relatable and reassuring. Families leave this session feeling more capable and supported.

 **11:15–12:00**

Panel 2: Bracing Kids & Teens (Parents & Kids Together)

Real Stories, Tips & “You’re Not Alone”

Kids and teens will share their personal experiences with bracing and surgery, along with practical tips that helped them along the way. Topics include how to talk to friends about a brace, how to handle comments or bullying, clothing tips for girls and boys, staying motivated, and building confidence. This is often one of the most powerful parts of the weekend because it is real and relatable. Both kids and parents hear directly from those who have lived it. The

overall message is clear: you are not alone, and there are ways through this. The main focus is on bracing. There will be a separate surgery panel presented to parents only. Teens that are interested in learning about surgery from other teens may also attend if they choose.

 **12:00–1:30**

Lunch

Families are encouraged to eat together and continue building connections. This is an important time to talk, process, and get to know other families in a relaxed setting. There are many nearby restaurant options, and concessions may be available on site. Some families may choose to make plans together ahead of time. This time helps deepen the relationships started in the morning.

Friday Afternoon

 **1:30–2:30**

 **Kids: Session 1 (In Age-Based Rooms)**

***All kids room activities are all age appropriate and tailored to each group.**

Kids move into their rooms for the first time without parents. They will meet their table group, begin forming friendships, and start their Higgy Con journal and/or coloring book. Activities are designed to help them feel safe, included, and comfortable. This session focuses on connection more than sharing. It allows kids to settle into their environment and begin building trust.

 **Parents: Support Groups**

Parents meet in small groups aligned with their child's group. These sessions are led by experienced parents and focus on sharing, learning, and supporting one another. Parents can ask questions, talk through concerns, and hear from others who understand. This is often where parents feel the greatest sense of relief. It creates a space where you don't have to explain — people just get it.

 **2:30-3:00- Break**

 **3:00–4:30**

 **Kids: Session 2 (In Rooms)**

Kids continue building connections while beginning to explore confidence and social situations. They will talk about real-life scenarios and how to respond in ways that feel right for them. Lauren will rotate through each room to personally connect with every group. Kids will continue journaling and creating motivational cards. This session helps shift them from feeling unsure to feeling more supported and confident.

Parents: Panels 3 & 4

Parents will learn from professionals about bracing, treatment options, and surgery. These sessions provide clear, helpful information while also addressing common myths and concerns. Parents will gain practical tools and a better understanding of what to expect. The goal is to help parents feel informed and confident in supporting their child.

4:30-6:30- Relax & Dinner (Off Site)

Friday Night (6:30–8:30)

Family Social

A relaxed, informal evening where families can connect with one another, as well as meet speakers and professionals. This is a time to continue conversations and build relationships in a low-pressure setting. Many of the strongest connections of the weekend begin here. It's designed to feel comfortable and welcoming. Families can stay the whole time or stop by for part of the social- whatever works for you!

Saturday Morning

9:00–10:30

Kids: Session 3 (In Rooms)

Kids begin exploring feelings and challenges in a deeper way, based on their age. Through journaling (coloring for younger kids), discussion, or reflection, they learn that their experiences are shared by others. They will create “Open When...” pages they can use on difficult days. This session helps normalize emotions and build understanding. It is a key moment for emotional connection.

Parents: Panels 5 & 6

Parents hear from other parents and teens (both bracing and surgery) about real experiences and what has helped most. These panels provide perspective, reassurance, and insight into what kids are really feeling. Parents often leave this session with a deeper understanding of their child. It helps bridge the gap between what kids experience and what parents see. Teens are welcome to attend the surgery portion if they choose.

10:30-11:00- Morning Break

11:00–11:30

Group Photos (Kids + Parents)

All families come together for a full group photo.

Kids will also take photos with their table groups and rooms while wearing their Higgy Con shirts. These photos capture the friendships and connections built throughout the weekend. They will be added to journals as keepsakes. This is a fun and meaningful moment. (This will be at a separate time from the entire Higgy Con group picture.)

11:30–12:00

State Meet-Up

Families connect with others from their state or local area. This is an opportunity to build relationships that can continue beyond Higgy Con. Many families form ongoing support systems through this time. It helps bring the experience home.

12:00-1:30- Lunch

Saturday Afternoon

1:30–2:45

Kids: Session 4 (In Rooms)

Kids reflect on their experience, complete their journals, and add photos and messages from others. This session focuses on strength, growth, and what they are taking with them. Boys will have the option to participate in a small breakout conversation during this time. This is a meaningful wrap-up to their experience.

Parents: Support + Parent Session

Parents reconnect with their groups and then participate in a parent-only session with Lauren and Catherine. This provides final guidance, reassurance, and clarity moving forward. It is a space for honest conversation and support. Parents leave feeling more confident and prepared.

2:45-3:15- Afternoon Break

3:15-4:30

Final Closing (Kids + Parents)

The entire group comes back together to reflect on the weekend. Kids and teens may share what impacted them most. Lauren will close with a final message that brings everything together. This is an emotional and powerful ending to the experience. It reinforces everything learned and felt throughout Higgy Con.

4:30-6:30- Relax & Dinner (Off Site)

Saturday Night (6:30-8:30 PM)

Higgy Con Green Fashion Show

The grand finale of the weekend. Kids walk the runway with their table groups, celebrating their journey, confidence, and friendships. This is a joyful, empowering way to end Higgy Con. It's a celebration of everything they've been through.

What You Will Leave With

- a completed journal and/or coloring book.
- photos and memories
- motivational cards
- a Higgy Bear

But more importantly:

-  connection
-  confidence
-  and the understanding that they are not alone

Parent FAQ

? **What time should we arrive?**

Please plan to be in the ballroom by **8:45 AM on Friday** so we can begin at 9:00.

? **Do we need to check in somewhere first?**

No — there is no traditional check-in line. You'll receive your shirts, materials, and program during your first ice breaker session.

? **Will kids and parents be together?**

Yes — Friday morning and the final closing are **together**. Parents and kids will also be together for all breaks and lunches.

In the afternoon and on Saturday, kids and parents will have **separate sessions** designed specifically for each group.

? **How are kids grouped?**

Kids will be placed in **6 age-based rooms**, with about **60 kids per room** and **small table groups of ~6 kids each**.

These groups stay consistent throughout the weekend.

? **Can kids be grouped with friends?**

We've done our best to honor requests where possible. Final group assignments will be emailed by **June 1**.

? **What will kids be doing?**

Kids will:

- make friends and connect with others
- build confidence through activities and discussion
- create a journal with photos, reflections, and messages
- receive encouragement from Lauren during room visits

The goal is for them to feel supported, understood, and not alone.

? Are siblings included?

Yes — siblings are fully included in all activities, and the experience is designed to support them as well.

? Is there anything specific for boys?

Yes — boys will have:

- the option to sit at **boys-only tables**
- a **30-minute boys-only breakout session** during the final session

? Will kids get anything to take home?

Yes — all kids (including siblings) will receive:

- a **Higgy Bear**
- a completed **journal and/or coloring book**
- **photos and keepsakes**

? When are photos taken?

Saturday morning:

- full group photo
- table group photos (in Higgy Con shirts)

👉 Please plan to wear your **Higgy Con shirt on Saturday**

? What about food?

Lunch is flexible:

- many nearby restaurants
- possible on-site concessions (TBD)

Families are encouraged to eat together and connect.

? Where is everything located?

- **DeVos Place Convention Center** (event location)
- **Amway Grand Hotel** (Higgy Con hotel)

They are connected by a **2–5 minute indoor skyway walk**.

? Is there parking?

- Hotel parking: ~\$20/day
- Convention center: pricing TBD

? Are there accommodations for families?

Yes:

- **Nursing room & ADA accessible**
- Multiple water fountains throughout building
- **Security on site**
- Family-friendly environment throughout