

Cashless Pools (Information)

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Cashless Pools

Overview

Beginning in summer 2025, all Columbus Recreation and Parks outdoor pools will go cashless. Residents can pay for pool admission via credit & debit card, a digital wallet (i.e., CashApp, Apple Pay, Google Pay, Tap to Pay), or by purchasing a "punch card" that is uploaded to the resident's Leisure Card.

This change offers several benefits:

- It offers multiple ways for residents to pay for their pool admission.
- This can speed up the time to check in and enter the pool for residents.
- Residents won't have to worry about carrying or losing cash.
- This increases the safety for staff by eliminating the need to count and handle larger amounts of cash.
- It reduces the department's operating costs by eliminating the need to hire security resources to transport the cash.

There will be a short grace period where cash will be accepted through June 15, 2025, allowing residents to become used to this change.

Risks and Consideration

Change is difficult for residents. Preparing for the following risks and considerations can make the implementation of this change easier.

- This could be seen as an equity issue, as not everyone has access to a credit card or smartphone. It's important to communicate the steps taken to ensure our pools remain accessible to all by offering the option to upload pool admission to a Leisure Card, which is free and required to enter the pool.
- Uploading pool admission to a Leisure Card needs to be easy. Working with Community Center staff to assist residents who come in to obtain a Leisure Card or a purchase a punch card will make it possible for residents to enter the pool without traveling to the Columbus Aquatics Center. Center staff are busy in the summer, so it's important to obtain buy-in from Community Center leadership and staff. Punch cards can be reloaded online, in person via credit card/digital wallet and with cash at Aquatic Center and Recreation Centers.
- Staff working at the pool are young, some as young as 15. As the front line, they are the recipients of complaints and resistance from residents. When the temperatures are high, it's not uncommon for some people to get short-tempered, exacerbating tensions. It's important that staff are equipped with clear direction and talking points to work with residents, and that significant steps are taken to educate the public about this change before they come to the pool.
- Residents may be concerned about losing their Leisure Card/Punch Card. Because the admissions are uploaded to the Leisure Card, they are saved in the system. Pool staff encourage visitors to memorize their Leisure Card number, and Leisure Cards can be replaced

without losing the admissions.

- People may not use all of their pool admissions and ask for a refund. Limiting the digital punch card to 10 or 20 will reduce the likelihood that admissions will go unused. Also, admissions can be used at the Columbus Aquatics Center through Dec. 31, 2025.

Stakeholders

It is important to inform stakeholders ahead of this change so they are prepared to share a consistent message and respond accurately to questions.

Potential City stakeholders include:

- CRPD Commission
- City Council
- Mayor's office

Department stakeholders include:

- Department leadership
- Customer Service staff
- Aquatics staff
- Community Recreation staff

Messaging

Beginning in summer 2025, all Columbus Recreation and Parks outdoor pools will go cashless. Residents can pay for pool admission via credit card, a digital wallet (i.e., CashAp, Apple Pay, Tap to Pay), or by purchasing a "punch card" that is uploaded to their Leisure Card.

This change will improve safety for staff because they will not be handling large amounts of cash. It will also make it easier for residents who will no longer need to carry cash with them. Residents can choose from various payment options, selecting the one that works for them.

We understand that this is a change for residents, and there will be a short grace period where cash will be accepted through June 15, 2025. Having multiple ways to pay offers residents options to choose from.

FAQs

- Why are you doing this? Eliminating cash will foster a safer environment for staff working at the pools, eliminate potential thefts, decrease operating dollars required for private security and meet all requirements established by city auditor's office.
- How can I pay for admission to the pools? Credit card, debit card (standard or pre-paid), tap to pay via digital wallet, digital punch card.
- What do I do if I don't have a credit card or a smart phone? The aquatic center and recreation centers will be able to load punch cards via cash or customers can use pre-paid debit cards available from their local retailers.
- How will this make it easier for me? Residents can come to the pool without carrying cash, youth can visit without a card or cash required with digital punch cards on their account.

Admission will be just as easy as with cash.

- How do I purchase a “punch card?” Where do I go? They can be purchased online or in person.
- Are you raising the cost of admission to cover this change? Not at this time
- What happens if I lose my Leisure Card? We can replace your physical card as supplies last, or we can look up accounts on site. Those who do not want to carry a card can upload the barcode to a digital key ring or have their leisure card number on hand for quick access.
- How does the punch card work across a family – are the 10 or 20 punches loaded to one person’s card for the entire family, or are they shared across all household members? You can purchase one or the entire family or for individuals.
- What if I want to pay for my friend? Over 18 can use punches as they want for friends/family?
- Will I get a refund for unused visits on my punch card? You can use your punches through the end of the calendar year if any remain.
- What do I do if I come to the pool and I don’t have a way to pay? We are committed to helping residents with this transition, reach out in advance to your local pool or call the Aquatic Center to work with a staff person on a plan to visit the pools that works for you. Cash will be accepted through June 15th.

Communication Timeline

Date	Audience	Vehicle	Message	Responsible
April 1	City and internal stakeholders	Phone calls/ emails	Change to policy-cashless entry; FAQs	
April 7- June 23	Residents	Social media (ND, FB, Insta, X)	Opening date, cashless entry	
April 10th	Summer Managers	Summer training/ onboarding	Review key messages to respond to residents’ complaints/questions	Marissa + AQ Leadership team
April 17th	Summer Staff	Email/ Managers share to summer staff teams.	Review key messages to respond to residents’ complaints/questions	Marissa + AQ Leadership team
April 23	Aquatics participants	Direct email	Opening date, cashless entry	
April 24	Residents	External Newsletter	Opening date, cashless entry	
May 12	Residents	Aquatics webpage	Opening date, cashless entry	
May 12	Residents	Social media	Ask MAG to amplify	
May 12	Residents	Signs at community centers	Opening date, cashless entry	
May 12	Residents	Yard signs at pools	Opening date, cashless entry	

??	Community Center Staff	Email from Kenton? ComRec all staff?	Explain change and the importance of assisting customers if they come in for a Leisure Card or punch card	Marissa/Kenton
May 15	Residents	External Newsletter	Opening date, cashless entry	
May 19	Aquatics participants	Direct email	Opening date, cashless entry	
May 19- June 23	Residents	Website banner	Opening date, cashless pools	
??	Community Center Staff	All things Summer	Reinforce importance of assisting customers if they come in for a Leisure Card or punch card	Marissa/Kenton
May 19	Media	Pitch	Pools are opening, what to know/expect, water safety, cashless	
May 24		Pools open		
May 24	Residents	Signs at pool entrance	Cashless admission	
June 2nd	Summer Aquatic Staff	Summer onboarding	Reinforce importance of assisting customers if they come in for a Leisure Card or punch card	Marissa + AQ Leadership team