



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®**  
**FOR HEALTHY LIVING**  
**FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# **BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION**



**2026 Parent Handbook**  
**YMCA Early Learning Center at Little Hands**



Dear Parents,

Welcome to the YMCA Early Learning Center. We are delighted to partner with you in providing great beginnings for your child. The YMCA Early Learning Centers provide developmentally appropriate early education experiences along with a consistent, loving, warm, nurturing, and caring environment for children 6 weeks – 5 years of age.

This handbook is designed to help our center run smoothly by clarifying parent and center obligations for guiding day-to-day operations. Please take time to become acquainted with the handbook's contents before your child begins our program. Please be sure to keep your handbook for referral throughout the year as questions may arise.

Our children, families, and staff are indeed our most valuable resources! We welcome your questions and suggestions and hope you will share your talents and service with our staff here at the YMCA Early Learning Center. We look forward to getting to know you better and having a rewarding year of learning and growing together. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns please see the Early Learning Center Director.

Thank you,  
YMCA Early Learning Center Staff at Little Hands



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## YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

## PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

Our program philosophy is to develop the whole child through SPIRIT, MIND, and BODY. YMCA Early Childhood Learning Centers offer programs with developmentally appropriate activities to stimulate your child's intellectual, social, emotional and physical growth. Children develop communication, reasoning and problem-solving skills through play while interacting with other children and exploring their environment.

## OBJECTIVES

The YMCA Early Learning Center welcomes you and your child! We desire to make this a happy and safe experience. The Y is the largest nonprofit childcare provider with a history of stability built on the core values of CARING, HONESTY, RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, and FAITH.

At the YMCA, healthy child development starts early. That's why we offer early care and learning programs that help children learn the essential skills they will need to be ready for school. Our trained, supportive staff works to help children receive the best possible start to their education. The YMCA's Youth Development programs seek to help each child:

- Develop an appreciation for themselves, family, school, community, country, and other cultures.
- Learn through discovery and play, developing a love for lifelong learning.
- Prepare children for school readiness.
- Develop and improve personal skills such as neatness, originality, patience, and dependability.
- Develop and improve social skills: acceptance of others, cooperation, and responsibility.
- Develop healthy living and safety practices.
- Have FUN!

## EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

In order to meet the individual intellectual needs of children we used the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development. Children receive a variety of learning experiences to foster cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Indoor and outdoor play introduces children to a great amount of language and social interactions. They are encouraged to express their feelings, develop self-confidence, and learn autonomy along with the ability to get along with others.



# ENROLLMENT

The enrollment application for Youth Development programs is performed online and must be re-done yearly. In accordance with Department of Education requirements, the following information must include the relevant information, i.e. none or N/A are not acceptable. Failure to provide this information may delay your child's attendance in the program:

- Child's full name, full address, phone number, gender, and age of birth
- ONE, at a minimum, custodial guardian to include the guardian's full address and at least one phone number.
- TWO, at a minimum, emergency contact LOCAL ADULTS to include the emergency contact's full address and at least one phone number.

The Early Learning Center your child will be attending must also have a copy of the following:

- Medical form, (w/in 30 days of enrollment)
- Immunization Record, (w/in 30 days of enrollment)
- Medical Action Plan, if applicable,
- Emergency Medical Care Authorization Form and Information, and
- Over-the-Counter Skin Products Authorization form (as needed).

North Carolina's medical forms must be signed by your physician. Regulations by the State Board of Health for the immunization of children require documentation of all age-appropriate immunizations prior to each child's admission to a licensed childcare center.

The YMCA cannot accept your child into the YMCA Early Learning Center without this aforementioned documentation. It is also the responsibility of the guardian(s) to keep proper registration information and current phone numbers in the child's permanent record. Services may be withheld if this information is not updated in a timely manner.

# HOURS & DAYS OF OPERATION

Our program provides full-time care for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years and operates Monday-Friday from 7:00 am to 5:30 pm. Parents must notify the center 24hrs in advance if a child will be late, picked up early, and/or picked up and returned for an appointment. Breakfast cut-off time is 8:30 am for yellow and red rooms, 8:45am for blue room, and 9:00am for green room. (Parents must feed their children if they arrive after their class' breakfast time).

The center will be open Monday through Friday year-round with the exception of the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve (Early Dismissal)



## PAYMENTS & FEES

\$100 non-refundable, non-transferable registration fee is due at the time of enrollment. Tuition is divided into equal weekly payments for the year, allowing for consistent billing throughout the program year.

### Weekly Tuition Rates

- Green Room (Infants): \$230 per week
- Blue Room (Young Toddlers): \$220 per week
- Yellow Room (Older Toddlers): \$210 per week
- Red Room (Pre-K): \$200 per week

Weekly payments are due each Monday for the week of service, regardless of attendance. Monthly payments are due by the 5th of each month. Payments must be received by the due date to secure care for that week. Payments not received on time will be considered late and will incur a \$10 late fee per week for each week the balance remains unpaid.



### Attendance, Absences, and Vacation

Staffing, supplies, and program preparation are maintained daily; therefore, no refunds, credits, or pro-rated fees are provided for absences, including holidays and/or scheduled program breaks. Each enrolled child is eligible for one unpaid vacation week per calendar year (January–December) with two weeks' advance written or emailed notice. Children enrolling after June 30 are not eligible for a vacation week for that calendar year.

### Withdrawal & Classroom Transitions

Families are required to provide a two-week written notice when withdrawing a child from the program. If notice is not provided, families will be billed for two weeks following the child's last day of attendance. Vacation weeks may not be used as part of the required notice period. Children transition to the next classroom at teacher discretion and in consultation with families. Transitions include partial days over a period of one to two weeks to support a smooth adjustment. The official classroom move occurs on a Monday, at which time the new weekly rate takes effect and a \$25 Room Move Registration Fee is applied.



### Additional Fees

- Late Pick-Up Fee: \$5 per minute, per child
- Returned Draft Fee: \$30 fee, plus any outstanding tuition
- Credit Card Convenience Charge: 3%

Changes to or cancellation of automatic drafts require 14 days' written notice by emailing [YMCA.elc@trymca.org](mailto:YMCA.elc@trymca.org)

## DAILY SCHEDULE

The YMCA Early Learning Center programs have a consistent daily schedule for all children in the program. A typical day will provide a balance between child-directed and teacher-directed activities. Core content curriculum areas include literacy, math, science, social studies, art, character development, healthy eating, and physical activity. For details specific to your child's classroom, please don't hesitate to ask for the classroom schedule.

## PARENT/GUARDIAN COMMUNICATION

We believe communication between guardians and the Early Learning Program Staff is crucial to ensuring a positive, enjoyable experience for your child. The YMCA will provide written notices regarding changes in policy, procedure, scheduling, or special events. It is the responsibility of the guardian to provide the YMCA ELC with the most up to date contact information, including email address.



### BrightWheel App:

- We use BrightWheel for communication.
- Parents/Guardians must check their child in & out on BrightWheel every day.

### Parent Conferences:

- Conferences can be arranged at any time with teachers or the director.
- We value your feedback and encourage suggestions, concerns, or compliments to be shared with caregivers or directors.

## SUPPLIES PROVIDED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

Parents and/or guardians must supply the following items in their child's cubby:

- Formula and/or breastmilk. (ALL PLASTIC bottles and containers must be properly labeled with child's full name, date pumped, and date given to the center.)
- 2 complete sets of clothes, this includes undergarments and socks.
  - When potty training, an additional full set of clothes will be required.
- Sunscreen and bug spray (if different from what is provided)
- Diapers, pull-ups, wipes, and an extra pacifier that will remain at the center.
- Optional blanket (no larger than 54" x 36") for those 12+ months (Blanket will be washed and remain at the center.)

All belongings should be clearly marked with your child's name.

Staff will notify you when items are running low and need to be restocked.



## PERSONAL ITEMS

We have plenty of equipment and activities to keep your child engaged and busy throughout the day. To maintain a positive environment and avoid conflicts, theft, or loss, please do not send toys, video games, iPads/tablets, smartwatches with games, or cell phones with your child. The YMCA is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Exceptions: Children may bring toys for designated show-and-tell activities. All personal items must be clearly labeled with the child's name to avoid mix-ups.

Backpacks will not be allowed. The only exceptions will be for overnight stays with parents, guardians, or family members, or if a child needs a change of clothes for a special event, such as dance or sports. Bags for these situations will be securely locked in the main office. This procedure applies to all classrooms. Infants may bring bottle bags containing only bottles, milk, and formula. If you need to send extra clothes for your child, please place them in a gallon-sized or grocery bag clearly labeled with your child's name.

## APPROPRIATE DRESS

We play outdoors daily, weather permitting. Activities may include walks, outdoor gross motor play, playground time, and water play. Please note that children will not go outside when temperatures are below 32°F (including wind chill) or above 90°F (including heat index).

Children should wear comfortable, appropriate clothing for both indoor and outdoor activities. We strongly recommend durable, play-appropriate clothing rather than "party" attire. The YMCA Early Learning Center is not responsible for rips, stains, or normal wear and tear.



The YMCA Early Learning Center is not responsible for lost jewelry. For safety reasons, necklaces are not permitted at any time. If earrings become a distraction or are repeatedly removed by a child, they will no longer be allowed to be worn during program hours.

Footwear: Closed-toe, no-tie shoes must be worn at all times. Not allowed: Crocs, sandals, flip-flops, or Heelys, as they pose safety risks. If your child wears rain boots, please send an additional pair of shoes for indoor play. Children wearing inappropriate footwear may not be allowed to participate in activities and parents may be called to bring suitable shoes.



## NUTRITION

All food provided at the YMCA will meet the nutritional standards established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Menus will be posted monthly for parents/guardians to review. Food portions are tailored to the age of each child, and children will be encouraged—but never forced—to try new foods.

### Special Dietary Needs

Parents/Guardians may provide specific food for their children for religious, medical, or dietary reasons. To do so, a written letter must be submitted outlining the reason for the specific diet. All food must be delivered in airtight or original containers. Please note that we cannot store leftovers.

### Guidelines for Food Brought from Home

- Lunches must be in sealed containers, clearly labeled with the child's name and date.
- To promote healthy habits, please avoid sending candy, gum, or other sugary snacks.
- Food Sharing: For safety and allergy considerations, children are not allowed to share food brought from home.
- Celebrations – With prior approval, parents/guardians may bring food and/or beverages for special celebrations.

## DROP-OFF & PICK-UP

Upon arrival for the program, the parent/guardian or authorized person must:

- Accompany your child to the front door of the YMCA ELC. A staff member must be present when you drop your child off, do not leave your child if a staff member is not present. We cannot be held responsible for your child if we are uncertain of his/her presence.
- Sign the child into the YMCA program by using the BrightWheel App by scanning the QR code located on the front door.
- All children must be dropped off prior to 9:00 AM unless staff are notified in advance. Late drop-offs will only be accepted if staff are notified at least 24 hours in advance due to a scheduled appointment. If your child has a morning appointment, they must be dropped off by 11:00 AM. We are unable to accept any students after 11:00 AM due to nap time.

Your children may only be picked up by persons authorized on the enrollment application. If additional arrangements are needed, a written notice must be provided to the YMCA specifying the additional authorized person. Staff will request identification from anyone they do not know. Authorized individuals must present a valid driver's license or identification card issued by the DMV.

- In addition, the Y requires a copy of any legal documentation that restricts another guardian's access to a child. We will restrict access as required by the legal documentation only.
- Authorized persons must sign the child out of the YMCA ELC program, using the BrightWheel App and scanning the QR code located on the front door.

Should an authorized person arrive to pick-up your child and appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the Y staff members will take necessary measures to ensure the safety of the child, including contacting the police. Please do not put staff in a position where they have to make this judgment call.

## LATE PICK-UP

If your child is not picked-up by the end of his/her program, a late fee of \$1 per minute, per child, will be drafted at the YMCA's earliest convenience. This fee is used to pay the staff who remain with your child.

- If you know you are going to be late, call us. We do understand that things come up and traffic can be challenging even in the best of times. We tend to worry about your safety just as much as your child does. Please be considerate.
- If we have not heard from you by 15 minutes after closing time and we cannot reach you by phone, emergency contacts will be called.
- If a child has not been picked-up one (1) hour after closing, Child Protective Services will be called.

The YMCA has found it necessary to implement an excessive late pick-up policy, which could result in your child being removed from our program. Many of our staff have school or other responsibilities that require them to be punctual.

In the event of extreme inclement weather (excluding normal rainfall or typical weather conditions), natural disasters, or man-made emergencies that delay pick-up, the YMCA will waive the late fee and remain with your child until you can safely pick them up. During this time, the YMCA will continue to contact your emergency contacts to arrange for your child's pick-up in your absence.

## STAFF

The YMCA's Early Learning Center staff hold each child's safety and well-being at heart. YMCA staff have been selected based on their educational background, experience, and commitment to working with children. Pre-employment drug testing is required for all new staff and random drug testing is also conducted on a quarterly basis. Criminal background checks are performed for all staff as well. Continual training is provided throughout the duration of employment including, but not limited to, CPR, First Aid, and Daily Health Observation. We maintain a direct staff to child ratio that meets or exceeds state standards.

In addition, staff members strictly adhere to the YMCA code of conduct. Staff members will act in a Caring, Honest, Respectful, and Responsible manner, portraying a positive role model for youth. Staff members will respond to guardian(s), children, and each other with respect and consideration and treat all children equally regardless of sex, race, religion, disability, color, national or ethnic origin, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law.

Children need consistent caregivers in order to build a sense of security and trust. Our goal is for children to have a limited number of caregivers during a day. To ensure we preserve this continuity at our center, we maintain the following practices:

- Assigning full-time teachers to each classroom.
- Job descriptions for lead and assistant teachers to include continuity of care practices.
- Providing annual professional development to all teachers that address the continuity of care systems and practices.

## INJURIES

If your child has a serious injury that may require more than our First Aid skills allow and/or involves a bump to the head in any way, we will make an immediate attempt to contact you. If we are unable to reach you or the person you have designated in case of such emergencies, we will call the child's physician. If necessary, we will call an ambulance.

## CLEANLINESS & HYGIENE

The YMCA Early Learning Center teachers and staff do our best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed entering the classroom first thing in the morning, when coming in from the playground, before and after meals, and after toileting. We use paper towels for drying hands, so children do not have to use the same towel. All employees are required to wash their hands frequently.



# MEDICATION

In accordance with North Carolina Child Care Licensing rules and regulations, no medication, ointments, lotions, or powders will be administered to any child without specific instructions from the child's parent, physician, or authorized health care professional.

## Requirements for Prescribed Medication

- All prescribed medication must:
- Be in its original container with a pharmacist label that includes:
- Name of the person the medication is prescribed to
- Name of the medication
- dosage instructions
- fill and expiration dates
- prescribing doctor's name
- pharmacy information
- usage directions
- be accompanied by a written and signed Care Plan from the physician or authorized health care provider detailing specific instructions for administering the medication (e.g., dosage, timing, and circumstances).



Parents/Guardians must complete and sign a medication permission form that mirrors the information on the pharmacy label and the child's Care Plan. The form must be signed and dated each day the medication is to be administered. Parents/Guardians are required to remain at drop-off until the medication permission form is printed, fully completed, and signed; medication cannot be accepted by staff at the door until all documentation is finalized.

Staff will ensure adherence to the six rights of medication:

Right child, Right medication, Right time, Right dosage, Right route, Right documentation



## SICK CHILD PROCEDURES

The health and safety of your child are of the utmost importance to us. To ensure the well-being of all children in our program, we have strict guidelines regarding illness. Under no circumstances may a parent bring a sick child to the YMCA Early Learning Center if the child: Displays any signs of illness (see symptoms requiring removal below). Is unable to participate in the normal routine and regular activities. Each day, staff members will observe the health of every child as they enter the program, noting any fever, bumps, bruises, burns, or other signs of illness or injury. If your child exhibits symptoms of illness during the day, you will be promptly notified.

## SICK CHILD PROCEDURES (cont'd)

To ensure the health and safety of all children, a child exhibiting any of the following symptoms or conditions will be separated from group care, and the parent/guardian will be required to pick them up immediately. A late fee may be applied if the child is not picked up promptly after notification.

Children will be excluded for the following:

- Vomiting or diarrhea:
  - Children may return after being symptom-free for 48 hours without medication.
  - If diarrhea occurs while at the center and includes two (2) or more episodes within three (3) hours, parents will be contacted. Children may return once symptoms have resolved.
- Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease:
  - Children may not return if they have any open blisters and/or sores.

**If a child's sibling is experiencing symptoms of Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease and/or viral gastroenteritis (stomach bug), we strongly recommend that the sibling also remain home, even if they are not yet showing symptoms. This helps prevent the spread of illness to others.**

- Contagious illness evidenced by sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, persistent cough, heavy nasal discharge, headache, or similar symptoms.
- Fever: Temperature over 100.4°F. Children may return after being fever-free for 24 hours without medication.
- Head lice: Children may return once treated and cleared by a staff member prior to re-entry.
- Ringworm: Must be treated and the affected area covered. If the area cannot be covered, a doctor's note is required for return.
- Excessive irritability or crying: Continuous crying, extreme irritability, or behavior requiring more attention than staff can provide without impacting the health, safety, or well-being of other children.
- COVID-19: Positive or suspected to be positive.
- Allergic reaction
- Severe bleeding
- Possible sprain or fracture

### Return to Program Guidelines

Children may return 24–48 hours after receiving the first dose of antibiotics, depending on the illness. Children prescribed antibiotics for ear infections may return immediately if symptom-free, including fever-free, for at least 24 hours. Allergy-related symptoms or non-communicable conditions do not require exclusion when accompanied by a doctor's note. Please notify the Early Learning Center if your child will be absent.

### Emergency Illness Procedures

If a child becomes ill or complications arise, the YMCA Early Learning Center will contact individuals in the following order: Parent(s)/Guardian(s), Emergency Contact(s), Physician, Hospital

# TOILET TRAINING & DIAPERING

The YMCA Early Learning Center does not provide disposable diapers, pull-ups, or baby wipes. Families are responsible for supplying diapers, pull-ups, and wipes for their child. All items must be clearly labeled. If your child requires the application of ointment, lotion, or powder, written and signed parental permission is required prior to administration. All products must be in their original packaging with directions for use and an expiration date clearly labeled.

When you and your child are ready to begin toilet training, please notify your child's teachers. The Early Learning Center typically introduces toilet training between the ages of 2½ and 3. Toilet training is most successful when there is consistent collaboration between home and the center. Staff support children in developing personal hygiene habits while encouraging independence and self-help skills. Children learning to use the toilet are initially taken to the bathroom every 30–40 minutes and then hourly as progress is made. Toilet training can be a challenging transition and is handled with patience, praise, and positive reinforcement. Families are encouraged to share any helpful information or strategies regarding their child's toilet training needs. Once a child transitions to the Yellow Room, families and teachers must actively pursue toilet training. Children will not move to the Red Room until they are fully potty trained.

1. No child is punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
2. Children shall be supervised at all times while toileting.
3. All Caregivers will be willing to assist in the toileting process when necessary.
4. Children and staff are required to wash their hands with liquid soap and running water after toileting. Staff will also wash their hands after assisting a child with toileting. Proper handwashing procedures are always required to be used.
5. Clothing soiled or wet will be bagged and stored apart from other items until the child leaves the center. The parent will be informed of what happened during the day so they know to clean their clothing appropriately.
6. Families must provide three (3) additional full sets of spare clothing to support the toilet training process. Parents will be notified when supplies are running low and need to be replenished. If spare clothing is not available, the center will provide a temporary set, which must be laundered and returned for reuse. Children should be dressed in clothing that is easy to pull up and down (no zippers, overalls, jeans with buttons, or belts), especially during toilet training.



## INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Y will communicate with guardians about inclement weather procedures through in-person reminders, email, and/or the BrightWheel App, whenever possible, prior to a weather event. For updates regarding cancellations or delayed openings, you can also check the Twin Rivers YMCA website, our Facebook page, and the Brightwheel App. If dangerous weather conditions develop during the day, we may need to contact parents/guardians to pick up their children early due to school closures.



## EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

The director and staff of each site are responsible for the safety of the children and have coordinated their facility emergency action plans with community public safety official and the landlord's security and facilities (when applicable). The intent of this plan is to assist the Director and staff in responding to emergency situations and provides a basis for the restoration of services.

If the YMCA site experiences an emergency situation, e.g., fire, we will make an immediate attempt to contact you. If we are unable to reach you in a timely manner, we will attempt to contact your emergency contact.

- We are required by state law to do one fire drill per month. We vary the time of the day to help the staff and children prepare to evacuate the building quickly and safely. We will not do fire drills or have outside time when the temperature is below 32 degrees or above 90 degrees. At least one teacher from every class must take their cell phone, first aid kit, and emergency bag. The director will remain in the building to do a sweep of the classrooms and bathrooms. After the sweep has been completed, the director will then turn off the lights and shut each door to indicate that everyone is out of the building and are safe.
- Fire drills are conducted to ensure that children know what to do in case there is a fire in school or in their homes. Fire drills also teach children to not panic and walk quickly but safely in a single-file line to the designated area away from a building experiencing a disaster. Once we have exited the building, children or staff will not re-enter the building until each teacher has taken classroom roster attendance and all children have been accounted for. Children will be expected to re-enter the building the same way they exited the building: quickly, safely, and quietly. Once children are back in their appropriate classes, the teacher will take attendance again to make sure that all children are safe. At all times, our emphasis will be on keeping children protected.



# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION

Throughout its history, the Y has been a strong advocate for the child and children's rights; as a result, mistreatment or neglect of children and the resulting severe effects are of primary concern to the YMCA. To prevent the abuse of children in our care, the YMCA requires the following conduct and prohibitions:

I. Staff and volunteers shall not abuse or neglect children. The following may be examples of abuse and neglect:

- Physical abuse: strike, spank, shake, slap.
- Verbal abuse: humiliate, degrade, threaten, yell.
- Sexual abuse: inappropriate touch or verbal exchange.
- Mental abuse: shaming, withholding love, cruelty.
- Neglect: withholding food, water, basic care, etc.

II. Staff and volunteers are prohibited to have contact with children with whom their only relationship is through YMCA programs at any time outside of the YMCA facilities or program(s). This includes babysitting.

III. Staff and volunteers are prohibited from transporting children in their personal vehicles.

IV. Staff and volunteers shall never leave a child unsupervised.

V. At no time during a YMCA program may staff or volunteers be alone with a single child where others cannot observe him/her. As staff and volunteers supervise children, they should space themselves in a way that other staff can see them.

- Staff and volunteers should conduct or supervise the following private activities in pairs, if at all possible: putting on bathing suits, changing clothes, taking showers, etc. When this is not feasible, staff and volunteers should be positioned so they are visible to others.

VI. Staff and volunteers will respect children's rights to not be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say "no". Affectionate touch and the warm feelings it brings are important factors in helping a child grow into a loving and peaceful adult.

- The rule of thumb for staff is to not touch any areas that a bathing suit would cover, including swim trunks. Appropriate touch includes side hugs, pats on the back, and high fives.

VII. Staff and volunteers will make sure that suspicious or unknown individuals are not occupying the restroom before allowing children to use the facilities.

VIII. Children in YMCA programs must treat each other with Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility.

Child-to-child prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Bullying and
- Sexual behaviors, including inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

IX. Staff and volunteers are to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation. The YMCA is mandated by state law to report suspicions of abuse.

If you observe violations of these procedures or any other red flags, the YMCA asks that you bring your concern to the Site Supervisor/Director. If you feel your concerns are not addressed appropriately, contact Eastern Carolina YMCA Interim CEO, Kelly Millington, 252-638-8799, or email [kmillington@trymca.org](mailto:kmillington@trymca.org). It is our job as a community organization to educate ourselves, our children, and their parents and guardians about potential dangers in our community and to protect them from these dangers. At the Y, parents and guardians are our partners in child abuse prevention.

# DISCIPLINE & BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The YMCA is devoted to helping youth develop self-esteem, and feel discipline must be delivered in a positive and productive manner. Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of behavior policy. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others they develop good self-concepts, problem-solving abilities, and self-discipline. The ultimate goal of discipline is self-discipline, control, and direction. Our goal is to provide this direction with positive words and examples so that they will learn the skills necessary to control their own behavior and cooperation with others. It is our intention to try to prevent many behavior problems by providing direct supervision, guidance, age-appropriate activities, love & interaction, a daily routine, and clear boundaries. Using the belief that most young children "follow the leader" when taught and will learn and develop values, the YMCA Early Learning Center adheres to the following discipline and behavior management policy:

## WE WILL:

- Listen to the children
- Reason with and set limits
- Ignore minor misbehaviors
- Model appropriate behavior
- Praise, reward, and encourage
- Provide natural and logical consequences
- Explain things in an age-appropriate manner
- Provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior
- Use short and supervised periods of "two-minutes"
- Stay consistent with the behavior management program
- Modify the classroom environment to provide assistance
- Treat the children as people, with respect to their needs, desires, and feelings.



## WE WILL NOT:

- Deny food or rest as punishment
- Allow discipline of a child by other children
- Relate punishment to eating, resting, or toileting
- Shame or punish when bathroom accidents happen
- Leave a child alone, unattended, or without supervision
- Place a child in a locked room, closet, or box as punishment
- Spank, bite, pinch, push, slap, or otherwise physically punish a child
- Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle a child's parents, family, or ethnic group
- Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse a child



## FORMS OF DISCIPLINE

We use three forms of discipline at the YMCA

1. **Redirection:** With this technique, the caregiver suggests or physically gives the child a different task or toy to stop the undesirable behavior. The child may need to be redirected to a different play center or work table. This technique is used first and foremost by staff with ALL ages of children.

2. **Reasoning or away-from-the-moment discussions:** Discipline involves teaching positive behavior as well as changing unwanted behavior. That is, children need to know what to do, as well as what not to do, and is a more effective tool in anticipating and preventing undesirable behavior than punishing it. "Away-from-the-moment" refers to dealing with the difficult behavior outside of the heat of the moment, and in advance or away from the actual misbehavior. This technique allows the teacher to provide an alternative, desirable behavior in advance. This is the second choice of discipline for staff.

3. **Two-minutes (time-out):** Proven to be one of the most effective disciplinary techniques available to caregivers, and is effective by eliminating reinforcement opportunities for negative behavior. Like any other procedure, two-minutes (time-out) must be unemotional and consistent, which is what makes it effective. This is the third choice for staff. We will never use the words, "time-out", only two-minutes.

## BITING PROCEDURES

Biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for toddlers ages 16–30 months due to limited language and social skills. The YMCA Early Learning Center makes every effort to redirect disruptive behavior using positive reinforcement and reflection and is committed to working collaboratively with families to address concerns. All biting incidents will be documented.

The YMCA will take the following actions for biting incidents involving children ages 16–30 months:

- Verbal notification via phone call or parent conference
- One-day suspension
- Three-day suspension
- Five-day suspension with dismissal warning
- Dismissal from the program

Children older than thirty-six (36) months who bite or display aggressive behavior for any reason will be required to leave the Early Learning Center immediately. A discipline form will be maintained on file to document all such incidents.



## SUSPENSION & TERMINATION

If a child continues to display misbehavior as outlined in our Behavior Management and Biting Procedures, the following actions may be taken:

- Suspension may occur based on the frequency and severity of the behavior.
- If the behavior endangers the safety of others or the child, immediate suspension or termination may result.
- Guardians may be required to pick up their child within one hour of notification, depending on the nature of the behavior.

The Y reserves the right to terminate Youth Development program services at any time. If your child has been terminated from any of our programs, she/he may not attend the same program at a different location.

## PARENT ENGAGEMENT & VOLUNTEERISM

As your child learns and grows with us, we encourage you to participate in our parent engagement activities held three to four times a year. These events are designed to promote physical activity, healthy eating and nutrition habits, and quality family time.

If you are interested in volunteering, please note the following requirements:

- Volunteers must complete clear criminal background and FBI checks.
- Volunteers must also complete our YMCA Child Abuse Prevention Training.
- For the safety of all children, parents and volunteers will never be left alone with a group of children and will always be accompanied by a staff member.

## CONCLUSION

The YMCA Early Learning Center staff takes great delight in creating a safe, healthy, exciting, and stimulating learning environment. Our staff takes pride in the classes they teach and the students they nurture. We encourage you to contact our teachers and directors with comments, questions, concerns, or praises about your child or the school. We hope that this YMCA Early Childhood program will be the first “step” in your child’s involvement with the YMCA. Thank you for letting us be a part of your family.

