



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# CREATING LIFELONG LEARNERS

**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
Parent Handbook**

**WHATCOM FAMILY YMCA**  
**Heart House Early Learning Center**  
11705 Gladstone Street Bellingham, WA 98229  
360 | [whatcomymca.org](http://whatcomymca.org)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Program Particulars</b>	<b>3-8</b>
<b>Child Development</b>	<b>9-27</b>
<b>Policies and Procedures</b>	<b>27-42</b>
<b>Registration Paperwork</b>	<b>42+</b>

# **PROGRAM PARTICULARS**

## **Welcome to the YMCA!**

We are pleased that you have chosen our early learning center for your child! We are confident that your child will learn, grow, and develop in our environment designed especially for children.

## **Introduction**

Whatcom Family YMCA Early Learning Centers are state licensed non-profit childcare centers for the families of our community. The benefits of this program are offered to all children, regardless of race, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, disability, gender or religion. At the Whatcom Family YMCA, we celebrate diversity!

This handbook has been created as a reference to guide you through the workings of our center. Please read the contents carefully and keep the handbook for future reference. Your familiarity with the following information will help to enrich your child's experience at our center. We are always happy to answer any questions that you might have.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

It is the policy of the YMCA that no person shall be subjected to discrimination because of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, marital status, disabled or Vietnam Era Veteran status, or the presence of any physical, mental, or sensory handicap.

## **Our Mission**

The Whatcom family YMCA is an association of individuals with shared values which enhance the community with programs for the spirit, mind and body.

## **Our Focus**

The Y is a cause-driven organization that is for youth development, for healthy living and for social responsibility. That's because a strong community can only be achieved when we invest in our kids, our health and our neighbors.

Our three areas of focus:

- **Youth Development:** Nurturing the potential of every child and teen.
- **Healthy Living:** Improving the community's health and well-being.
- **Social Responsibility:** Giving back and providing support to our neighbors.

Our early childhood programs at the Whatcom Family YMCA are committed to a value-based development curriculum. Helping children understand and practice the YMCA's core values, caring, respect, honesty and responsibility, is central in our programs.

# Types of Care

The Heart House YMCA Early Learning Center has full-time and part-time care available for children from one through the fifth year. As your child grows, there is before and after school care available through the YMCA's school age program.

# Holidays, Teachers Work Days, and Religious Activity

The Heart House Early Learning Center closes on the following days: New Year's Day, President's Day (teacher work day) 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of April (teacher work day), Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Friday before Labor Day (teacher work day), Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday after, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the day after (depending on how the holidays fall that year). Occasionally we will close an additional day around a major holiday if our attendance will be low and if the holiday falls on a weekend. We close at 12:30pm, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of every month for a teacher in service training(except Feb, April and September). Additionally, we will close 2-4 days per year for teacher in-service and training days. These dates will be determined well in advance.

The YMCA is a Christian based organization. When our programs are located in a facility other than a public school, we reserve the right to acknowledge and celebrate religious holidays. We do respect each family's choice to follow a different faith and value the culture that each family brings into our program. While we cannot exclude a child from the rest of the group during an activity, we can work with you to provide an alternative activity. Please talk with your child's classroom teacher, the director, or the program supervisor to arrange a time to share how your family celebrates!

# Inclement Weather Closures

Helping parents meet their employment and education goals is important for our program. We strive to stay open, as long as possible, when severe weather affects our community. However, the safety of our children, families, and staff is also imperative. Inclement Weather includes extreme heat, flooding, and snow/ice.

We use the Bellingham School District as a guide for **snow/ice days**. Please keep in mind that if the district is delayed/closes early or closes all together, we will open 2 hours late (**8:30a**) and will close early (**4:30p**). Please plan on an early pickup on snow days. If we decide to stay open until 6p, we will notify you of this decision, otherwise your children will need to be picked up by 4:30p. The Bellingham School District also has Purple Fridays/Holidays where the schools are closed, we will then use our best judgment to determine **snow/ice day** hours/closures. If the weather is deemed treacherous, we will close the center for the day as it would be too dangerous to travel for our staff and families. **(We do not issue credits for inclement weather closures)**

Communication will be made to our parents as soon as possible through email, Brightwheel, and KGMI radio (KGMI/closure.com). If we are trying to open on time when it is a snowy/icy morning, please be patient with staff as they attempt to get to the center as close to our opening time as possible, we have a large majority of our staff coming in from various areas in the county or from Skagit, that may have very different weather than Bellingham.

# Power Outage

Toddlers and Preschool must be picked up immediately if power is out for longer than 2 hours. At this point we cannot maintain heat/cooling systems, wash hands with water at appropriate temperatures, or potentially feed your child(ren).

**(We do not issue credits for power outage closures, this is an event that we cannot control.)**

# Alcohol, Tobacco, Cannabis, Illegal Drug Use

Heart House does not permit the use of alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, or illegal drugs in our building or on our campus.. This applies to our staff and families during school hours. Indication that a parent is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs will result in staff asking that another adult be called to pick up that child.

## Weapon Safety

It is unlawful for a person to carry onto, or to possess on, licensed child care center premises (Heart House), or areas of facilities while being used exclusively by a child care center:

(a) Any firearm;

(b) Any other dangerous weapon as described in RCW 9.41.250;

(c) Any air gun, including any air pistol or air rifle, designed to propel a BB, pellet, or other projectile by the discharge of compressed air, carbon dioxide, or other gas; or

(d)(i) Any portable device manufactured to function as a weapon and which is commonly known as a stun gun, including a projectile stun gun that projects wired probes that are attached to the device that emit an electrical charge designed to administer to a person or an animal an electric shock, charge, or impulse; or

(ii) Any device, object, or instrument that is used or intended to be used as a weapon with the intent to injure a person by an electric shock, charge, or impulse.

There are exceptions to this policy which follow the law set forth by RCW codes. Please refer to RCW 9.41.070, RCW 9.41.060, and any other Washington State laws/exceptions when briefly attending to business, picking up or dropping off a child at YMCA Heart House.

## Attendance

In order to maintain a consistent and high quality experience for children, it is necessary to know when your child will be attending. Please reserve your child's space in advance. Payment is due by the fifth of the month of care and is non-refundable. Credit is not given for absences due to illness or cancellation. Lack of attendance for a reserved space may result in termination of care. Due to scheduling purposes we are not able to provide switching days of the week for part time children due to illnesses or days that we are closed for holidays.

If your child care is paid for by DSHS or CPS, you are authorized to miss up to 5 days per month. After 5 days your childcare may be canceled due to lack of attendance.

## Vacation Credit

One week of vacation credit is allowed for all families participating in the Early Learning Programs. This means that if you attend 5 days a week, you will receive 5 days of credit per year, if you attend 3 days a week, you will receive 3 days of credit, etc. These days must be consecutive, and we need a two-week written request for vacation credit, in order to make a credit to your account. The credit will then appear on the following month's bill. The beginning of the vacation credit year is July 1<sup>st</sup>. Vacation credit requests must be submitted 2 weeks in advance of the vacation to receive the credit.

## Reserving Care and Wait Lists

Because of space availability, we are unable to "hold" a space for you in your child's classroom if you have an extended period of absence. If you would like to reserve your child's spot in a classroom you must pay for that spot regardless of your child's attendance. If you choose to forgo paying for your child's spot there will be no

guarantee that we will have space for your child to attend when you return. If you have an extenuating circumstance, please see the director. Some short-term exceptions may be granted on a case by case basis.

We often enroll new families off a classroom waiting list, which can be found on the Whatcom YMCA's web page under programs/early learning. It's free to add yourself to the waiting list until we can guarantee you a spot in one of our classrooms. Once we've made the commitment to you that we will have space, we require the \$75 registration fee and ½ of your child's first month of care (which will be credited to your account upon starting). If you should choose to cancel care with us after those fees have been paid to hold the spot, they are non-refundable.

## Membership

All of our childcare rates include a family membership to the YMCA, while the child is enrolled in our program. Membership can be activated at the business desk at our downtown facility. Membership allows your family use of our Downtown-facility as well as, reduced rates on youth programming.

## Confidentiality

All child files will be stored in the director's office. A copy of each child's registration form (with contact information including contact and pick-up information) will be kept in a secure binder in each child's classroom (along with any medication forms or special health care plans). Any outdated or unneeded forms will be shredded for security. All staff are trained regarding keeping children's information confidential upon hire.

## Program Philosophy

We believe that each child is a unique individual that comes to our program with varied experiences and questions. Our centers provide hands-on opportunities that support and encourage each child to develop:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A positive self-image</li> <li>• Independent thinking and decision making skills</li> <li>• Imagination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A familiarity with the natural world using all five senses</li> <li>• Positive social relationships</li> <li>• An understanding of diversity</li> </ul>
---	--

Furthermore, our program recognizes that parents are the primary support example, and teacher for their child. We acknowledge the importance of family and strive to create a partnership with each child's family in order to encourage their development in a safe, loving, and supportive environment.

## Monthly Fee Structure (effective Feb. 1, 2022)

### Toddler

Day	Time	Rate
M - F	Full day	\$1,464
4 Days/week	4 Full days	\$1,318
3 Days/week	3 Full days	\$1,010
2 Days/week	2 Full days	\$673

## Non-Potty-Trained Preschool

Day	Time	Rate
M - F	Full day	\$1,398
4 Days/week	4 Full days	\$1,282
3 Days/week	3 Full days	\$947
2 Days/week	2 Full days	\$645

## Preschool (Fully Potty-Trained)

Day	Time	Rate
M - F	Full day	\$1,275
4 Days/week	4 Full days	\$1,169
3 Days/week	3 Full days	\$881
2 Days/week	2 Full days	\$611

- Included in the fees for the preschool class is a \$1.00/per day field trip activity fee, which covers all extra activities the children participate in.

## Registration Fee

There is an annual, non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00. Registration fees are due when you begin care, and every February 1<sup>st</sup>. If you have additional children attending, there will be a \$20.00 additional registration fee for each child. This additional \$20.00 fee will be due when you begin care, and every February 1<sup>st</sup>. If you choose to cancel care and then return at a later date, the initial registration fee will again be assessed. All program participants using care in February will have the annual registration fee added to their February bill. The registration fee is due even if you plan to cancel care in the near future.

## Service Fee

There is a \$125 per family service fee that is charged every July, to all current families. This fee will also be charged to any new families that start between June and December of that year.

## Notice of Schedule Change

Written notice of permanent schedule changes must be given two weeks in advance in order to credit billing.

## Notice of Withdrawal

Cancellation of care is effective at the end of the month, provided that two weeks' notification has been given in writing. No credit is given for cancellations.

## Volunteering/Visitation

For the safety of all children enrolled, parent visits of more than 10-15 minutes on a regular basis will require a "volunteer" clearance. This does not apply to parents who are feeding their infants. All Whatcom Family YMCA volunteers must have a negative TB skin test, a cleared criminal background check, and be determined by management to be a positive role model for children and an asset to the program. A volunteer must be willing to

donate their time to any classroom, not just the classroom their child attends. We also encourage parent volunteering in the following areas:

- Work parties: Held periodically to accomplish needed projects around the center such as painting, playground maintenance and deep cleaning.
- Parent meetings: Held when needed for topics dependent on emergent needs at the center.
- Family evenings: Held periodically to allow the children in our center to showcase their projects and to allow families to meet and have fun together.
- Fundraising: Periodically based on large ticket items needed for the center.

Volunteering cannot be used as parental visitation. YMCA management reserves the right to determine the definition of “volunteering” and “visitation”. The Early Childhood Program is not the appropriate setting for non-custodial visitation and is not allowed under any circumstances. If at any time a parent or authorized person to pick up is seen as a disruption to the program, they will be asked to leave and further access to a program may be restricted.

## **Parental Rights/Parenting Plans/Court Orders**

The Whatcom Family YMCA supports the right of access to information regarding their child to both legal guardians unless the court alters or abolishes those rights. No-Contact Orders or Court Orders requiring supervised visits only will limit the parent’s access to information. Current documentation of court orders must be provided to childcare administration before any parental rights will be modified by this organization.

Parenting plans will be considered an arrangement between parents and will not be policed by YMCA Staff. Any problems that arise regarding items outlined in the plan will be seen as a problem between the parents and therefore, a family matter. We will maintain that our role is to care for the child, not monitor or be involved in disputes or misunderstandings between parents. For example, if a parent comes to pick up a child at a time outside of the time outlined in the parenting plan, we will release to that parent. The rights of both parents, including access, will remain equal for both parents named in a parenting plan.

Financial information will be provided to the parent listed as the “Person Responsible for Payment” on the registration form. Year-end tax information will be available to both parents unless the court alters the rights to that information.

## **Late Pick-Up/Late Fees**

If your child is not picked up by closing time, you will be assessed a \$5.00 charge for every 5 minutes that you are late. Charge begins at 6:00 pm.

If a child is not picked-up and there has been no communication from the parents, we will call the emergency numbers listed in order to find someone to pick-up. If an hour goes by and the center does not hear from parents or emergency contacts, we are required to call the police.

## **Leaving Children/Siblings in Unattended Vehicles**

Our goal is to keep children as safe as possible. Because we’re in a busy part of the city with busy streets, we remind you not to leave children unattended in vehicles while you go inside to pick up a sibling. It’s not possible to see your child from the inside of the building and without your supervision there are large safety concerns, no matter what age your child(ren) are.

## **Daily Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedures**



A sign-in/out tablet is available in each classroom.. As per our licensing regulations, you must sign your full name and the time on the sign-in/out sheet for your child. It is important to remember that your child will only be released to parent/guardian or other authorized adult listed on the Registration/Emergency/Consent form on file. We will check photo ID's for anyone that is not known. Your child will not be released without this.

# **CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN THE CLASSROOM**

## **Teachers and Volunteers**

The Whatcom Family YMCA hires teachers based on their ability to relate to the perspective of young children. Staff are selected for their personal qualities of warmth, empathy and ability to relate positively to others. In addition, our teachers are required to have S.T.A.R.S. training and experience or education. We provide training for our staff through daily direction, staff meetings and approved trainings.

In addition, state licensing requires the following for paid staff:

- Criminal History Background check
- Negative TB test
- Infant child CPR and First Aid training
- Blood-borne pathogens training
- Orientation to center policies and procedures
- 30 Basic STARS
- Child Abuse Prevention

The Whatcom Family YMCA values community support in the form of volunteerism. All volunteers will be accompanied by a teacher when with the children. All volunteers must have a cleared criminal background check, TB test and an orientation to the center. Volunteers are not included in teacher – child ratios.

## **Substitute Staff**

As in any other workplace, there are times when a regular staff member is out due to personal or family illness or perhaps on a vacation. Unlike many other jobs however, the absence of a teacher on any given day can be particularly stressful to the rest of those coming to work...staff, children and parents alike. We assure you we understand the need to keep substituting to a minimum. However, we are realistic in knowing there will be substitute needs and we do plan for that with the goal of making children feel secure and safe with the staff they

see when they walk through the door. We work with the following possibilities, in order of priority, for filling substitute staffing needs:

- We adjust regularly scheduled staff schedules to cover the absence
- We use a break staff person, who is familiar with the children, to cover the shift
- We call a staff person from one of the other YMCA centers

Substitutes meet all the requirements for working in the center as any other employee and are given direction in maintaining the classroom for the day.

If you feel uncomfortable dropping your child off and you are not familiar with the staff member greeting you, please ask his or her name and introduce yourself. None of us want you to leave your child feeling as if you've left him with a stranger. And by all means, if you are concerned with the staff at drop off please check in at the office or in one of the other rooms.

## **Ages and Stages**

The YMCA Heart House offers the following classrooms to meet your child's blossoming developmental needs:

### **Toddler Classroom (1-2.5 years old)**

#### **Young Toddlers (ages 12 months through 24 months):**

Transitioning from a developmental stage of being totally dependent on caregivers, our young toddlers are developing an increasing independence and need for social interaction. However, newly independent young toddlers still require lots of comfort and attention to physical needs. Our young toddlers nap just once during the middle of the day which we recognize can be difficult for some of the little ones. Teachers are constantly interacting with the children to encourage gentle and appropriate behavior between peers. Frequent outdoor time, singing, and rotating new and exciting toys are just some of the ways we adjust the environment to meet the developmental needs of our young toddlers.

#### **Older Toddlers (ages 24-30 months):**

Our older toddlers begin to engage in group activities. They are introduced to stories, songs and games in formats such as circle time. Older toddlers are encouraged to practice their newly acquired language skills in working together on solving problems. Early concepts such as shapes and colors are introduced, as well as continuing to evolve self-help skills, social skill building, large and fine motor skills, and early literacy and counting experiences. Treehouse is also the room where potty training is emphasized as it is our goal for children to be mostly potty trained and out of diapers before they transition into preschool.

### **Preschool Classroom (ages 2.5-5 years old)**

Building upon their language, social, and logical thinking skills, preschool children are presented with a wealth of opportunities to cultivate their growing sense of independence. Preschool children are exposed to more classroom activities involving arts, music, cooking, science, pre-literacy, math, and fine motor skills in a play based format. Large motor skill building highlighted during outdoor time in the morning and afternoon. Social development is also highly emphasized and children are encouraged to make good choices, learning from their mistakes as they mature in their friendships with peers.

As our 4 and 5 year olds begin the move to elementary school, it's important to prepare them for their upcoming school experiences. The classroom builds upon each child's previous learning experiences, bringing skills and

concepts together into a program that emphasizes a kindergarten readiness curriculum. Using various methods of instruction with lots of play, pre-kindergarten children participate in early literacy activities, as well as early mathematics, science, music and arts, and fine and large motor skill building activities. Each activity involving kindergarten prep is paired with opportunities for building social skills and character values. Children are required to be fully potty trained in our pre-kindergarten classroom (including naptime). The 4 and 5 year old children will go on an occasional field trip during the winter months, and weekly trips during the summer. Examples of field trips include swimming at the Downtown YMCA, visits to city parks and tours of local businesses.

<b>Age</b>	<b>12 to 30 Months</b>	<b>2.5 to 5 years</b>
<b>Teacher to Child Ratio</b>	1:7	1:10
<b>Maximum # of Children in Class</b>	14	20

## Parent Orientation

Parents are offered a tour prior to or upon enrollment. We ask that parents schedule a tour with the director or program supervisor instead of just dropping in. Certain times of the day (like nap time) are not conducive to doing parent tours. After the tour and upon enrollment, a parent may visit with their child multiple times prior to their start date, so everyone feels more comfortable. Of course, a parent may visit, ask staff about clarification of policy, request a conference, or call the director/program supervisor at any time.

## Play is Learning

It is important that you recognize the learning and development that will take place during the time your child spends at the YMCA. When viewing our classrooms, you may ask yourself “Is my child simply playing all day, or are they learning?” First, let us emphasize that a child’s play enables children to explore and make sense of the world. We provide opportunities for creative, investigative play. Teachers carefully observe play themes and follow up on these experiences through reflections, questions, and additional playtime. Children who learn in this manner develop habits of individual thought and are encouraged to be self-initiated, responsible, creative, and inventive. Finally, we support children as they cooperate and build negotiation skills and supportive friendships.

## Consistent Care Policy

High-quality, relationship-based care is essential to children’s early brain development, emotional regulation, and learning. One practice for relationship-based care is to offer continuity of care. At all time, when possible, children are assigned a specific classroom where specific teachers are also assigned. Our goal is to allow teachers and children to stay together for as long as possible, creating opportunities for teacher-child, teacher-family, and child-child relationships to develop and strengthen over time. This practice allows for children to develop secure attachments, which are essential to long term learning. In

some cases, teachers will even loop and move to the next age group with their growing children. In all cases possible, we work diligently to introduce new teachers to the classroom slowly and regularly, giving children a chance to naturally get to know new faces and develop new relationships at their own pace.

## Dual Language Learning

At the Whatcom Family YMCA, we understand that a child's home language support is the foundation for developing English-language skills. In order to better support children who are dual language learners in our program, we are committed to making sure our teachers understand and support families and children with this learning. Examples of this support may look like learning and using phrases and words in the child's home language, providing individualized supports for children and families in their home language (including in assessment), learning each child's cultural and linguistic strengths, and using professional development to grow our skills as educators to support dual language learning.

## Child Screening

Early identification of potential developmental delays is critical to help ensure that children get the resources they need to support positive development. Using a screening tool to review a child's developmental milestones can help to facilitate early identification of developmental delays and help connect families with additional services and/or a formal evaluation. Within 90 days of your child's enrollment into our YMCA program, we will conduct a screening and send home a checklist for you to fill out. The screening we use is designed by the CDC and is a simple developmental checklist that will give you and the teachers a chance to look for red flags. If we have a concern, we'll conduct a screening called "Ages and States Questionnaire." It is widely used in early education programs as well as pediatrician offices. After screenings are completed, we will score them and share the results with you. It is infrequent that a child will need special services after a screening has been conducted. However, if there is a suspicion of a developmental delay, we will help guide you in finding developmental services through your local school district.

## ASSESSMENT

In order to support the development and progress of children, Heart House will conduct regular, on-going assessments. Assessments are done both formally (developmental checklists, child portfolios) and informally (observations, photographs) in the context of play within the classroom setting. Assessments guide lesson planning and teaching practices. Teachers also use assessments to ensure they are providing learning opportunities for every child that are consistent with program goals.

Heart House has chosen to use Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) as our ongoing assessment tool for our preschoolers.(hoping to incorporate it into the toddler program) TSG is an authentic, observational assessment system for children birth through kindergarten. It will help us to get to know children well. With this information, we can offer engaging experiences that help children build on their strengths and interests.

We understand that children are complex and that their life experiences often exceed the kinds of measures assessments address. We also know that children behave differently in different situations, and according to their mood and wellbeing. No assessment tool can ever portray the whole child with 100% accuracy. This is why classroom teachers rely first and foremost on their individual relationships with children and families.

Assessments, as with all child records, are confidential and will not be released to anyone outside Heart House without parent or guardian permission. Upon request, parents may view their child's entire ongoing assessment, which is accessed online.

## ASSESSMENT TIMELINES

Parents are asked to complete an informal developmental checklist / screening upon enrollment in order to provide teachers developmental input from parents.

During the spring, teachers will work with families to arrange conferences. This is an opportunity to share updated developmental growth, that contain samples of children's work, photos, updated progress reports from Teaching Strategies GOLD.

Daily conversations between parents and teachers at drop-off and pick-up help everyone stay connected. For longer or more private conversations, parents and teachers are encouraged to arrange a time to meet outside the classroom. Teachers are available to meet with parents at any time of the year. *This is our goal as a new center it may take a bit of time to implement TSG and assessment.*

## YMCA Toddler Curriculum Philosophy

The Toddler Program at the Downtown YMCA Early Childhood Programs can be described as developmentally appropriate, emergent, relationship based, and experience-based with an emphasis in language development.

Developmentally appropriate practice is an approach to teaching that is grounded in the research of how young children grow and learn. It involves teachers meeting children where they are in their development, individually and in a group, and helping them meet attainable and challenging learning goals. Developmentally appropriate practice requires knowledge of child development, what is individually appropriate, and what is culturally important to the child and their family.

Emergent curriculum is a way of planning based on the passions and interests of children and teachers. It requires careful observation, documentation, creative brainstorming and flexibility. Once teachers observe an interest in the classroom, they brainstorm ways to study that topic in-depth, weaving in appropriate learning goals and objectives.

A relationship-based approach is one that intentionally fosters all of the relationships between and among children, family and teachers. In this model, the each person has repeated opportunities over time to grow to know each other, develop affection, and deepen understanding of each other. One important element in this responsive caregiving is meeting the emotional tone of toddler. Staff work hard to understand a toddler's distress while remaining calm, capable, and comforting. Most elements of responsive, relationship-based caregiving cannot be scheduled, but need to be offered in response to each child's communication of that need. Teachers are to be a safe place for children to come back to after exploring, for security, reassurance, and positive reinforcement.

Toddlers are competent learners and will be given the opportunities to try out their developing skills in play-based experiences. Activities are multi-sensory and experience-based. During these explorations, teachers help build and scaffold each child's language development by repeating and extending children's language, describing and narrating actions in the classroom, labeling, and using a variety of words. The teacher also helps develop language by singing, reading, and using conversational language with each child.

### **How Toddlers Learn**

Toddler-aged children learn through play in both their learning experiences and their environment. Active exploration of concrete materials will help children use a multisensory approach to learning about the world around them. Toddlers need time for uninterrupted play, with the freedom to explore and interact with other participants in their classroom environment.

Additionally, toddlers thrive off of consistent daily routines, caregivers, and expectations. Knowing when to expect meals and naps, who will be their primary caregiver, and what will happen when they test their limits makes toddlers feel safe in their environment. When children feel safe, they are more likely to take risks in their learning, venturing farther and experimenting further with the materials they have access to.

Toddlers are constantly learning about themselves, others, and how they relate to each other. During this period of their lives, they are learning so many new skills! Potty training, new words and conversational language skills, playing alongside peers and sharing toys, the beginnings of problem solving, and more advanced gross motor skills, just to name a few. Learning new skills can be frustrating, and working through these emotions and frustrations, while coping with new feelings can be exhausting. Encouragement and positive reinforcement from primary caregivers is key during this period of development.

Communication typically grows by leaps and bounds during toddlerhood as well. Often children at this age can understand more than they can communicate, which can lead to more frustration. Being surrounded by a language and literacy rich environment, with responsive and intentional caregivers can help to provide further opportunities for growth in this area.

### **The Role of the Teacher**

Warm, positive interactions between teachers and children in a toddler classroom are the key to developing strong and trusting relationships, allowing them to become confident learners. A teacher's role in the classroom is to show kindness and respect for each child as an individual person, being attuned to their needs, interests, and developmental levels. As the teacher learns more about his/her classroom community of learners, they can help guide children with activities, experiences, and materials that are geared towards their interests, needs, and learning.

As toddlers are rapidly expanding in their language development, teachers are responsible for supporting the use of language in the classroom. You will likely see teachers modeling language with open-ended questions, repetition and elaboration of children's words, labeling and narration of events. All of this language modeling helps demonstrate what language looks like for young children, building skills through daily routines. Teachers also help the children navigate through their sometimes-tumultuous emotions. Teachers work hard to give children choices in their day and a sense of ownership over their classroom.

so that tantrums are less likely to occur. When big emotions do appear, our teachers help children label their feelings and use strategies for calming down.

Finally, our teachers are also encouraged to be reflective in their practice, examining what is working and not working in their classroom, how to adjust the environment for learning, and to plan activities to guide intentional play based on interests and abilities of their students.

### **The Role of the Environment**

Children must feel safe and secure in an environment before they can begin to actively explore and learn. Because a welcoming, home-like environment encourages a child to engage in activity and discovery, the perspectives of the children are taken into consideration when setting up the classroom. The teachers organize the environment into centers, separating louder, more active centers (like blocks and dramatic play) from quiet, less active centers (like reading and manipulatives). There are spaces for small and large group gatherings, as well as intimate spaces for one, two, or three children. The interest areas in the classroom are always available to the children, offering a plethora of choices in materials. The environment is designed to represent all children as a part of the classroom community and should inspire and invoke wonder. Sometimes you'll notice changes to the environment. These changes are planned by teachers and are based upon the observations of the child, which highlight their interests and needs.

## **YMCA Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten Philosophy**

Albert Einstein once said, "Play is the highest form of research." At the Downtown YMCA Preschool and Pre-K Program we believe that a play-based approach to learning is the key to creating a developmentally appropriate, child-centered curriculum that supports all learning styles, as well as supporting a child by encouraging a love for learning. Structuring our curriculum and our schedule, we provide for at least two child-initiated and child-directed periods of play per day. Learning develops as children play, touch, manipulate, and experiment with materials, classmates and teachers.

Time for large and small group activities, directed and non-directed play, as well as quiet and active play is provided. Teachers in the classroom follow the children's leads in exploring ideas and developing their capabilities. Children are seen as active learners, and curriculum is planned to help children explore their own interests and take an ownership in what they learn. We believe this approach sets the stage for future learning through an enjoyable, positive first experience at school.

### **HOW PRESCHOOLERS/PRE-KINDERGARTENERS LEARN**

The most important thing to remember about children is that no two children develop in the same sequence or at the same time, and that each child is unique in his/her own personality, learning style, and background. However, research has shown that almost every preschooler learns best through play, exploration, and research. Learning is heightened with opportunities to explore, question, practice, and pretend in order to discover new ideas. Active exploration of concrete materials will help children use a multisensory approach to learning about the world around them. Preschoolers also learn by being exposed to experiences that encourage learning in all areas of a child's development: physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and creative learning through an integrated approach.

Social development also plays a huge part in learning at this age and preschoolers yearn to create relationships with others and communicate. Children are learning to handle and manage their emotions in an appropriate way and to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves, each other, and their classroom while being given the opportunity to make choices and solve problems. Teachers work to help children recognize their own needs and those of others, while encouraging conflict resolution and problem solving skills that will lay a foundation for moving into elementary school.

### THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Warm, positive interactions between teachers and children in a preschool/pre-k classroom are the key to developing a strong and trusting relationships, allowing them to become confident learners. A teacher's role in the classroom is to show kindness and respect for each child as individual person, listening to their voice, and dedicating time to observing their personal learning style, needs, interests, and developmental levels. As the teacher learns more about his/her classroom community of learners, they can help guide children with activities, experiences, and materials that are geared towards their interests, needs, and learning. Our teachers are also learning alongside the children, researching topics and ideas and bringing information back to the children to digest and explore. As learning occurs in the classroom, our teachers carefully listen, observe, and document children's work and the growth of community in their classroom and are to provoke, co-construct, and stimulate thinking. Our teachers are also encouraged to be reflective in their practice, examining what is working and not working in their classroom, how to adjust the environment for learning, and to plan activities to guide intentional play based on interests and abilities of their students.

### THE ROLE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Children must feel safe and secure in an environment before they can begin to actively explore and learn. Because a welcoming, home-like environment encourages a child to engage in activity and discovery, the perspectives of the children are taken into consideration when setting up the classroom. The teachers organize the environment into centers, separating louder, more active centers (like blocks and dramatic play) from quiet, less active centers (like reading and manipulatives). There are spaces for small and large group projects, as well as intimate spaces for one, two, or three children. The environment is designed to represent all children as a part of the classroom community and should inspire and invoke wonder.

## The Daily Schedule

Following a consistent routine day after day gives children the sense of security they need to make choices and take risks in their play, which opens the door to exciting learning opportunities. While dependability is an important factor in child development, it's also important to remember that the needs of children are diverse and fluctuating. Our goal in both preschool and pre-kindergarten programs is to provide children with a consistent and flexible schedule.

At the YMCA we believe that it is through play that children learn the very best. Throughout your child's day they will be actively involved in play. During this play, children will move around the classroom, using their choice of materials and interacting with their peers. Our classroom environment is set up so that materials are arranged into centers. We work to create clearly defined areas that are protected from unnecessary interruptions so children can engage in activities with more concentration. This play may be active or quiet; individually, with a teacher or another child, or in a small group of children. The following are a description of some of our classroom centers:



## THE BLOCK CENTER

The Block Center is the area of the classroom where children create and construct all sorts of designs and structures. This area provides opportunities for learning across all types of development and each child is given the chance to create, cooperate, and communicate. The primary material for the block center is standard, wooden unit blocks, but other props may be involved such as cars, people figurines, animals, paper and pencils for designing and labeling, as well as other types of blocks and materials to construct.

## THE ART CENTER

The Art Center is a place in the classroom where children can create with a range of materials. Children have opportunities to create their ideas in a visual form through media such as drawing, painting, sculpting, collaging, and so on. Materials are rotated through so that children can experiment with them, gluing, cutting, painting, and creating as they go. Basic materials in the Art Center are paper, scissors, glue, crayons, pens, pencils, and paint. Rotated materials can include various collaging materials, different types and colors of paper, oil pastels, different types of paint, different types of sculpting materials, stamps and stamp pads . . . the list is limitless!

## THE DRAMATIC PLAY CENTER

Dramatic play is CENTRAL to the early childhood classroom. In dramatic play, children break through the restrictions of reality. They pretend to be someone or something different from themselves and make up situations and actions that go along with the role they choose. When children engage in dramatic play they deepen their understanding of the world and develop skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

## THE MANIPULATIVE/FINE MOTOR CENTER

The Manipulative Area is a quiet center where children can use materials such as puzzles, matching games, pattern blocks, and sorting activities. These activities (most of which are also included in our "busy bags") can be completed independently or as a pair. This center often serves as the "math hub" of the classroom.

## THE READING/BOOK CENTER

The Reading Center is a place in the classroom with soft furniture, books, magazines, puppets, felt boards, other literacy activities and storage that encourages children to spend time looking at books. It is a quieter center where children can curl up with a book, or spend time with a friend reenacting a familiar story.

## THE SENSORY CENTER

The sensory center is an area of the classroom where children can use their senses to manipulate a variety of materials. Sometimes it's as simple as sand and water, or sometimes it's a new and strange substance like cornstarch and water or shaving cream.

## THE SCIENCE/NATURE CENTER

The Science and Nature center is the area of the classroom where children have access to natural materials and experiences. Using all five senses, children get hands-on interaction with collections of natural objects, living things, and nature-science related books, games and toys. Using real, concrete materials helps young children explore their innate curiosity and fascination about the world around them.

Generally children will have access to all materials in the classroom (including all centers) for two extended periods per day (called Discovery Time). Studies show that longer periods of play (30-60 minutes or longer) increase the maturity and complexity of children’s play, with many more benefits including persistence, negotiation, problem-solving, planning, and cooperation. During Discovery Time, teachers also bring out small-group activities where children can work alongside their teacher and a few other children in lessons that need a bit more teacher guidance.

While we do a large amount of reading and singing in our toddler classrooms, we don’t introduce a structured “circle time” until the children move into Preschool at age 3. Children at this age are not good at sitting for long periods of time and keeping the attention of 14 toddlers at one time can be daunting and usually not enjoyable for most involved. Children are free to come and go while the teacher sings and reads. Often, most children will naturally gather for that time. In addition, we often read books to our two-year-olds during meal times, while they’re all sitting and eating at the tables.

Preschool and Pre-K are also the beginning of large group classroom meetings in our YMCA programs. Each classroom does a morning meeting, complete with discussion of the calendar, weather, attendance and so on. Also included in the day are whole-group readings and class discussions. At least weekly our classrooms also help children participate in a whole group writing exercise where teachers tell a story and draw a picture of their experience. All of these activities help build foundations of literacy for children, introduce them to a typical classroom routine, and reinforce our classroom community.

Mealtimes, rest time, gross motor play, and special activities are also integrated throughout a typical day. Below is an example of a daily schedule in preschool and pre-k. Please refer to your child’s lead teacher for a more specific daily schedule for your child’s specific days of attendance.

### Sample Daily Schedule (Preschool)

7:00 am-8:15 am:	Arrival and Free Play in the Classroom
8:15-8:30 am:	Clean Up
8:30-9:05 am:	Breakfast
9:05-9:30 am:	Gathering time
9:30-11:50 am:	Morning Discovery time and outdoor play
12:00-12:30 pm:	Lunch
12:30-2:45 pm:	Nap/Rest time/Quiet Activities
2:45-3:15 pm	Snack

3:15-4:00 pm	Music
4:00-6:00	Small Group Work/Outside Time/Discovery Time

### Sample Schedule (Toddler)

7:00-8:15 am:	Arrival and Free Play
8:15-8:30 am:	Transition to Breakfast
8:30-9:00 am:	Breakfast
9:00-10:00 am:	Outside time
10:00-11:15 am:	Small Groups and Free Play
11:15-11:30 am:	Clean up and transition to lunch
11:30-12:00 pm:	Lunch
12:00-2:30 pm:	Nap/Rest Time/Quiet Activities
2:30-3:15 pm:	Afternoon Snack
3:15-4:30 pm:	Outdoor Play
4:30-6:00 pm:	Free Play in Classroom

## PACIFIERS

If your child uses a pacifier, parents are asked to provide a labeled one. Children who use pacifiers will have them on an as-needed basis throughout their day. Toddlers are discouraged from walking around the classroom with a pacifier during the day for the following reasons: it is not healthy for a child to pick up a pacifier off the floor once dropped and put back into their mouth; another child may put someone else's pacifier in their mouth; it is difficult to understand a child who is trying to talk with one in his/her mouth; and their muscles in their mouth and tongue need to learn how to work when they talk without a pacifier in it.

## DIAPER CHANGING POLICY

On arrival, our staff will ask parents when their child's diaper was last changed. Staff checks diapers at least every two hours when children are awake, when children awaken, or as needed.

- Diapers, underwear and clothing are changed in designated areas when wet or soiled.
- Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are never used for other purposes.
- Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a plastic lining and a lid that opens and closes tightly by using a hands-free device.
- Cloth diapers are sent home in a sealable container provided by the parent. Cloth diapers must have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. *State law prohibits us from rinsing out soiled diapers.*

# DIAPERING PROCEDURE

The following diapering procedure is posted and followed at our center:

1. Wash hands.
2. Gather necessary materials, i.e., clean diaper, wipes, clean clothing if needed.
3. Put-on disposable gloves.
4. Child is gently placed on the table. Soiled diapers are removed and deposited in plastic lined and covered waste receptacles. At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child when the child is being changed on an elevated surface.
5. The child's diaper (peri-anal) area is cleaned from front to back with a clean, damp wipe for each stroke. Wipes and gloves are then deposited in a plastic lined and covered waste receptacle.
6. Topical cream/ointment/lotion is applied only when a parent's written request is on file. If the parent/guardian has completed a medication authorization for diaper cream, ointment, or lotion, put on gloves and apply to the area. Remove gloves.
7. Put on a clean diaper and protective pants (if cloth diaper used). Dress child.
8. Wash the child's hands with soap and running water. Return the child to the appropriate area.
9. Clean the diaper-changing pad with soap and water, rinse with water, and disinfect with 1 Tablespoon bleach to 1 quart water. Allow the bleach solution to remain on the surface for at least 2 minutes before drying with a paper towel.
10. Wash hands.
11. Record on diapering chart.

# STAND- UP DIAPERING PROCEDURE

1. Wash hands.
2. Gather necessary supplies (diaper/pull-up/underpants, wipes, cleaner and sanitizer, paper towels, gloves, plastic bag.)
3. Put on disposable gloves.
4. Coach child in pulling down pants and removing diaper/pull-up/underpants (assist as needed.)
5. Put soiled diaper/pull-up/underpants in a plastic bag.
6. Coach the child in the cleaning diaper area from front to back using a clean, damp wipe for each stroke (assist as needed.)
7. Put soiled wipes in a plastic bag (or assist a child in doing so.)
8. Close and dispose of the plastic bag into a hands free covered trash can lined with a plastic garbage bag.
9. Apply topical cream/ointment/lotion when a parent has written a request and a medical form is on file.
10. Remove gloves.
11. Wash hands and coach the child in doing the same.
12. Coach the child into putting on a clean diaper/pull-up/underpants and clothing and washing hands (in the bathroom sink).

13. Close and put any bag of soiled clothing or underpants into the child's cubby.
14. Use the 3 step method on the floor where change occurred: soap and water, rinse with water, and disinfectant with 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 quart water. Allow the bleach solution to remain on the surface for at least 2 minutes before drying.
15. Wash hands
16. Record on diaper chart.

## Toilet Training

### Potty Training Policy

Learning to use the toilet is an important milestone in each child's development. Readiness and every child's ability to control their bladder and bowel functions is very individual to each child. Although there is no definite age as to when a child is "ready", children between the ages of 2-3 years of age usually begin to show the signs, understanding, and muscle control to show they are ready to begin potty training.

### Signs of Potty-Training Readiness

Your child uses 3-4 word sentences.

Your child tells you when s/he has a wet and dirty diaper (recognizing when s/he is wet).

Your child tells you when they are wetting their diaper (recognizing the sensations of urinating).

Your child tells you that s/he needs to use the bathroom (can control self and let others know when they need to use a toilet).

Your child stays dry for at least 2 hours at a time and is showing the ability that they can hold their urine and bowel movements.

Your child can pull up and down their own pants with minimal assistance.

Your child asks to use the toilet and/or wear underwear (a sign of wanting to be independent).

Your child can follow instructions such as "wipe yourself with toilet paper", "flush the toilet", and "wash your hands".

Your child shows a willingness to WANT to sit on the toilet both at home and at school.

When a child is ready, potty training should take a short amount of time and should be a positive experience. Sometimes a child is asked to begin potty training when they aren't showing the signs that they are ready, and this is when problems arise. There is no right or wrong age or way to potty train, and it is often dependent on each child. However, there are certain things that can sometimes limit our ability to completely individualize the experience based on our licensing, sanitation, and classroom expectations.

We believe that children are most successful at potty training when they are showing MANY of the signs listed above and when there are not a lot of changes in the child's life. We will assist your child in becoming potty trained when they show these signs both at home AND at school, and when potty training has begun at home. A child may show signs of readiness at home but not at school, or vice-versa. If possible, parents should begin the potty-training process at home first. It's especially helpful if it can begin over a long weekend or vacation from their classroom. Once a child has been relatively successful and accident free at home for at least two weeks (or relatively dry and accident-free in their classroom for two weeks), we will ask that parents send children to school in underwear. Please notify your child's teacher in the morning at drop off if your child is wearing underwear and not a diaper/pull-up.

We will remind and assist your child in the bathroom frequently to use the potty. Please remember that it is nearly impossible for a busy teacher to remember to remind a child (often many children) every half hour and/or help them use the bathroom that often while ALSO caring for others in the class. For that reason, your child needs to be able to communicate the need to go potty by his or herself more often than not. There are times in the day that teachers remind the kids to go in and go, but it is not on a set time schedule.

We ask that the following guidelines are followed when children are potty training at school:

1. We request that children be dressed in clothing that is easy for them to pull up and down (no zippers, overalls, belts, or difficult snaps/buttons).
2. 2-3 changes of clothing must be kept in your child's cubby in case of accidents. If the child has no spare clothing, the center will provide a set. Please return clothes as soon as possible so we may reuse them for other children, as we often run out.
3. If possible, please bring an extra set of shoes (since they often get wet during accidents).
4. We do not rinse out or wash soiled clothing (this is a required health code). All soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag to be sent home at the end of the day. Please check your child's cubby daily for these bags.
5. Children must wear some type of underwear or training pants if they are not in diapers or pull ups. We are aware of popular potty-training methods that recommend children do not wear underwear until they are fully potty trained, but because of sanitary reasons, we must have children wear some sort of underwear to contain any accidental bowel movements.
6. Please keep a supply of pull-ups available at school until the child is showing naptime dryness for 3 weeks. If a child is showing regular dryness at naptime after that amount of time, we can discontinue pull ups.
7. For those classrooms that swim, we ask that even after your child makes the transition into underwear, that they continue to wear swim diapers for at least 3-4 weeks. Sometimes the warm water can make accidents involving bowel movements more frequent until full bowel control has been reached.

The process of self-toileting is a gradual process, and one that is impacted by developmental issues of autonomy and a continued need for security and nurturance. The greatest tool a parent or teacher has in this process is the child's own strong desire to begin self-toileting. *State law prohibits us from rinsing out soiled underwear or diapers. This means that they are bagged to go home "as is".*

## Arrival to the Center

Children excel when they have a consistent routine. Therefore, in the best interest of the children in providing them with a consistent schedule, it is required that children arrive at the center no later than 9:00 am. Morning activities begin at 9:00 am and families that drop off late can cause disruptions both to the classroom, as well as their child's transition into the day's activities. After three late drop offs your child may be turned away from care on the 4<sup>th</sup> late drop off. Please call us if your child will be late or if your child won't be attending on their regular day (due to illness, etc.). If we have not received a call and it is an hour and a half past their normally scheduled time, we will assume s/he will not be attending. Staff schedules will be adjusted and there may not be space for your child to attend.

If your child has a doctor's appointment or other commitment, please let us know. These are not counted as a late drop-off. Breakfast begins at 8:30 am; so if you would like your child to have breakfast with us, please make sure you arrive by 8:30 am!

Please plan for at least 10 minutes each morning to accompany your child to his/her classroom. There will be a teacher ready to greet you! We have a number of teachers that arrive between 8:30-9:00 am therefore your child may need to go to the neighboring classroom until the second staff arrives. Please be sure to let the teachers know how your child's morning has been. The morning teachers will provide all of the other staff with the

information about your child. This is an excellent time of day to communicate instructions, as well as observe your child interacting with their peers or the classroom environment.

**Morning reminders:**

- Always make sure the front doors close behind you.
- Remember to sign your child in and out each day at the parent table in the hallway.
- Never leave your child alone in a classroom.
- Make sure that the teachers know your child has arrived and that you are leaving for the day.

If you are dropping off medicine, special food/milk or other “special” items, please ask the classroom teacher where you should place these items. If you are dropping off extra clothes, mittens, hats, shoes, or coats, you may place those items in your child’s cubby. Be sure to label ALL of your child’s belongings clearly with first and last names. Sometimes items can get misplaced, so please do not bring valuable items or special family mementoes. Also, with the exception of special nap time comfort items or items for sharing day, we ask that all toys stay at home so we can avoid any unnecessary arguments between the children.

As you prepare to leave your child for the day, he/she may start to get upset as they anticipate your departure. Sometimes it feels easier to try to sneak out so your child isn’t looking or to linger and say goodbye for a longer period of time, but both can be more damaging to a child. Before you leave, give your child a hug and kiss goodbye and tell him/her that you have to go to work/school and that you will be back (after snack, nap, etc.) to pick them up. This is a great time to hand your child over to a nearby classroom teacher for comfort as you wave goodbye. Sneaking out without saying goodbye tends to leave children feeling more worried when they realize that you have left and lingering tends to make the separation drawn out and more painful. Some of our children never get upset when their parents leave for the day and others will continue to get upset. Every child has a different way of coping with separation. As difficult as it is to say goodbye, you can leave knowing that your child will be safe, comfortable and enjoying a day of experiences that will contribute to their successful growth and development.

## Going Home

After your child has had a full day of learning, it is important to allow for a patient, smooth transition. Each of our classrooms complete a personalized daily report that will give you an overview of your child's day. Usually you can find your daily report in your child's pocket in the hallway. These pockets are also used to send home illness, accident and illness reports, art projects and any other written communication. Please check your child's pocket daily. Be sure to also check your child's cubby for any clothes that need to be taken home.

Please feel free to take a moment to talk to your child about their day, admire an art project, or clean up an activity in progress. Because there will most likely still be children in the classroom, if you need to have a more in-depth conversation with questions or concerns that require more than five minutes, it's a good idea to schedule a time during the day where your child's teacher, our program supervisor or the director can assist outside of caring for the children. This way we can give you and your concerns the full attention they deserve.

Remember to sign-out with your full signature upon departure. If you are going to be delayed in picking up your child, please call and let us know in advance. With prior notice, we can attempt to accommodate your needs.

If anyone other than a parent or authorized person is picking up your child, we need written permission in advance. Please remind anyone picking up your child to bring photo identification. If a teacher does not recognize a parent or authorized pick up person, photo identification will be **REQUIRED** upon pick up. It's a good idea to always carry photo identification with you as we may not release your child without it. No one under 16 years of age is allowed to pick up a child. Again, please be sure that the staff in charge is aware that you will not be picking up your child.

## Rest Period

A healthy sleep schedule is an important part of child development. Opportunities for rest periods are provided in your child's daily schedule. Each child has their own cot, sheet and blanket that is laundered weekly. Parents will need to bring a blanket and take it home with them on the last day of care for their child that week. Washing it at home and bringing back the 1<sup>st</sup> day of care the next week. Each child depending on personal preference is rocked, cuddled, patted, or has their back rubbed in order to fall asleep. Because there are various schools of thought on healthy sleep patterns, we will do our best to work with our child's sleep preferences within our licensing and developmental guidelines. Once a child has fallen asleep we will let them sleep until their body is rested and they wake on their own, or until the scheduled naptime is over. All children lay down to rest their bodies for a 30-minute time period. If at that time the child has not fallen asleep, they are offered quiet activities for the remaining portion of the rest period. We will not wake children up early for parent preference or to induce an earlier bedtime.

## Outside Play

Health experts are unanimous on the importance of fresh air and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in a closed indoor setting. Furthermore, health experts agree that cool or damp weather is rarely harmful to children and will not necessarily make them sick. If a child is well enough to be in the center, the child is generally considered well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather, children are expected to go outside and play every day. The Director of the center will make the determination whether conditions are acceptable for outside play. In the event that the weather is severe enough to require the children to stay indoors, large motor activities will be provided in the classrooms and windows will be opened to provide fresh air.

Outdoor large motor play is critical to a young child's social and motor development. Our center is equipped with a play yard that allows for children to crawl, climb, dig, run, pedal, throw, and more! Even our youngest toddlers who are not walking are taken outside. As your child is transitioned into the toddler programs, please send them with a pair of shoes that can be used outside so their feet stay dry. In all outdoor settings, and with parent approval, we take precautions to prepare for the weather, including sunscreen, jackets and hats. As there is sand, woodchips, grass and sometimes mud outside, please make sure you send your child to school in clothing and shoes that can get dirty.



# Field Trips

Children learn best when they are able to interact with their surroundings through all five senses. We value the rich exposure that field trips offer to various parts of our community and natural settings. Furthermore, our preschoolers swim and participate in other activities at the downtown YMCA. You will be notified in advance of all field trips planned for your child's classroom. In order for your child to participate in field trips, we must have a signed permission slip on file.

Any field trips that are taken outside of walking or city bus (YMCA vans and busses) will be communicated to parents on a separate field trip permission form. The permission form included in the registration packet is only for walking and/or city bus trips (as well as swimming and climbing for ages 3-5). At any time that a child uses a YMCA vehicle for a field trip, appropriate car seats will be used as necessary and all drivers will be screened and run through a YMCA and WA State check for driving infractions. All necessary insurance for transportation and safety equipment will be ensured.

During each offsite activity, teachers will have the health history and contact information of each child in their care, a first aid kit, a cell phone for emergency use, as well as basic supplies to ensure the health and safety of children (extra clothes for bathroom accidents, snacks, and so on). Teachers will take attendance prior to leaving each location, during the walk/drive, and upon arrival to ensure that every child is accounted for. Staff will always maintain or exceed appropriate child to teacher ratios when on any offsite field trip.

# Neighborhood Walks

In all our early childhood classrooms, we enjoy getting out on walks around our neighborhood. We enjoy walks to give the children exposure to more fresh air, sunshine, and opportunity to learn about the community they live in. One-year-olds only go on walks in our quad-strollers. Two through five-year-olds walk while holding onto a long rope with handles. One teacher stands in the front of the rope, and one at the end. Children who are new to the walking process will hold the hand of a teacher until they are more familiar with the routine, and until they can hold onto the rope. Safety is our number one concern on these walks and teachers are hyper-aware of their surroundings and keeping the children out of harm's way. If you would prefer, we can exclude your infant or one-year-old from walks with written permission. However, in our older classrooms (2-5 years), we often take the entire class and we can't leave a child behind, which means opting out is not an option.

# Transitions

As children grow, develop and reach certain milestones we begin planning to move them to the next classroom to keep them challenged and curious! Generally, we transition children over a short period during the following ages:

**Toddler to Preschool: Around 30 months, Heart House only has 1 transition.**

Teachers consult with the Director and Program Supervisor when they believe a child is ready to transition. After looking at development, as well as age, we discuss the process with parents, as well as the child's new classroom teacher, and begin the transition process.

We highly encourage parents to tour the classroom that their child is transitioning into. This gives parents the opportunity to meet the lead and assistant teachers, learn the schedule of the day, as well as any special procedures for the new classroom. The more a parent knows about the classroom their child is moving into, the more at ease the child will feel.

After a parent tour, children are scheduled times to visit their new classrooms during specific times of the day. These times are usually calmer times with important routines. After the "visit" the child will return to their

classroom. As the days progress, visits grow longer and longer as the child adjusts. Some children transition within 1-2 weeks, while others take longer. Generally, the older the child is the faster they will transition.

There are times when a child is not ready to transition during the usual time period listed above. Sometimes this may be because a child is still working on certain toileting skills or is napping at certain times. Other times we may wait to transition a few children together for comfort. Whatever the reason, please feel free to communicate with your child's teachers and directors in order to learn about your child's transition schedule.

## **Transitioning into the Center**

### **From Home (or a former school/childcare center) to our Toddler/Preschool Program**

Leaving your young child with anyone new is extremely difficult, especially with a group of people in a place that you're not very familiar with. Before starting your child in one of our classrooms, we highly recommend that you spend some time visiting the classroom with your child. Oftentimes children will have some sort of difficulty transitioning into a new situation. The time your family spends visiting will allow your child to begin to familiarize themselves with our center. It generally takes between 2-4 weeks for a child to become well-adjusted to a new child care situation. The more that you integrate your child into the classroom before you have to leave him/her, the easier it will be when you leave them on their first day. However, it's not uncommon for some children to have difficulties with this separation from parents even after the child has adjusted to the classroom environment.

Finally, before your child's first day you may want to bring in your child's belongings to store in his/her cubby. Bringing in supplies prior to the first day back to work can make the morning less stressful for the whole family. It's also very important that you drop off all paperwork before starting care so we can get your account set up and get all paperwork into your child's classroom.

## **Transitioning within the Center**

### **From Toddler to Preschool**

Moving up to preschool is a major transition for your child and you! Expectations for your child's educational experience increase when they enter preschool as their skills are developing rapidly. The preschool classroom at Heart House is composed of children 2.5 years to 5 years of age. In multiage classrooms, older children have opportunities to nurture and model skills for younger children, be nurtured and encouraged by older peer models, participate in more complex activities with older peers, and develop at their own pace knowing that there are a variety of developmental expectations in the classroom, not just one. Our preschool classroom environments offer a rich variety of spaces, materials and activities organized to promote children's active exploration and mastery. Although classrooms often appear informal, they are the result of careful planning and structuring to ensure that the needs of each child are met in a supportive and nurturing way. Our teachers encourage curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, promote cooperative social interactions, support individual creativity and diversity and provide opportunities for children to use their growing bodies to develop a sense of autonomy and self worth. Children are provided with tasks and activities that promote language development, learn readiness skills to prepare them for school, learn about their world through creative play, develop their large and fine motor skills, develop thinking and problem solving abilities, and, optimally, develop emotionally and socially.

### **From Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten**

The transition out of an early childhood program into an elementary school can be an exciting, but also a bit of an anxious change for young children. We work hard to get kids ready for the change throughout their last year of Pre-K. Early in the "school year" we make a list of where everyone will likely start kindergarten in the fall. This gives us an idea of plans to make for the upcoming Spring. In early Spring, you'll receive information from us about kindergarten registration. It's important to get those forms to the schools as soon as you can so they can prepare for your incoming child! If you have trouble accessing those forms, we would be happy to help you out.

In the late Spring, we work together with most of our local school districts to pay a visit to each school we have children going to. We partner with our Barkley site and we visit each child's school individually during a weekday. This allows them to sometimes meet other children going to the same school, as well as view a school and a classroom while it is in session. Most open houses are after hours and incoming kindergarteners don't get to see what it looks like with other children attending. We visit with the principal and the kindergarten teachers, we visit the gym and the lunchroom, they even get a bit of time to play on the playground. All of the frequent exposure of our Pre-K kids to their upcoming new environment helps reduce anxiety in the fall.

Finally, in late Spring, our Pre-K teacher also completes Kindergarten Transition Reports for each outgoing child. It gives a brief picture of your child as a learner and will go directly to their kindergarten teacher in the fall. All Transition Reports are signed by parents before we send them off, so it's a great opportunity to add your own input!

## **From Pre-Kindergarten to the YMCA After School Programs**

When your child "graduates" from our early childhood program and moves onto kindergarten, there are options through the YMCA for safe care after your child's school day. Most of Bellingham and Ferndale schools have a location (usually onsite at your child's school) where your child will meet a YMCA caregiver/counselor afterschool for games, activities and snacks. You can choose to sign up for after school care on a part time or full time basis. There are also programs for children when there are no school days, early release days, snow days and winter/spring/summer vacations. All programs are for grades Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grades and are licensed (with exception of some extra unlicensed programs over school vacations).

There are important changes to note when registering for the before and after school programs. Enrollment in these programs happens twice per year and **is not ongoing** as it is in the early childhood programs. Families must register for the care they need for the beginning of the school year and again for summer. All registration and space is on a first come, first serve basis.

With the unique locations of care in the school age programs, along with the integration of children ages 5 through 12 years, it becomes increasingly important that the children follow the set behavior expectations. While still developmentally appropriate, these expectations rise when your child transitions out from the early childhood program into the school age program. The most important expectation is that your child must stay within the defined program area and cannot leave without permission or run away from the YMCA staff. This is a huge safety concern and care may be terminated if the issue is ongoing.

Another frequent difficulty for transitioning kindergarteners is using the bathroom. New situations can sometimes cause stress in children and lead to accidents both at school and at our afterschool locations. It's a good idea to always send your child to school with an extra set of clothes in their backpack. Because of our licensing and staffing arrangements we cannot assist a child who has had an accident.

Children must be able to change their clothes without assistance from the YMCA staff member. If there are issues with accidents or your child does not have an extra set of clothes, we will call you to assist in the situation. If your child has frequent bathroom accidents before kindergarten, please call our school age department before registering to discuss your family's options.

It's important to talk to your child about the changes that they'll see in the school age program: Being in a group with same age peers, along with older children; how to talk to the teacher/counselor if there's a problem that they need help with; staying with the group at all times; and using words instead of more physical options when in a conflict with a peer. At the end of a full day of kindergarten your child will most likely be quite tired. It's important to prepare for these changes before they have the added stress of being tired and hungry after a long day of school.

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Meals and Snacks**

Our center serves breakfast lunch and an afternoon snack through the USDA Childcare Food program. Meals are served at the following times:

Breakfast	8:30 - 9:00
Toddler lunch	11:30 - 12:00
Preschool lunch	12:00 - 12:30
Snack	2:30 - 3:30

Weekly menus are posted in our entry way. Menus are planned in accordance to USDA and state guidelines as well as the "Dietary Guidelines for Healthy Americans." Sample menus are as follows:

**Breakfast:**

Pancakes  
Strawberries  
Milk

**Lunch:**

Macaroni and Cheese  
Peas  
Watermelon  
Milk

**Snack:**

Yogurt  
Graham Crackers  
Water

### **Toddler Meals**

Young toddlers have now moved from the baby food stage and are now feeding themselves. This can be a messy process! All food has been prepared so that it is safe for young toddlers (in size, texture, and type of food). Because we have multiple children eating at one time, we cannot spoon feed toddlers at mealtime. We will serve your one year old whole milk from a sippy cup at mealtime. We provide bowls, plates, spoons and forks for children to feed themselves and to become familiar with using those tools at meals. We often use bibs for children at meals however the bibs do not always cover the areas that the toddlers get the food! Bringing extra clothes for those messy mealtimes is very important. Most of our toddlers sit at the table in child-sized chairs.

After children turn 2, mealtimes become more of a chance for children to practice their self-help and social skills. Children are asked to politely ask for more food as needed and clear their places after eating. At this time our 2-year-olds are switched from whole milk to 1% milk.

## A Message on Meal Substitutions

We provide nutritious meals and snacks starting at age 6-8 months. We will gladly make the following substitutions to our meals:

- Meatless entrée's
- Substitutions for food allergies, with a doctor's note.
- It is not feasible for our program to make other substitutions due to personal tastes, preferences, vegan diets or gluten free diets.\*
- Parents are responsible for providing milk substitutions (must be accompanied by a doctor's note).

\*Children with vegan or gluten free diets are encouraged to bring meals from home. All meals brought from home need to have 1 grain, 1 fruit, 1 vegetable and milk/milk alternative.

## Milk at Mealtimes

In order to participate in the USDA Food Program, we are required to serve milk at breakfast and lunch. As per the USDA, all of our one-year-olds are served whole milk and two-year-olds are served 1% or non-fat cow's milk. Our milk is mostly purchased from Costco.

Parents will often come to us with a desire to substitute their child's milk for another alternative. You may substitute your child's milk with any lactose free milk (i.e. Lactaid), organic milk, or breast milk without a doctor's note. Please be sure to replace your child's milk frequently. You can also substitute cow's milk with two brands of approved soy milk: 8<sup>th</sup> Continent Soymilk (original or vanilla) or Pacific Ultra Soy (plain or vanilla). All other soy brands and any other forms of milk (rice, coconut, goat, etc.) are required to get a note from your doctor. Please see the director for an appropriate form for your child's doctor to fill out. We are unable to serve almond milk because of our center's nut-free policy.

# Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards (HEPA)

In response to a call by First Lady Michelle Obama and the Partnership for a Healthier America, the Y has expanded its longtime commitment to supporting healthy living by adopting a set of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards. Based, in part, on years of research and with key partners, the HEPA standards will build a healthier future for our nation's children by creating environments rich in opportunities for healthy eating and physical activities. Some of the practices we are working hard to implement in our early childhood programs are:

- Having water accessible to children at all times.
- Providing only water and unflavored low-fat or non-fat milk for children ages 2 and older.
- Providing fruits and vegetables at every meal and snack
- Eliminating fried and par-fried foods from our menus.
- Eliminating foods that contain trans-fats.
- Offering whole-grains as much as possible (whole grain breads, pasta, brown rice, oatmeal)
- Provide foods that don't list sugar in the first three ingredients, or that contains 8 grams of sugar or more.
- Using staff as role models for healthy eating behavior at all times.
- Promoting and supporting exclusive breast-feeding (when possible) for six months, and the continuation of breast-feeding in conjunction with complementary foods for 1 year or more.
- Provide children, when environmentally possible, with moderate to vigorous physical activity for 60 minutes every day. Staff will role model physical activity by participating in the activities with children.
- Provide opportunities for infants to explore their indoor and outdoor environments with adult supervision, with lots of opportunity for "tummy time".
- Eliminate screen time in our early childhood programs, except for rare, special occasions for children 3 and older

## Food Allergies

The Heart House YMCA recognizes that allergies are a growing concern among parents, caregivers, and health care providers. The Heart House YMCA does not exclude a child from care on the basis of any allergy. We will work with the parents on an individual basis and within the constraints of our facility, program requirements, and licensing regulations. A written individualized care plan will be implemented in cooperation with the parents and the child's physician. Parents are encouraged to meet with the child's teachers, the Director, and Program Supervisor on a regular basis to discuss the child's special needs and/or restrictions.

## Allergy Procedure

Upon enrollment, the parent shall notify the administration of their child's allergy in writing on the child's registration form.

A severe allergy defined as life threatening by a physician will require an EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE PLAN. This plan must be completed by the child's physician and must be accompanied by any required medication.

A mild food allergy will require a note from a physician outlining the food restriction and the appropriate substitute. **Parents may be required to supply substitute foods.**

# Birthday and Special Occasions

Your child's birthday is a special day to celebrate! If you would like to send a special birthday, or other holiday treat for the class you may, but it is completely optional. Also, please be aware that all treats must be store bought (this is a licensing requirement). We ask that you refrain from sending peanut and tree nut products, as we have children with life threatening allergies in our classrooms. We are a peanut/tree nut free center.

## Items to Bring to School

Dropping your child off each morning can be a busy time! It's much easier to have all your child's supplies in their cubby prior to their first day so that drop off can be a calm and stress-free experience. The following items are what you will need you to supply for your child's care at the YMCA:

- Diapers (Either cloth or disposable, see "Diapering" section on page 27)\*
- Diaper Wipes\*
- Waterproof, Zipping "Wet Sack" for Cloth Diapers (if applicable)
- 2 Sets of Extra Clothes (See "Clothing Suggestions" on page 27)
- Pacifiers (if applicable)
- Blanket or Security Item for Naptime
- Diaper Cream (if applicable)\*
- Swimming Suit (For Summer Months, Will be Kept and Laundered at School)
- Mittens, Hat, Scarf, Gloves (For Winter Months)
- Water bottle or cup

\* When you bring in a supply of these items, we will inform you when your supply is low.

## We supply the following:

- Breakfast, Lunch and Afternoon Snack
- Cow's Milk (Whole and 1%/Non-fat)
- Bowls/Spoons
- Cups
- Sheets
- Toys

## Personal Belongings

Please clearly mark all items such as clothing, lunch boxes, and backpacks with your child's name. Toys from home can be a distraction to classroom learning. Unless it is a designated sharing time, please do not send toys from home with your child. Please do not send money, wheeled shoes, video games, or any other valuable items. The YMCA cannot be held responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items. We will attempt to contact the owner of lost and found items that are marked, but as the amount of items grows, it will be displayed in the hallway. It will stay in the hallway for one week, and then is donated to a worthy cause.

## Diapers

At the Heart House YMCA parents are asked to supply their child's diapers, but they may choose between cloth or disposable diapers. Cloth diapers may not be used with diaper pins and must have some sort of waterproof cover. We need to use a clean waterproof cover with every change. We also ask that parents provide a waterproof, zipping "wet sack" to store soiled diapers in. Because of health and safety requirements, we cannot empty the contents of cloth diapers before placing them into the zippered sack.

## Clothing Suggestions

When your child is in our care for a full day of play, eating, sleeping, and hands-on classrooms activities, they tend to get their clothes messy. We ask that you send your child with at least two changes of clothes (both tops and bottoms) to keep in their cubby. If your child soils his or her clothing, we will place all soiled items in a plastic bag for you to take home and launder. Please remember to bring more spare clothes when you take a set home! As your child begins to experiment and participate in more art and science projects, their clothes also tend to get dirtier (even with aprons). Please make sure your child comes to school in clothes that can be easily washed when they get dirty, as well as clothes fit for napping and playing. As we do go outdoors, please send your child with clothing that is appropriate for the day's weather. Finally, please label **ALL** clothing items clearly, as we do sometimes have duplicates.

## Pet Policy

At the YMCA we believe that assortments of pets are important for teaching children skills in caring and responsibility. We are likely to have fish, turtles, hamsters, gerbils, guinea pigs, and rabbits. At times parents may also bring their family pets to the center for a visit. All animals are carriers of various bacteria and viruses. To limit exposure to any of these we do the following:

- Children and staff wash hands after handling pets.
- Cages are cleaned on a weekly basis by lead room staff.
- Cages are not cleaned in the kitchen.
- Current rabies vaccinations are required for all dogs and cats visiting the center.
- Staff are always present when children are handling pets.
- No pets are allowed in the infant room.
- We will notify parents at least a week in advance of any new or visiting pet.

Please let us know if your child has an allergy to any pets at the center and we will make accommodations for them.

## Injuries

If your child is injured while in our care, staff will do the following:

1. Minor injuries: Apply first aid and complete an accident report.
2. More serious injuries: Apply first aid as necessary, attempt to reach the parent/guardian or others listed on the Emergency Information Form to discuss further action taken. Complete an accident report.
3. If we cannot reach the parent/guardian, or other designated people, and the staff feels the situation warrants it, 911 will be called.



# Child Abuse Prevention: Know, See, and Respond

At the Whatcom Family YMCA, we practice three important habits of Child Abuse Prevention – **KNOW**, **SEE** and **RESPOND** – to create safe spaces where youth can learn, grow and thrive. When we **KNOW** how abuse happens, **SEE** the warning signs and **RESPOND** quickly to prevent it, together we foster a culture of child abuse prevention.



We **KNOW** when we understand the behaviors of those who harm youth and how to stop them. Staff and volunteers who practice the **KNOW** habit:

- Understand the potential risks for abuse that children and teens face, and their role in protecting them at their Y.
- Understand how predators operate
- Recognize the importance of proactive engagement when supervising youth, and between youth
- Appreciate the difference they make when they practice the Three Habits in Child Abuse Prevention at their Y
- Encourage others to adopt these prevention habits
- Can explain what Know, See and Respond means when asked by a parent or community member

We **SEE** when we can recognize warning signs or behaviors that signal abuse or a risk for abuse. Staff and volunteers who practice the **SEE** habit:

- Interrupt inappropriate interactions between adults and youth, and between youth
- Respect children and teen's emotional, psychological and physical boundaries – according to YMCA policies – and ensure that others also follow the policies
- Act when something seems wrong and if they observe others not practicing the prevention habits

We **RESPOND** when we take action to stop behaviors we recognize as being inappropriate or questionable. Staff and volunteers who practice the **RESPOND** habit:

- Act when children or others need help
- Interrupt questionable behavior by a staff member, volunteer or youth
- Notify the appropriate people at the Y when they have a concern
- Can make a report to Child Protective Services and/or police when they suspect abuse

If you have any questions about our Child Abuse Prevention practices or Know, See, and Respond, please feel free to contact Lynda Purdie at (360) 733-8630 ex. 1106.

# Health Policies

Heart House, Downtown and Barkley YMCA Centers are “well child” facilities. Children will not be admitted to the Center when they are ill. You are the best judge of your child’s health, and we trust that you will not bring a sick child to the Center. However, if in the opinion of the teaching staff your child is sick, we will call you to come pick up your child. If we are unable to reach you, we will call the emergency contact person on your registration form. In addition, if your child was sent home due to illness, **he/she cannot return to childcare until he/she is free from symptoms for 24 hours.**

**While our Health Care Policy goes into detail about when a child should be kept at home, here are some general guidelines:**

- If you have given your child Tylenol before coming to the center.
- If your child is irritable, continuously crying or requires more attention than we are able to provide.
- If your child had runny diarrhea or vomited at home or on the way to the Center. Please note: A child will be sent home if he/she vomits while at the center. If a child has vomited/had diarrhea on two or more occasions within 24 hours, he/she will be expected to miss the following day of care.
- If your child is unable to participate in planned activities.
- If you are called to come and pick up a sick child, you have 1 hour to pick them up unless other arrangements are made with the office.

We know that it is difficult for you to miss work to stay home with your child. However, bringing a sick child to the center assures that other children will become sick, as well as teaching staff. Keeping sick children home is a win-win situation for all involved.

Please see our Health Care Policy for more information.

# COVID-19/Pandemic Parent Guidance

(only applies while in a pandemic and adjustments can and will be made as needed)

The following policies and guidelines were developed with the guidance of the CDC, Washington State Department of Health, Whatcom County Health Department, and childcare licensing requirements. These have been put in place to provide safety for all staff, children, and families at Whatcom Family YMCA Child Development programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document will constantly change because the information we are getting is continually changing. We will do our best to update this information regularly. Please be patient with us, we are working to get you up to date information but want to make sure that the information is fully understood by us and then we can get it to you. The Barkley YMCA Child Development, Downtown YMCA Early Learning, Heart House YMCA Early Learning and Whatcom YMCA School Age programs may have some information that is specific to their locations and procedures for those sites.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING STRATEGIES

Social distancing focuses on remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance from others when possible. Whatcom Family YMCA Heart House Early Learning Center will follow the following social distancing strategies:

- Operating hours will be 7:00 am. – 6:00 p.m. to allow staff adequate time to clean and disinfect.
- Class/group sizes will be limited to no more than 20 children.
- Outdoor playground times will be staggered. Playground equipment will be disinfected between each use.
- Outdoor time will be increased to allow children more space to play and provide better air circulation.
- Classes will alternate times to use the restrooms & clean/sanitize them in between groups.
- Daily activities will be planned to minimize physical contact between children when possible.
- Special events and social gatherings will be canceled or postponed.
- Field trips will be canceled or postponed.
- Visits to the administrative office will be limited to emergency needs only.
- Nonessential visitors will not be permitted into the facility (see details below).

## HEALTH SCREENING PROCEDURES FOR PANDEMIC

A thorough health screening will be performed on each child upon arrival. This screening must be completed before the parent/guardian leaves the child and before the child enters the center.

- Staff member will perform a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness, which could include **flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing** (without recent physical activity), **fatigue, or extreme fussiness**, and confirm that the child is not experiencing **any symptoms of COVID-19**.
- Staff member will ask questions to parents/guardians from a list of symptom questions (if answer yes to any one symptom, see illness policy section below)

## Symptoms:

### Class A Symptoms:

- Fever (defined as 100.4 or higher)
- Cough
- Loss of sense of taste/and or smell
- Shortness of breath

### Class B Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle or Body Aches
- Sore Throat
- Congestion or Runny Nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea (defined as 2 or more loose stool in 24 hours)

## **ILLNESS POLICY DURING COVID-19 (It is very important to read this section very carefully)**

\*If your child(ren) are experiencing any of the symptoms (A or B) you should stay home.

\*If your child(ren) has 1 Class B symptom for less than 24 hours, you can return to care.

\*If your child(ren) has: Any 1 class A symptom for any duration, or 2 or more class B symptoms for any duration, or 1 B symptom lasting more than 24 hours, then you should consult a Health Care Provider (HCP) and/or receive a COVID-19 test before you can return to care.

\*\*The decision to return should be made in consultation with your healthcare provider and/or state and local health department.

## Travel Policy

Please note that these policies are subject to change, and are based on the most up to date CDC and Washington Department of Health [guidelines](#).

## Return to a Child Care Program Policy (as of 4/1/22)

### POSITIVE CASES

Regardless of vaccination status, if a person tests positive for SARS-CoV-2 by a molecular or antigen test, they can return\*\* to the facility when the following criteria are met:

- At least 5 days have passed since the date of your positive COVID-19 test if no symptoms are present (up to 20 days for those who are severely ill or immunocompromised), **AND**
- You have had no subsequent symptoms.

## CLOSE CONTACTS

### Vaccinated Youth

In the event of COVID exposure in the YMCA Early Learning or BASE programs, students will not be required to quarantine. COVID tests are highly encouraged, and students will be monitored for COVID symptoms.

**Program credits will not be given for quarantine due to COVID exposure for children eligible for vaccination in the BASE program (School Age).**

**\*\*\*If guidance changes we will update families in writing. \*\*\*Please note that during a pandemic or public health emergency, we may restrict access to our building as needed, for the health and safety of our staff and children enrolled in our center.**

# Pesticide Use

We do not use pesticides at our center. In the event that pesticides are needed the center will follow RCW 17.21 "The Pesticide Application Act."

## Behavior Guidance in Young Children

Young children are learning how to be in charge of their own behavior and emotions. This is a big learning experience for children, which requires teachers who respond to inappropriate behaviors with insight, sensitivity, consistency, and reflection. Most of our classroom boundaries center around three basic principles: children may not hurt themselves, hurt others or destroy property. It is essential for children to understand why the behavior is inappropriate and how to modify it (once developmentally appropriate). Furthermore, it's imperative for children to understand that while they may have made a poor decision, it doesn't make them a "bad child".

### PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Most classroom behaviors can be prevented with some of these simple strategies listed below:

- Establishing clear, consistent, age-appropriate boundaries
- Considering the age, individual temperament and developmental level of each child.
- Arranging the classroom to help children understand behavior expectations (i.e. reducing running pathways, encouraging small group play, quiet and loud areas separated, etc.)
- Teachers acting as positive roles models for positive behavior and conflict resolution
- Close observation and supervision of all children
- Specific, positive praise when children are making good choices
- Redirecting children to another activity when having a difficult time working within classroom boundaries
- Establishing a consistent classroom routine and transitions so children can know what to expect on a daily basis

### RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS

If a child is not responding to verbal warnings and is still displaying negative behaviors, we often use one of the strategies below:

- Having a short discussion with the child, privately, getting down on their level and using a calm voice
- Helping children verbalize their feelings and frustrations to the teachers and/or peers.
- Practicing and role-playing common behavior scenarios
- Working with 1-3 children at a time on solving a problem by asking guiding questions
- Using logical consequences to teach children that each action they display has a reaction (i.e. scrubbing a table when they've colored all over it)
- Loss of privileges, usually closely related to the inappropriate behavior (i.e. having to miss a trip to the pool if a child can't use their walking feet during swimming)
- Taking space away in a quiet area to calm down (not a time out)

## **PROHIBITED**

The behaviors listed below are prohibited in our program and may not be used under any circumstance:

- Withholding of food, bathroom privileges or the use of rest time as a behavior management tool.
- Corporal/physical punishment of any kind
- Shaming, humiliation, or "making an example" out of any child
- Sarcasm
- Abusive or profane language

## **BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS AND COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES**

We believe that parents are our partners in their child's experience and we want to inform them when their child is having trouble making good choices. Daily communication with families is critical in building rapport. This can be done using daily reports, "That Hurts" Reports, and/or letters and phone calls home. If a child continues to struggle with a behavior or the behavior is extremely unsafe, we often will set up a conference with the parent(s) and discuss options for the future. Options for ongoing behavior challenges may include behavior plans, reward charts to earn special privileges, shadowing, logging behaviors to look for patterns, bringing in a behavior specialist, and so on.

## **Chronic Disruptive Behavior**

The staff will make every effort to work with parents or children having difficulties at the center. Children displaying chronic disruptive behavior, which has been determined to be detrimental to the physical or emotional wellbeing of another child, may require the following actions:

**Consultation:** The teaching staff, program supervisor, and Director will meet with the parents for a discussion of the issues. A plan of action and a time frame for its review will be agreed upon in writing.

**Expulsion:** Asking a child to leave our program based on negative behaviors is the last resort and will only be considered after multiple efforts of problem-solving and/or extremely unsafe behavior. Unless there is a situation that is extremely unsafe for the child, or other children/staff in the program, we strive to work with parents on a variety of solutions and modifications for keeping that child in their classroom, maximizing their continuity of care and stability. If we feel that a child's behavior is not responding after multiple behavioral intervention strategies are tried, or if the behavior is an immediate or severe safety concern, we will work with families to find a program that best meets the needs of the child. Sometimes there are programs that are more suitable for certain children than for others, and it's important for us to respect and recognize each child's individual needs. Our ultimate goal is for each child to be successful in our program so they can build their self-confidence.

Prior to expulsion of a child in our program due to behavior, we will provide the following levels of support:

1. We will begin a log that documents child behavior and any relevant details (to look for a pattern): antecedents, date, time, staff involved, details, etc.
2. We will have a parent meeting to discuss home-school partnerships and possible approaches to behaviors.
3. We will review the Expulsion Policy with the parents.
4. We will make changes to the environment, staffing, schedule and other changes as necessary. We will provide parents with a description of all changes made to help make the child successful in our program.
5. All community resources for childcare providers (e.g. early childhood mental health consultant) will be contacted and accessed as available for guidance.
6. A behavior plan will be developed and modified as needed, to inform everyone involved of steps to take when the behavior occurs.
7. Child observations will be used when appropriate, including videotaping, parent observations, and/or professional observations with feedback. Videotaping will only be shared with classroom staff and parents. Professional observations will only be conducted with parent permission.

If expulsion is necessary, we will refer parents to community resources to help them find a placement that might ensure more success and a smooth transition. In all cases of expulsion, DCYF (childcare licensing) will be contacted and made aware.

## Physical Restraint Policy

Children in our early learning programs will only be physically restrained when they are exhibiting behaviors that are extremely dangerous to themselves or others (e.g. leaving the premises, turning over furniture, persistent throwing, physical behaviors to hurt others, etc.). In all situations, a child will be sat, facing outward, on a teacher's lap while the teacher wraps their arms loosely around them. Our programs will never use and sort of bonds/ties/straps, car seats, high chairs, activity saucers or any heavy weight to restrain a child.

All episodes where restraint is used will be documented and parents will be contacted so that they are aware of the situation and what happened. Any situations where physical restraint is needed often will warrant further meetings with families and possible behavior plans.

Infants and young toddlers will not be restrained in our program. If an unsafe situation occurs, children will be picked up and moved to a safer location.

## Biting

Periodically, outbreaks of biting can occur in infant and toddler rooms and sometimes even among preschoolers. Unfortunately, this is an unavoidable consequence of children who are in group care. When it happens, it is pretty scary, very frustrating, and very stressful for children, parents, and teachers. However, it is a natural phenomenon and not something to blame on children, parents, or teachers... and there are no quick or easy solutions.

Children bite for a variety of reasons: the simple sensory exploration of babies, panic, crowding, seeking to be noticed, or the intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting can become a pattern of learned behavior that is often difficult to extinguish because it does achieve results: the desired toy, excitement, attention etc.

It is our job to provide a safe setting where no child needs to hurt another to achieve his or her needs. To extinguish biting behavior we do the following:

- Notification to the parents on the first bite
- Examine the environment to determine what may be the cause of the biting e.g.: teething, sensory, frustration etc.
- Supervise the child to prevent biting situations
- After 3 bites in the same day for older toddlers and preschoolers, the parents will be notified that their child may need to be picked up immediately; this is at the discretion of the teachers and office staff. This is for the safety of the other children.
- Temporary suspension if determined it may help

Biting is a frustrating stage some children go through. It is a common phenomenon that has virtually no lasting developmental significance. A child who bites is not on a path towards being a discipline problem or a bad person. There are a number of possible explanations for why some children bite; none of which are the fault of a "bad" home, "bad" parents or "bad" teachers.

# Specific Guidance Techniques for Toddlers

1. **Logical Consequences:** Most one and two year olds are developing an understanding that their actions have consequences, both positive and not so positive. Letting children at this age experience what happens naturally when they make a poor choice is usually the most effective way for them to learn the boundaries of their environment. Our first option is to always explore the logical consequences as a guidance technique, so that the child associates their behavior with the consequence that follows. Of course, this cannot always happen, mostly for safety reasons. We cannot allow a child to fall if they're climbing on furniture, for example. Classroom teachers will often give a consequence that is directly related to the behavior. For example, if a child is not following directions in the pool area they may lose their swimming privileges.
2. **Redirection:** Sometimes children get overwhelmed and/or distracted by their surroundings and need help making a different choice. Redirecting a child to a different location or activity can separate them from the inappropriate behaviors and give them a fresh start in another area.
3. **Positive Modeling:** Toddlers listen to every word we say, often repeating our phrases and imitating our actions. This is why it's so important to tell and show young children what we'd like them to be doing as opposed to what we don't want them to do. For example, telling a child "Don't throw that ball" can sometimes backfire. A toddler will usually hear the phrase "Throw the ball" and often completely disregard the "don't" portion. A better phrase to say is, "Let's roll the ball on the floor!" Being a good role model, both in speech and in actions, is a positive way to resolve behavior issues.
4. **Choices:** When a child is having difficulty following directions, or would like to assert their newly forming independence, we give the child the ability to make a good choice independently by providing them with two simple, acceptable choices. Giving them two appropriate activities, actions, or items to choose from allows the child to feel more in control and make their own decisions.
5. **Removal from Situation or Group:** If other methods are not working in an unsafe situation, we will move the child away from the situation to a safe, quiet place in the classroom. This allows a child to "cool off" for 1-2 minutes until they are able to stay calm and make good choices. After that time we will follow up on the situation with a discussion and reminders about good choices.



# Specific Guidance Techniques for Preschoolers and Pre-Kindergarteners

1. **Logical Consequences:** Most preschoolers and pre-kindergarteners have a growing understanding that their actions have consequences, both positive and not so positive. Letting children at this age experience what happens naturally when they make a poor choice is usually the most effective way for them to learn the boundaries of their environment. Our first option is to always explore the logical consequences as a guidance technique, so that the child associates their behavior with the consequence that follows. Of course, this cannot always happen, mostly for safety reasons. We cannot allow a child to fall if they're climbing on furniture, for example. Classroom teachers will often give a consequence that is directly related to the behavior. For example, if a child is not following directions in the pool area they may lose their swimming privileges.
2. **Redirection:** Sometimes children get overwhelmed and/or distracted by their surroundings and need help making a different choice. Redirecting a child to a different location or activity can separate them from the inappropriate behaviors and give them a fresh start in another area.
3. **Verbal Reasoning:** When a teacher is trying to direct a child to stay within the classroom boundaries they tell the child what they would like them to do rather than what they want them to stop doing. Using positive language helps to keep the emphasis off the negative behavior(s).
4. **Problem Solving:** Our ultimate goal for the children is to problem solve independently through conflicts (especially with peers). The classroom teachers guide the children, as facilitators, through disagreements, conflicts and classroom issues using words and problem solving skills rather than more physical behaviors.
5. **Choices:** When a child is having difficulty following directions, we give the child the ability to make an appropriate choice independently by providing them with a couple of different options for them to choose from. Giving them two or three appropriate activities, actions, or items to choose from allows the child to feel more in control and assert their independence.
6. **Removal from Situation or Group:** If other methods are not working in an unsafe situation, we will move the child away from the situation to a safe, quiet place in the classroom. This allows a child to "cool off" for 3-5 minutes until they are able to stay calm and make good choices. After that time we will follow up on the situation with a discussion and reminders about good choices.

Young children are learning how to be in charge of their own behavior and emotions. This is a big learning experience for children, which requires teachers who respond to inappropriate behaviors with insight, sensitivity, consistency, and reflection. Most of our classroom boundaries center around three basic principles: children may not hurt themselves, hurt others or destroy property. It is essential for children to understand why the behavior is inappropriate and how to modify it (once developmentally appropriate). Furthermore, it's imperative for children to understand that while they may have made a poor decision, it doesn't make them a "bad child".

# Reporting Policy

All state-licensed childcare programs are mandated by law to report any suspicion of possible child abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Incidents occurring within the center that require medical attention will be reported as well. Failure to do so can result not only in the loss of the center's license, but also in possible charges filed against the staff, agency or institution responsible for the center.

## Adults on the Premises

We monitor the adults who are allowed access to the children in our facility. Paid staff, approved volunteers and parents are the only adults allowed to spend time in our classrooms. Adults are expected to behave appropriately when in the presence of children. At no time will we allow verbal altercations to occur in the classrooms. We are always happy to discuss parent concerns in the office. When a parent displays chronic disruptive behavior, which affects the integrity of the Center, the Director or Program Supervisor will ask them to leave the Center.

## Photographs

Children are photographed for two reasons. First, documenting the process of learning with photographs enables children to remember and build upon past experiences. Also, the YMCA may select certain photographs for promotional use. If you do not wish for your child to be photographed for either of these purposes, please let the Director know in writing.

## Community Programs, Events, and Education

As many families know it may be difficult to find resources for the many needs that exist within a family. Many times, when we search for a resource, it can take valuable time away from both spending time with your child, and receiving the help that is desired. For this reason, we have created a growing selection of resources to help you learn about a variety of community programs, local events, and education to help in raising a healthy family. Our goal is to share these resources with parents and to be a central location for education and support. More to come on these display boards.

## Difficult Family Times

Sometimes families go through painful times. It is important to have clear guidelines about how these difficulties will be handled in the center. Hopefully, this will allow us all to be effective in our respective roles in raising, caring for and educating children and families.

1. The center is a neutral place. Teachers, parents, and children need to know they are in a safe and non-judgmental space.
2. All parental rights will be recognized by the center unless a No-Contact Order is produced.
3. Parents are always welcome to spend time with their children at the center. However, this is not an appropriate place for "visitation" by a non-custodial parent.
4. Indication that a parent is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs will result in a staff asking that another, capable adult be called to pick up the child.
5. Adults who raise their voices or act in a way that is frightening or threatening to a teacher or child will be asked to remove themselves from the center.

Our primary priority is the safety and well-being of the children in our care. We also hope to be supportive of all parents and strive to create a space where the entire family can feel safe, encouraged, and engaged in the learning process.

## Communication

We will strive to meet your expectations as Teachers and Administrators. There are numerous avenues for communication between parents and staff, including the center orientation, Seesaw, email, and parent information boards. Furthermore, we are always available to answer any questions that you may have. However, there may be times when you feel the need for additional communication.

If you ever feel confused or frustrated with our methods or something that has happened in the classroom, please know that we are here to help you. The most effective way to solve a problem or clear up confusion is to talk things over. We want you to feel secure in and confident with the quality of care you and your child are receiving. Please talk with your child's teacher, Program Supervisor or Director as soon as possible. We take your concerns to heart!

## Donations

Throughout the year we gladly accept donations of toys, books, and other useful items that are new or in good condition. All donations need to be approved by the Program Supervisor or Director upon arrival at the center. In addition we keep a "wish list" of larger items needed.

## Annual Fundraising Campaign

In March the center participates in the Annual Community Support Campaign for the Whatcom Family YMCA. Money raised during this campaign allows us to provide scholarships for families in need of financial assistance to participate in YMCA programs. Please contact the Director if you are interested in participating in this exciting fundraising event.

# REGISTRATION PAPERWORK

## Registration

As required by our license, childcare cannot be provided without the following forms completed, reviewed by the director, and on file in the center office:

- Registration/Emergency Consent form
- Two emergency contacts not living in the same household
- Certificate of Immunization status or Signed Exemption Form Signed by an Authorized Medical Professional
- Field trip Permission slip
- Registration Form

In addition, the center requires the following paperwork:

- Parent agreement/Financial contract
- All About Me Form
- Early Achievers Permission Slip

- CDC Developmental Screening
- Facebook Permission Slip
- CACFP Enrollment Form
- Membership Application

This handbook is the beginning of a supportive and positive relationship between your family and the Whatcom Family YMCA. We are pleased that you have invited us to into your child’s educational adventure! In closing, we would like to leave you with the following thought:

This handbook is the beginning of a supportive and positive relationship between your family and the Whatcom Family YMCA. We are pleased that you have invited us to into your child’s educational adventure! In closing, we would like to leave you with the following thought:

## **When you come into our school please remember:**

It is a child’s world!

These activities are:

THEIR WORK

THEIR IDEAS

THEIR FUN

Sometimes a child’s idea of decoration, beauty and good housekeeping does not coincide with adults.

A child’s imagination is great!

Children can do wonderful things-

Paint the wind

dance like a leaf and

find the joy and happiness in performing simple tasks.

These are the abilities that adults may have lost along the way.

Enter and return for a brief visit to the wonderful world of young children.

Enjoy their enthusiasm for living and learning!”

-Author unknown