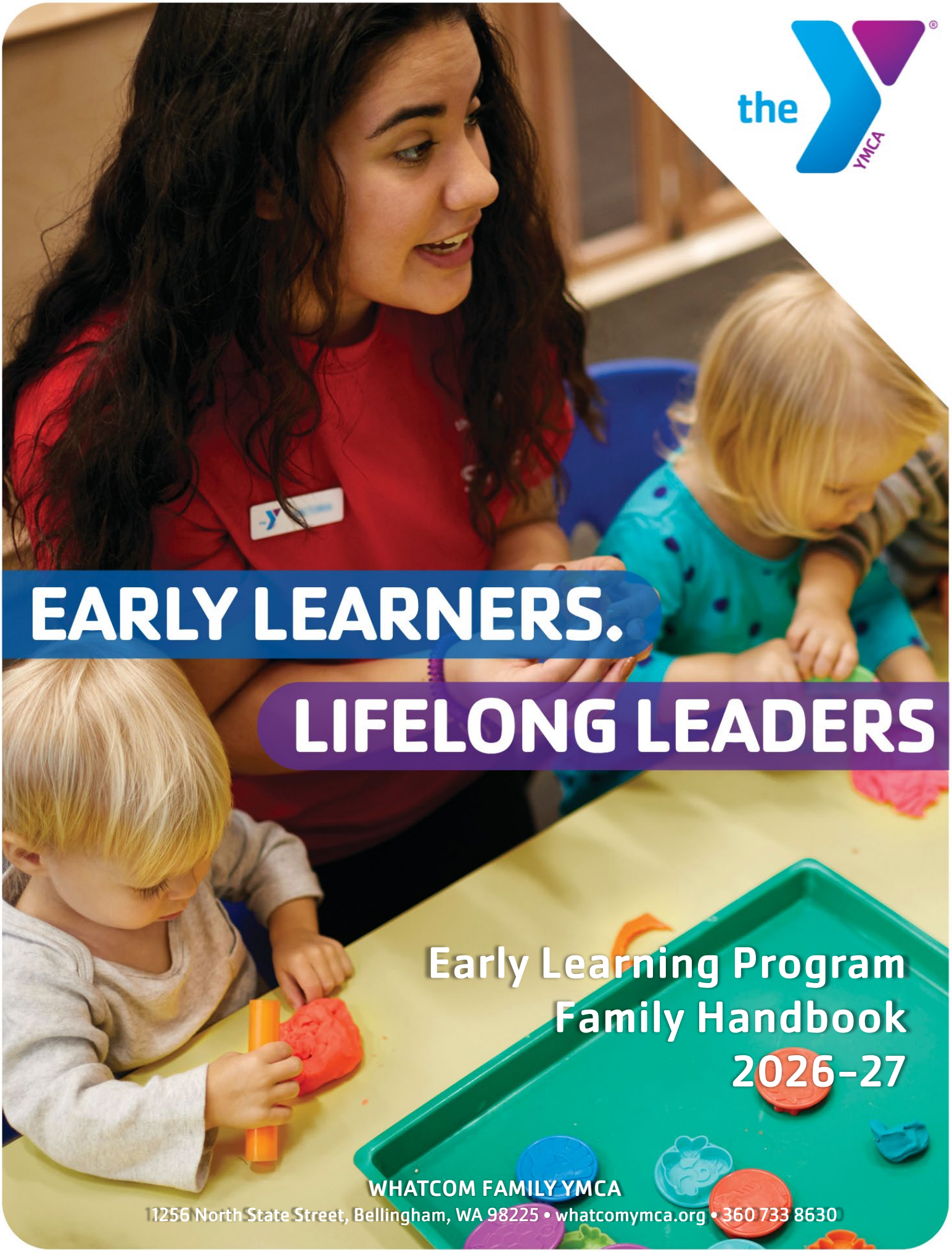

EARLY LEARNERS.
LIFELONG LEADERS

Early Learning Program Family Handbook 2026-27

WHATCOM FAMILY YMCA
1256 North State Street, Bellingham, WA 98225 • whatcomymca.org • 360 733 8630

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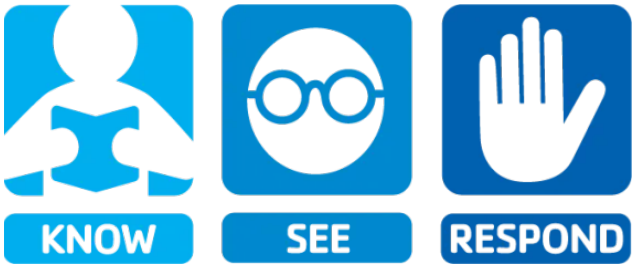
HELP THE Y PRODUCT CHILDREN FROM ABUSE

We are a KNOW, SEE, RESPOND, organization. Learn more about what that means and how you can help us keep all children safe on page 31.



WELCOME

Welcome to the Whatcom Family YMCA

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

Introduction

Whatcom Family YMCA Early Learning Centers are state-licensed, non-profit programs for families of our community. At the Y, strengthening the foundations of the community is our cause. Every day we work side-by-side with our neighbors to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, income, or background, can learn, grow, and thrive.

This family guide has been created as a reference to guide you in the policies and practices of our program. Please read the contents carefully and keep the handbook for future reference. Familiarity with the information will help enrich your child's experiences. We are always happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Our Mission

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

Our Areas of Focus

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

Areas of focus include:

- **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.

  The 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 to our programs.

Culture of Inclusion

The Y believes that in a diverse world, we are stronger when we are inclusive, when our doors are open to all, and when everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. As our laws and communities change, one thing is constant: the YMCA is, and always will be, a place where individuals and families from all walks of life are welcomed and supported. We demonstrate this through equitable practices and procedures and offering programs and services that continually evolve to meet the changing needs of our community.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Locations

The Whatcom Family YMCA has three early learning centers to serve Whatcom County:

- Barkley ELC
  - 2410 Rimland Drive, Bellingham, WA 98225
  - Seven (7) Classrooms
- Heart House ELC
  - 1705 Gladstone Street, #102, Bellingham, WA 98225
  - Two (2) classrooms.
- Millworks ELC
  - 102 W Laurel Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
  - Six (6) classrooms

The Early Learning Programs have full-time and part-time care available for children from infancy through their fifth year until they enter elementary school. As your child grows, the Y offers safe, high quality, Before and After-School programs (BASE) throughout all Bellingham Schools, as well as various other communities such as Ferndale, Mount Baker, Meridian, Nooksack and Lynden Schools.

Reserving Care and Waitlists

New families are enrolled hen a space becomes available. If you know that you need care for your child(ren) ahead of time, it's recommended you go to www.whatcomymca.org to inquire about availability. Once the center director has confirmed availability, a required $75 registration fee and half of your child's first month tuition will be due (which will be credited to your account upon starting). If you choose to not enroll, those fees are non-refundable.

Classroom enrollment varies depending on the number and age of the children presently enrolled. Sometimes, it's difficult to predict when a spot may be available. In the event that an opening is not readily available, your child may be placed on a 'waitlist'. When a spot opens up in the classroom that is most appropriate for your child, the Center Director will contact you. Consideration for placement from the waiting list into a classroom slot depends not only on how long a child may have been on a waitlist but also on your child's birthday (how close they are to moving on to a different classroom) and on which days they need care. Children who are already enrolled in our program automatically have a guaranteed spot in the next classroom for the developmental progression as they grow. Priority is also given to children of Y staff members and siblings of children who are already enrolled in the program.

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 (longer than 1 week of care). 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 an extenuating circumstance arises, contact the Registrar at registrar@whatcomymca.org. Some short-term exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis but are not guaranteed.

Registration Fee
There is an annual, non-refundable registration fee of $75 upon enrollment. If you have additional children attending, there will be a $20 additional registration fee for each child. If you choose to cancel care and then return at a later date, the registration fee will again be assessed. The registration fee will be assessed to your bill every September.

Childcare Subsidy/Working Child Care Connections (WCCC)
All of our early learning centers are licensed by the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and accept state subsidies for childcare. Co-pays are due by the 1st of each month.

Families will need the appropriate license number below to link their DCYF account to the center their child attends. DCYF award letters for the location your child is attending must be received PRIOR to your child's start date. If not received, families will be responsible for the full payment of childcare. The following are our SSPS numbers for families:

- Barkley #918062
- Heart House #494920
- Millworks #612406

Financial Assistance
The Y is for everyone. Please contact the Registrar to inquire about financial assistance to help support the cost of care or visit.

Payment Procedures

All monthly tuition is due by the 1st of the current month of care.

Accepted payment methods are automatic ACH withdrawal, credit card, and debit card. Automatic draft is the required payment method unless an alternative payment arrangement has been approved in advance by the YMCA. The YMCA reserves the right to approve or deny requests for an alternative payment arrangement.

Automatic drafts are processed on the 1st of each month. Automatic drafts do not include additional charges that may be added to an account, including, but not limited to, fees for added days or late pick-up. Families are responsible for regularly reviewing their child's account and ensuring that any additional balance is paid in a timely manner.

To establish automatic draft payments or to request an alternative payment arrangement, please contact the Registrar at 360-255-0585 or registrar@whatcomymca.org.

Starting Mid-Month
Payments can be made for a full month's tuition, or for a half-month. If a child starts on or after the 15th of the month, a half-month's tuition will be due.

Billing Support
Questions regarding your monthly billing statement and reimbursements, verification of payment and receipts may be directed to the Registrar. To request an exemption, contact the Registrar.

Attendance
To maintain a consistent and high-quality experience for children, maintaining a regular schedule of attendance is important. Inform your center's leadership if you will not be attending on a regularly scheduled day. Credits are not issued for absences due to illness or cancellation. Lack of attendance without proper communication 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.

If an illness impacts multiple children and staff in such a way that the safety of the program is a concern, a classroom or the entire center may be closed. When a classroom is completely closed for the full day due to staffing/illness and it is a regularly scheduled day, a credit will be issued to your account. Please allow for 1-2 weeks for the credit to show on your account.

Notice of Schedule Change
Inquire with the early learning Center's Director if you need to change your child's regular schedule. With space limitations, it's not always possible to accommodate an increase of days your child attends. However, with advanced notice, a concerted effort will be made to make accommodations. Notice of schedule changes that involve a billing change must be given in writing at least 2 weeks prior. Your account will reflect necessary changes to the schedule with either with a charge or a credit.

Notice of Withdrawal
Written notice is required to withdraw a child from care. Withdrawal from care is effective at the end of the month in which the required notice is provided, provided that at least two weeks' written notice is given.

Tuition and fees are non-refundable, and no credits or refunds will be issued due to withdrawal from care, regardless of the date the notice is provided. Families remain responsible for all tuition and fees due through the effective date of withdrawal.

To submit a notice of withdrawal, please contact the Registrar at 360-255-0585 or registrar@whatcomymca.org.

Family YMCA Membership
The early learning rates include a free 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.

Tax Receipts
Program fees are eligible for childcare tax credit. Our federal tax ID # is 91-0482690. You may access your tax ID statement on the online account system.

Keeping Records Current
All enrollment paperwork is scheduled to be updated at least annually at re-registration in September to ensure that the most current information is on file. Contact your Center Director when information changes for you, and any other people that may be contacts within your child's records.

When your child visits the doctor to receive an immunization, request a copy of the new immunization record and provide it to your Center Director.

Confidentiality
All child files will be kept confidentially stored in our main childcare offices. A copy of each child's registration form, including contact and pick-up information, will be kept in a secure binder in each child's classroom, along with other confidential information such as any medication forms or special health care plans if appropriate. Any outdated or unnecessary classroom paperwork will be shredded. Upon hire, staff receive training to safeguard children's information as confidential.

PROGRAM PRACTICES

Holidays and Center Closures
Providing consistent availability for working families while we balance the needs of teachers and their professional development is essential to our programming model. Any time we the program closes, it's with careful consideration of how it may impact children, families, and staff.

YMCA Early Learning Centers will close on the following holidays:

- Thursday and Friday before Labor Day (for teacher training/in-service)
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day (for teacher training/in-service)
- Thanksgiving, and the day after
- Christmas Eve, Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve (early closure at 3:00)
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President's Day (for teacher training/in-service)
- April 16 (for teacher training/in-service)
- Memorial Day

Sometimes the centers may close for an additional day before/after a major holiday. In the event this happens, it will be proactively communicated in advance of the closure.

Religious Activities, Holidays, and Special Events
The Whatcom Family YMCA's early learning programs value diversity and do not implement religious activities into the programming. Through cultural awareness education and celebrating a variety of traditions, an array of beliefs and customs are valued. These beliefs and customs may be associated with a cultures' religious beliefs and practices. While learning about others, staff do not promote or question the beliefs of others. Families are encouraged to have discussions together about opportunities to celebrate diversity.

Holiday celebrations focus on history, traditions, games, and sometimes the foods that may represent a culture. Families are encouraged to share their personal traditions and preferences with the program staff.

Inclement Weather Closures

The safety of our children, families, and staff is imperative, thus, weather conditions are closely monitored when severe weather affects our community. Inclement Weather includes extreme heat, air quality, flooding, and snow/ice.

The Y follows the Bellingham School District (BSD) for inclement weather closures. If the district issues:

- A delayed start, our program will open at 8:30 a.m.
- An early closure, our program will close at 4:30 p.m.
- A full closure, our program will not open and will resume when BSD resumes normal operations.

Communication will be sent via a variety of avenues including the parent engagement software, Y website, and KGMI radio (KGMI/closure.com).

Weather related delays or closures can necessitate an array of issues while we ensure the utmost safe conditions. Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation.

Credits for inclement weather closures or delays will not be issued.

The Bellingham School District schools are closed for Purple Fridays/Holidays. On those days, the Senior Leadership of the Y will determine any changes to normal programming.

Power or Water Outage

In the event of an emergency we ask that you follow guidance to ensure that children are picked up promptly. Your teacher or center director will notify you in the event of an urgent situation, but for general guidance:

- Infants and Toddlers must be picked up immediately if there is a power outage that lasts for one hour or longer.
- Preschoolers and Pre-K must be picked up immediately if power is out for longer than 2 hours.

If there is a loss of water, children will need to be picked up if the water cannot be restored within one hour.

Credits ae not issued for power/water outage closures.

Extreme Heat

If we encounter extreme heat, including when a heat advisory has been issued, activities will be adjusted. Alternative activities may include playing in the shade whenever possible, increasing water activities, or remaining indoors. As a general guideline:

1. If the heat index is at or above 90°F children and staff will remain indoors.
2. If an indoor space cannot be kept below 83°F the program will be required to close.

Air Quality
YMCA employees monitor air quality regularly when situations arise. If the Air Quality Index reaches 101 or higher (unhealthy for sensitive groups), activities are moved indoors or outside time is limited to 10-15 minutes. The staff continue to monitor children that may be impacted with health conditions.

Prohibited Items at our Centers
This list provides examples of prohibited items but is not fully inclusive. 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 all YMCA early learning locations.

- **Controlled Substances:** Illegal drugs, controlled substances, and alcohol are not permitted on the property where a Y program is operated or visits.
- **Tobacco:** Tobacco products, inclusive of vaping materials, are not permitted at Y childcare and facilities. Family cooperation is also necessary to protect our outdoor classroom for everyone to enjoy. Thank you for keeping the Y Early Education space and buildings tobacco-free.
- **Pets:** Animals as pets are not allowed and are not to be brought to Y programs unless pre-arranged with the Center Director.
- **Weapons and/or explosives:** Children, staff, parents, or visitors are not permitted to bring or possess weapons (including firearms and pocketknives) at Y early learning programs. Matches, lighters, and firecrackers and similar are not permitted.

Late Pick-Ups and Fees
If your child is not picked up by closing time, you will be assessed a $5 charge for every 5 minutes that you are late. Charges begin at 6 pm.

We understand that at times, situations may arise that impacts a child being picked up late. We ask parents communicate in a timely manner to let staff know they may be arriving later than normal. Yet, if a child is not picked up and there has been no communication from the parents, staff will begin calling the emergency numbers listed in the list of emergency contacts to determine whether someone can pick up your child. If the child is not picked up after an hour of caregivers being contacted, and the staff has not heard from parents or emergency contacts, local law enforcement will be contacted.

Leaving Children/Siblings in Unattended Vehicles
To keep children as safe as possible, children should not be left unattended in vehicles at any time, for any reason.

Parental Rights, Parenting Plans, and 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 the early learning administration before any parental rights are modified by the YMCA.

Parenting plans will be considered an arrangement between parents and will not be monitored by YMCA staff. Any problems that arise regarding items outlined in the plan are viewed as a domestic issue between the parents and therefore, a matter that does not pertain to this program. Our role is to care for the child, not monitor or be involved in disputes 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 it to that parent. The rights of both parents, including access, will remain equal for both parents named in a parenting plan. The Center Director may request a meeting to discuss any necessary issues; parties are highly encouraged to participate.

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.

Adults on the Premises

Adults on the center's premises are continuously monitored to determine who is allowed access to the children in the facility. Employees of the Whatcom Family Y, approved volunteers, appropriate state officials and caregivers are the only adults allowed on site. Following guidelines to support a safe learning environment is expected at all times. Leadership are available to discuss parent concerns in the privacy of an office. When a caregiver displays chronic disruptive behavior, which affects the integrity of the center, the Director will ask them to leave the center. Repeated requests will require a meeting with the Association Director of Youth Development. At no time, will verbal altercations be tolerated.

DAILY PROCEDURES

Daily Sign-In and Out Procedures

An electronic communication program is used (e.g. Brightwheel, etc.) for signing in and out. The most convenient way to sign your child in and out is to download the appropriate app and use an assigned 4-digit pin number.

Per licensing regulations, caregivers must sign their full name and the time on the Sign-In/Sign-Out screen when dropping off and picking up. Additionally, it's important to remember that your child will only be released to the caregiver or other authorized adult listed on the Registration/ Emergency/Consent (REC) Form on file. If the staff member doesn't recognize the adult picking up your child, photo identification will be requested. Anyone picking up a child must be at least 18 years of age.

For the safety of your child, your child will not be released to anyone who appears to be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs but staff will assist in making arrangements for safe transportation home.

Arrival at the Center

Children excel when they have a consistent routine. Thus, in the best interest of your child, you are asked to arrive at approximately the same time each day. Check with your Center Director for drop off times for that center, as they vary per site. We ask that caregivers provide their child's regular drop-off and pick-up times for staffing purposes. Caregivers can send a message via the app if their child is late or if their child won't be attending on their regular day (due to illness, etc.). If the staff have not received a communication within 30 minutes of their normally scheduled time, the staff will assume the child will not be attending. Staff schedules will be adjusted to meet programming needs.

We ask that caregivers allow reasonable time each morning to accompany their child to the classroom. The staff warmly welcome each child, and this also serves as an excellent time to talk to the teacher about how your child is feeling or to give special instructions for the day.

If you are dropping off medicine, special food or milk, or other specially designated items, you are encouraged to ask the classroom teacher where you should place these items. Completing medication forms may take a few minutes, allowing appropriate time is helpful. 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 your child's belongings clearly with first and last name. Sometimes items can get misplaced, valuable items or items of sentimental value is highly discouraged. Also, except for any special naptime comfort items or items for a special event, we ask that all toys stay at home in order to avoid any unnecessary conflicts between children or distractions to the learning environment.

Once you've successfully dropped your child off, they may start to feel uneasy or get upset as they anticipate your departure. The staff will work closely with caregivers to determine a way to separate and support the child's feelings. Feel free to ask our highly trained staff for help as sometimes it can be difficult to know when a caregiver is ready to go. As difficult as it is to say goodbye, you can leave knowing your child will be safe, comfortable, and enjoying a day of experiences that will contribute to their growth and success.

Going Home

After your child has had a full day of learning, they are likely eager to see you. This is a great time to look at an art project, help your child clean up their activity, or talk with your child about their day.

You are encouraged to take a moment to read any notes from your child's teacher, learn about how their day went and the things they learned, or chat with the teacher about your child's day.

Because pick-up time is busy and there will likely be other children in the classroom, if you need to have a more in-depth conversation about your child's day that lasts more than a few minutes, you are encouraged to schedule a time to meet. It's best to set aside a time when your child's teacher, the Program Supervisor/Assistant Center Director, or Center Director can give you the attention your questions deserve.

Remember to sign out with a full-signature and the time upon departure. If you are going to be delayed in picking up your child, please call and let us know in advance. No one under 18 years of age is allowed to pick up a child. With prior notice, we can attempt to accommodate your needs.

If anyone other than an approved caregiver or authorized person is picking up your child, written permission is requested in advance. If a teacher does not recognize a caregiver or authorized pick-up person, photo identification will be REQUIRED upon pick up. In that case, remind anyone picking up your child, to bring photo identification. Our team will not release your child without proper identification. Again, please be sure that the staff in charge is aware that you will not be picking up your child.

If your child is in care for over 10 hours per day, please consult with your Center Director. Specific licensing regulations apply regarding how long children can be in care.

Rest Period
A healthy sleep schedule is important to support your child's healthy brain development. Opportunities for rest periods are provided in your child's schedule. Each child is given their own sheet, blanket (for over 12 months), and cot that are laundered weekly. Staff help the children fall to sleep by rocking, bouncing, or gently rubbing their backs. Because of new sounds in a childcare setting, sometimes children can have trouble adjusting their sleep. Many caregivers find success in playing a radio, music, or other noises during their child's sleep before starting care with us.

Staff will work with you to determine sleep preferences within the licensing and developmental guidelines. Please refer to "Safe Sleep Practices" in the Policies and Procedures section for information on infant sleep standards.

The program is required to offer a rest period to ALL children in our care. With our older children (ages 3-5), they can be asked to rest and if they don't fall asleep, allow them to do quiet activities during nap. However, if they fall asleep on their own, staff may encourage an older child (4-5 yr old), to wake up after 60 minutes. If they cannot stay awake or if they are extremely upset, the sleep time may be extended. Toddlers will not be woken up unless it interferes with the daily schedule, and it's been an exceedingly long time.

Outside Play
If a child is well enough to be at the center, the child is generally considered well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather, children go outdoors daily. If weather conditions are severe, the Center Director will make the determination to stay indoors.

Outdoor large motor play is critical to a young child's social, cognitive, and motor development. Each center is equipped with a play yard that allows for children to run, crawl, climb, dig, pedal, throw, and more! The infant program has a covered outdoor deck for exploration. Other than infants, please send your child to school with shoes (or something thicker to protect their feet) so they can stay dry. In all outdoor settings, and with parental approval, we take precautions to prepare for the weather, including sunscreen, jackets and hats. As there is sand, wood chips, grass, and sometimes mud and dirt, please make sure to send your child to school in clothing that can get dirty. Getting messy is natural!

Field Trips
Children learn best when they can 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, Preschoolers and Pre-K swim and participate in other activities at the YMCA as well as in the community. You will be notified in advance of all field trips planned for your child's classroom.

Neighborhood Walks
In each early learning classrooms, we enjoy going for walks around the neighborhood. The walks give the children exposure to fresh air, sunshine, and opportunities to learn about the community in which they live. Toddlers only go on walks using quad-strollers or wagons, and two year olds are encouraged to walk with their teachers. 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. Please discuss any safety concerns or questions about neighborhood walks to your Center Director.

Transportation
Being in an urban environment allows children the opportunity to explore the city of Bellingham in a variety of ways including the use of local city transportation. If you have any questions about this process, you are encouraged to reach out to the Center Director.

Field trips, other than walks, will be communicated to caregivers on a separate field trip permission form. The permission form included in the registration packet is only for walking and/or city bus trips. At any time 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, etc...). Teachers take attendance prior to leaving each location, during the walk/drive, and upon arrival to ensure that every child is accounted for. Staff always maintain or exceed appropriate child to teacher ratios when on any off site field trip.

Items to Bring to School
Dropping your child off each morning can be a busy time. It's much convenient 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. Caregivers are asked to closely monitor electronic communications and applications so that their teacher can let you know if supplies are running low. The following items will be needed:

Items to bring...

- **Infant:**
    - Diapers (cloth or disposable)
    - Waterproof "wet sack" for cloth diapers (if applicable)
    - Diaper Wipes
    - 2 Sets of Extra Clothing
    - Diaper Cream (if applicable)
    - Pacifiers (if applicable)
    - Sleep-sack (if applicable)
    - Enough premade bottles for the day
    - Breast milk (if applicable)
    - Formula (if applicable)
- **Toddler:**
    - Diapers (cloth or disposable)
    - Waterproof "wet sack" for cloth diapers (if applicable)
    - Diaper Wipes
    - 2 Sets of Extra Clothing
    - Diaper Cream (if applicable)
    - Pacifiers (if applicable) Blanket, Sleep-sack, or other Nap-time Security Item
- **Preschool:**

- Diapers (if applicable)
- Pull-ups (if applicable)
- Diaper Wipes (if applicable)
- 2 Sets of Extra Clothing (more if potty training)
- Blanket or other Nap-time Security Item
- Swimsuit/Towel when they start to go swimming

- **We supply the following:**
  - Breakfast, Lunch, and Afternoon Snack with Milk
  - Bibs, Bowls, Spoons and Cups
  - Sheets and Blankets
  - Classroom Toys

Personal Belongings

Clearly mark all items such as clothing, blankets, and bottles with your child's first and last name. Unless it is designated sharing time, do not send toys from home. Any items such as lotions, lip balms, cough drops, for example, are treated as medication and are given directly to the teacher; not in the child's backpack. The YMCA cannot be held responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items. If an item is found, it will be brought to the front office. The owner of lost and found items will be contacted, if the item is clearly marked, but as the number of items grow, they may be donated if unclaimed.

Diapers

At YMCA Early Learning Center's caregivers are asked to supply their child's diapers, choosing between cloth or disposable diapers. Cloth diapers may not be used with diaper pins and must have a waterproof cover. We also ask that parents provide a waterproof, zipping "wet sack" to store soiled diapers. Because of health and safety requirements, the contents of cloth diapers are emptied before placing them into the zippered sack. Licensing also requires us to change each part of the cloth diaper, at each diaper change.

Clothing Suggestions

When your child is participating in a full day of playing, eating, sleeping, and hands-on activities, they tend to get their clothes messy. Sending your child with at least two changes of clothes (tops, bottoms, socks and underwear) to keep in their cubby is encouraged. If your child soils their clothing, the soiled items will be placed in a plastic bag to be taken home. W you take a set of soiled clothes home, replace them so that your child always has a set of clean cloths available. As your child begins to eat messier foods, their clothes also tend to get dirtier (even with bibs). We ask that you ensure that 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, label ALL clothing items clearly, as we do sometimes have duplicates.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Termination Policy/Parent Code of Conduct

To ensure that Y programs are a positive, healthy and safe learning environment, the Code of Conduct sets forth conditions that caregivers and guests are expected to follow and promote:

All caregivers and guests must:

- Conduct themselves in a manner that represents the four core values of the Y: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
- Refrain from foul language at all times, while in a Y program location or interacting or engaging with Y staff or participants.
- Not show or exhibit derogatory conduct towards any Y staff, participants, or other caregivers.
- Not use or be under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis at any Y location.
- Not take pictures/videos of other participants during the Y program.
- Comply with requests from staff for a photo ID.
- Pay childcare fees according to the billing schedule.
- Make reasonable accommodations to follow all illness policies.
- If the caregivers cannot or will not uphold these conditions, they could face suspension from the program.

Volunteering/Visitation

Our early learning programs have an open-door policy for participants having followed the volunteering policy. When you volunteer with us, you are not just giving your time. You are helping create real, lasting change in our community.

For the safety of all children enrolled, if a caregiver visits for more than 15 minutes on a regular basis, they will require a volunteer clearance. All Whatcom Family YMCA volunteers must have a negative TB skin test, a cleared criminal background check, child abuse prevention training, and be determined by management to be a positive role model 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.

As a caregiver, you are welcome to drop by for a visitation to see your child throughout the day, unannounced. We enjoy parents visiting our programs throughout the day and remain committed to providing a safe learning environment. Thus, caregivers are cautioned when visiting during certain times of the day if a transition time is especially busy, if your child has a hard time separating from you, or if it causes a large disruption to the classroom activities.

Sometimes grandparents or family friends enjoy visiting our programs too. Toddler and preschoolers who have "stranger danger" can feel unsafe even with the other children in the classroom. We may ask you to limit family member visitation based on the classroom dynamic and how it impacts the flow of the day.

New Family Orientation

An orientation is required for all new families. Program policies and procedures will be reviewed at that time. Families will have the opportunity to see the classroom(s), meet the staff, and ask questions about the program at the time of parent orientation. Children are encouraged to attend.

Surveillance Permission

Early learning centers at the Whatcom Family YMCA have video surveillance both inside and outside the facility. The surveillance is for safety and monitoring reasons. The surveillance does not connect to the internet and only administrative staff have access to review footage.

Photographs
Children are photographed for two reasons: first, documenting the process of learning using photographs enables children to retain and build upon past experiences; secondly, 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 Center Director know in writing.

Electronic Communication Application
Numerous avenues for effective communication between caregivers and staff, including the center orientation, newsletters, information boards, email, in person meetings, and our messaging application.

An application called Brightwheel helps classroom staff connect to families. The app can be used to upload documents to families, directly communicate with classroom teachers during the day, track attendance, sign in and out at pick up and drop off, and share photos to help create a positive link from caregivers to children during the day. At the time of enrollment, the Center Director or Program Supervisor/Assistant Director will input your child's information into the program and send you an email invitation to link you to your child's account.

Teachers only have access to this program while they are working in the classroom or in the building (not on their personal phones), thus when staff are not scheduled to work, they will not respond to communications.

Donations
Throughout the year we gladly accept donations of toys, books, and other useful items that are new or in good condition if we have space to take them. In addition, we keep a "wish list" of larger items needed.

Annual Fundraising Campaign
Once a year, the Y focuses on the Annual Community Support Campaign for the Whatcom Family YMCA. This campaign is extremely important to the mission of serving the entire community. 100% of funds raised during this campaign allows us to provide scholarships for families in need of financial assistance to participate in YMCA programs. Contact the Center Director if you are interested in participating in this exciting fundraising event.

YMCA TEACHING STAFF

Teachers
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 as well as experience working with children. Training is provided for our staff through daily direction, coaching, staff meetings and professional development.

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

- Criminal History Background check and fingerprinting
- Child Development and Best Practices (STARS)
- Negative TB test
- Infant/Child CPR and First Aid Training
- Blood-borne pathogens training
- Safe Sleep Practices

- Child Abuse Prevention
- Various Health and Safety Trainings
- Orientation to center policies and procedures
- Criminal History Background check and fingerprinting

Substitute Staff
Staff members may be out due to illness, vacation, or scheduled appointments. In those times, maintaining a staffing model is essential including keeping substituting to a minimum. However, with the staffing model the importance of making children feel secure and safe with the staff when they walk through the door remains constant. The program hires and retains multiple substitutes, you will see them in and out of classrooms. In addition, teachers from another early learning center may be on-site to cover classroom shifts. Substitutes meet all requirements working in the center as other employees. If you feel uncomfortable dropping your child off and not being familiar with the staff member greeting you, please find the Center Director or Program Supervisor/Assistant Director.

Staff Relationships Outside of Y Programing
For the safety and protection of your child and the Y staff, Y employees are not permitted under any circumstances, to provide individual transportation for any child or to bring or take a child home. Y staff and personnel are not allowed to babysit for program participants, spend time outside of the program with the families or contact families by personal phone, email, or internet without the prior written consent of the caregiver and the early learning Center Director or Association Director of Youth Development.

We ask that these parameters are honored, and that parents do not put staff at risk of losing their employment by asking them to compromise any policies. If you have a previously established relationship with a staff member, please contact the Center Director to discuss and document the relationship.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM

Program Philosophy
We believe that each child is a unique individual with varied experiences and questions. The early learning centers provide rich opportunities that support and encourage each child to develop:

- A positive self-image
- Independent thinking and decision-making skills
- Imagination
- A familiarity with the natural world using all five senses
- Positive social relationships
- An understanding of diversity

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

Ages and Stages: Infant Rooms
Infant (Ages 1 month to 12 months):

The first year of life is a critical time of exploring and understanding a new world of sights, sounds, feelings and thoughts. Supportive, responsive, and knowledgeable staff members guide the children through these new explorations while supporting their physical and emotional needs. Each infant follows their own schedule based on their personal needs, which are coordinated closely. Caregivers which are highly encouraged to visit their children throughout the day for feeding or just to play.

Ages and Stages: Toddler Classrooms
Toddler (Ages 12-30 months)

Transitioning from a developmental stage of being totally dependent on caregivers, young toddlers are developing an increasing independence and need for social interaction. However, newly independent young toddlers still require a lot of comfort and attention to their physical needs. To help the children transition into a classroom experience, teachers are constantly interacting with the children to encourage gentle and appropriate behavior between peers. Frequent outdoor time, singing, and rotation of new and exciting toys are just some of the ways the environment is adjusted to meet the developmental needs of the younger toddlers. Older toddlers are learning rapidly, eager to show their budding independence. They are increasing their need to communicate and beginning to verbalize their needs. Teachers set up the classroom to stimulate curiosity, creativity, and the chance for children to engage in activities that continue to set the groundwork for a lifelong love of learning. Opportunities are ongoing to practice life skills (like hand-washing, clearing plates from the table, and so on), language development and continued social-emotional skills with classmates. Trust and relationship building is still very important at this age as children begin to express their emotions. Your child may also start their potty-training journey in Toddler II if they are showing signs that they are ready.

Ages and Stages: Preschool Classroom
Preschool/Pre-K (Ages 30 months - 5yr approximate, depending on space and development)

Young Preschoolers need an environment that is flexible, multi-sensory, encourages joyful exploration and problem solving. The young preschool classroom begins to encourage the children to engage in brief group activities such as group stories, songs, and games in formats such as short meeting times. Children in Preschool are encouraged to use their newly acquired language skills as they practice regulating big emotions and learning to talk through arguments with friends. Early concepts such as shapes and colors are reinforced, as well as introducing activities involving self-help skills, following a classroom routine, large and fine motor skills, and early literacy, and counting experiences. Preschool students have opportunities to explore their community by taking frequent walks throughout the neighborhood. Potty-training will continue to be reinforced (or introduced) in this classroom.

Building upon their language, social, and logical thinking skills, older 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-emotional 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 transition to kindergarten, it's important to prepare them for their upcoming school experiences. The preschool 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, these older preschool 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. The preschool children will swim (at the Downtown location) and will go on occasional field trips during their classroom experience.

Play is Learning

A considerable amount of learning and development will take place while your child is participating in the program. A child's play enables them to explore and make sense of the world. Opportunities are provided for creative, investigative play. Teachers carefully observe play themes and follow up on these experiences through reflection, question, and replay. Children 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. A relationship-based care practice is to offer continuity of care. Children are assigned to a specific classroom with specific teaching staff. 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 up to the next age group with their growing children. In all cases possible, the staff 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, a child's home language support is the foundation for developing English-language skills. To enhance the support of children who are dual language learners, the staff are committed to partnering with each family to incorporate an array of instructional practices. Examples of this support may include learning and using a combination of words and phrases heard in the child's home language, providing individualized supports for children and families in their home language (including in assessment), visual supports, learning each child's cultural and linguistic strengths, incorporating professional development to build the skills of 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 assess a child's developmental milestones can help to facilitate early identification of possible developmental delays and help connect families with additional services and/or a formal evaluation. Within 45 days of your child's first day in our program, teachers will conduct a screening and send home a screening for you to complete with your child. The screening, "Ages and Stages Questionnaire" (ASQ), is widely used in early education programs as well as pediatric offices. After both the parent and teacher screenings are completed, a score will be generated, and the results will be shared directly with you, always in your home language at a scheduled time. "Boost Lingo" may be utilized to help translate when needed as well other translation devices such as Google Translate. If a staff member suspects that characteristics of a developmental delay may be present, they will guide you in finding developmental services through the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers Program (ESIT). This screening will happen yearly in the Fall (September/October) after your initial screening.

Conferences
When children begin attending, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss goals for their individual learning. At this Fall or initial conference, families help develop goals for their children based on formal and informal observations and Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) data.

Conferences are offered three times per year, Fall, Winter and Spring, where formal and informal assessments including observation results are shared with families. Conferences provide an opportunity to discuss your child's strengths and goals. In the Spring your child's progress is summarized by sharing of TSG data that has been collected throughout the year. A survey will be sent to caregivers before each conference asking questions about their child to help guide the conference conversation.

Curriculum Alignment and Philosophy
All of the early learning programs are developmentally appropriate, responsive, relationship and play-based. Curriculum materials align with the Washington State Early Learning Guidelines. Teachers use *Creative Curriculum* which is specifically designed for each age group to enrich playful learning and promote nurturing relationships. All teachers receive training on Creative Curriculum and use weekly planning time to plan classroom experiences.

Developmentally appropriate practice is an instructional approach grounded in the research of how young children grow and learn. It involves teachers understanding children's development, individually and as a group, helping them meet attainable yet challenging learning goals. Developmentally appropriate practice requires knowledge of child development, age appropriate skills, and culturally relevant information.

Pairing a responsive curriculum with the learning environment lesson planning incorporates the needs, passions, and interests of children and teaching staff. It requires careful observation, documentation, creativity, and flexibility. Once teachers observe an emerging interest or need in the classroom, they brainstorm ways to incorporate that topic using instructional strategies into the classroom, weaving in appropriate learning goals and objectives.

A relationship-based approach intentionally fosters healthy relationships between and amongst children, families, and teachers. Using this model, people have repeated opportunities to grow, learn about each other, develop affection, and deepen understanding of each other over time. An important element in this responsive caregiving is meeting the emotional needs of young children by understanding their emotional cues.

Documenting Learning and Assessment
Children demonstrate what they know and what they want to know while at play with profound moments of learning happen on the playground and in the classroom. Routines and meal times also present opportunities to observe the capabilities and natural development of children. Ongoing informal observation are conducted with TSG assessments being administered for all children attending the program for at least 90 days. These observations and assessments are used to establish and facilitate learning experiences for children.

We document this learning in a number of ways:

- Portfolios - a collection of artwork, drawings, photos, and learning stories
- Anecdotal records of naturalistic observations
- TeachSmart ™, a research-based assessment program by Teaching Strategies (data is summarized quarterly, through checkpoints which track individual progress and classroom trends)

- Brightwheel for photos, updates, and communication.

The Daily Schedule
Each classroom uses a daily schedule to meet the needs of the children by establishing a consistent routine. Schedules are posted in individual classrooms and can be provided to parents upon request. Schedules vary depending on the classroom, age, and needs of the children.

Children are expected to arrive at designated times. This ensures they participate in pre-planned daily activities and acclimate into the classroom before lunch and nap-time.

Transitions
Transitions Into the Center: Leaving your young child with anyone new can be extremely difficult, especially when it involves new people in unfamiliar places . Families are encouraged to schedule a tour and visit the classroom with their child prior to enrollment. This opportunity is welcomed so that families meet teachers, experience the classroom, ask questions and pick up enrollment paperwork.

Finally, before your child's first day, caregivers are encouraged to bring their child's belongings to place in their cubby. Bringing supplies prior to the first day can make the first morning more successful.

Transitions within the Center: When your child is ready to transition to the next classroom, families are included in creating a transition plan. Paperwork will be shared with you to complete so that the new teachers can learn about your child through your eyes. Ask us to schedule a tour of the new classroom and meet the teaching staff. Transitions usually take between 1-2 weeks, depending on the individual needs of the child and their age. Your child will visit the new classroom by starting with short visits and then extending the duration as they become more comfortable. Occasionally, some children aren't as successful with multiple visits between the current and new classroom. In that case, the team will recommend a more expedited transition.

If you have questions about when your child will transition to the next classroom, please speak with your child's teacher or the staff in the office.

Transition from the YMCA to a new Facility or Kindergarten: Most of our children and families spend their entire early learning experience at the Y, but leave to transition to kindergarten. Sometimes, families exit the Y program at other times including moving or other change. Regardless of when a child leaves the program, the staff are committed to supporting a successful transition. If requested, a written summary can be provided that highlights their achievement, and things to consider when starting at a new school using a transition report. The transition report can be sent to the school your child will be attending to provide helpful information to their new teacher. The YMCA collaborates with the public schools for Kindergarten transition activities, which vary annually.

Early Achievers
The YMCA early learning programs participate in Early Achievers, Washington State's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) administered by the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). The QRIS is a supportive process often incentivizing child care providers for providing high-quality care As an Early Achievers participant, the commitment to offering high-quality early learning and promoting kindergarten readiness is memorialized. Early learning programs are assigned a leveled rating (up to a level 5) based on observed quality, staff qualifications, and

parent surveys. As a participant, we receive resources including coaching, training, scholarships, and the ability to accept Working Connections Child Care Subsidies.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE AND WORKING WITH EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS

Behavior Guidance in Young Children

Young children learn how to be in regulate their own behavior and emotions. This is a developmentally appropriate learning experience, which requires teachers to respond to inappropriate behaviors with insight, sensitivity, consistency, and reflection while they use strategies to replace with appropriate behaviors. Boundaries within the classroom are established using three basic principles: children may not hurt themselves, others, or destroy property. Children learn to understand why the behavior is inappropriate while they learn to modify or replace it making developmentally appropriate choices. It's imperative for children to understand that while they may have made a choice that lead to an inappropriate behavior, it does not make them a "bad child".

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Most classroom behaviors can be prevented with the use of the 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).
- Teachers as positive role models for positive behavior and conflict resolution, modeling expected behaviors.
- 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.
- Establishing a consistent classroom routine and transitions so children know what to expect daily.

RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS

If a child is not responding to verbal warnings and is still displaying inappropriate behaviors, these strategies may be used:

- A brief discussion with the child, privately, getting down on their level, and using a calm voice.
- Redirecting children to a different activity or location to help them be successful.
- Helping children identify, and verbalize their feelings or frustrations to teachers and/or peers.
- Practicing and role-playing common behavior scenarios.
- Working with 1-3 children at a time to solve a problem by asking guiding questions.
- Using logical consequences to teach children that each action they display has a reaction. (i.e. cleaning a table with supervision when they've colored on it).
- Loss of privileges, usually closely related to inappropriate behavior (i.e. having to miss a trip to the pool if a child did not using walking feet).
- Taking space in a quiet area (not a time out).

PROHIBITED

The behaviors listed below are prohibited and may not be used under any circumstances:

- 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 with Families

Effective communication, including daily communication, between the program staff and caregivers is highly essential to each child's success. This can be done using daily reports, "That Hurts" Reports, electronic communication, phone calls and meetings. At times, if a child struggles with a behavior or a behavior is extremely unsafe, a conference with the caregivers may be scheduled to discuss solutions. Options for ongoing behavior challenges may include but not be limited to behavior plans, reward charts to earn special privileges, shadowing, logging behaviors to look for patterns, or consulting with a behavior specialist. When appropriate, a behavior support plan will be created, implemented and reviewed as needed. Caregivers are expected to be involved in not only the process of creating the behavior support plan but supporting the behavioral expectations at home and in alternative settings as well.

Physical Restraint/Seclusion Policy

Children in the 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 self or 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. The program will never use equipment such as car seats, highchairs, or activity saucers to restrain a child.

All episodes where restraint is used will be documented, reported to the Center Director, and parents will be contacted to make them fully aware of the situation. Any situation where physical restraint is needed often will warrant further meetings with families and possible behavior support plans.

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

Biting

Periodically, outbreaks of biting can occur. As a natural and common phenomenon, no quick or easy solutions exist. First aid, if needed, and comforting is given to children or staff that were bitten.

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 the desired results.

By providing a safe learning environment, children appropriately express their wants and needs. Yet, to extinguish biting behavior, the following strategies are implemented:

- Notification to the caregivers of the child that bit, and to the caregivers of the victim on the first bite
- Examine the classroom or playground environment to determine what may be the cause of the biting (e.g.: teething, sensory, frustration, etc.)

- Supervise the child to prevent further biting situations
- Determine what strategies can be implemented by the teaching staff
- Temporary suspension if determined it may help
- Permanent suspension for cases that have become chronic or extreme

Behavior and Expulsion Policy

Caregivers are asked to support maintaining a fun, safe learning environment for both children and Y staff to learn, grow and thrive. Staff implement strategies that support children to prevent inappropriate behaviors from occurring. Talking to your child about the importance of exhibiting healthy behaviors provides children with knowing your expectations. Yet, behaviors may become extreme and warrant interventions that align with keeping all children and staff safe. The overall integrity and quality of Y programs is of utmost importance.

Inappropriate behaviors that will be discussed with caregivers include:

- Actions deemed physically or verbally aggressive towards any program participants including spitting and foul language
- Purposely leaving program area without permission (elopement)
- Hiding anywhere outside of visual and auditory supervision of staff
- Damaging school property (shelves, toys, structures)
- Causing or displaying inappropriate exposure
- Rough play (headlocks, choking, tackling, etc. with the intent to harm)
- Deliberately or repeatedly throwing objects in a matter that harms.

Failure to follow comply will result in disciplinary action which may include:

- Step 1: An in person meeting with caregivers
- Step 2: The child being sent home early
- Step 3: A 2-3 day suspension, with a required re-entry meeting before the child can return to programming
- Step 4: A modified schedule, transitioning to partial day care
- Step 5: Removal (expulsion) from the program. Parents will receive written notification.

Prior to suspension or expulsion of a child in our program due to behavior, the following levels of support will be provided:

- A record that documents the child's behavior and any relevant details (i.e.
- antecedents, date, time, staff involved, consequences, details, etc.)
- A meeting with caregivers will be scheduled to discuss home-school partnerships with possible approaches to behaviors.
- The Suspension/Expulsion Policy will be reviewed with caregivers.
- Changes to the learning environment may be needed. A description of all changes made to help make the child successful in our program will be provided.
- Community resources for childcare providers (e.g. OT specialist, SLP specialist, Early Achievers Coach, etc.) will be contacted may be accessed as available for guidance as needed based upon the child's individual needs.
- A behavior support plan will be developed and modified as needed, see Behavior Contract section.
- Observations, and consultation with the Youth Development Program Inclusion Specialist

- Observations of the child will be used when appropriate, including videotaping, and observations by professionals. Occasionally, caregivers may be asked to observe. Feedback will always be provided.
    - Videotaping will only be shared with classroom staff and caregivers. Professional observations will only be conducted with your permission. Information about the observations will be shared with the caregivers

If expulsion is necessary, caregivers will be referred to community resources to support 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. Tuition credits are not issued for missed days due to suspension or expulsion.

Grievance Policy

We are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all children, youth and their families. We understand that, from time to time, concerns or grievances may arise. Effective communication between caregivers and staff members is of utmost importance. Daily interaction between families and our staff are encouraged to keep you informed about your child's daily experiences and to promptly address any specific incidents that may occur. We encourage open communication and value your feedback, as it helps us to continuously improve our program.

This grievance policy is designed to provide families with a clear and fair process for addressing concerns or grievances. This policy applies to all enrolled families enrolled in an Early Learning Center with the Whatcom Family YMCA.

Grievance Definition: A grievance is defined as a formal complaint or concern submitted by a parent or legal guardian regarding any aspect of the program, staff, or policies, which they believe requires attention or resolution.

Submitting a Grievance: Families are encouraged to follow these steps when submitting a grievance:

- **Informal Discussion:** In most cases, concerns can be addressed promptly through an informal discussion with the relevant staff member or Classroom Lead.
    - Speak with the staff involved and/or the Classroom Lead
    - Allow follow up from the staff to you.
    - If you are uncomfortable discussing the concern with the staff members involved, you may contact the Program Director to facilitate the conversation.
- **Written Grievance:** If the informal discussion does not resolve the concern to your satisfaction, you may submit a written grievance.
    - Your written grievance should include:
        - Your name and contact information
        - A detailed description of the concern
        - Any relevant dates, times, and locations
        - Any previous attempts to address the issue informally
        - Your desired outcome or resolution
- **Submission:** Deliver your written grievance to the Center Director, either in person or via email, within 15 days of the incident or concern.

Resolution Process: Upon receiving a written grievance, the Center Director will initiate the following resolution process:

- **Acknowledgment:** The Center Director will acknowledge receipt of the grievance within five (5) business days.
- **Investigation:** The Center Director will conduct a thorough investigation of the concern. This may involve interviewing relevant parties and gathering evidence.
- **Resolution:** The Center Director will work to resolve the grievance within fifteen (15) business days.
    - If the resolution process requires more time, the Center Director will communicate the delay and provide an estimated timeframe for resolution.
- **Written Response:** Once the resolution is determined, the Center Director will provide a written response to the family. The response will include the findings of the investigation, any corrective actions taken, and the program's plan to prevent a recurrence of the concern.
- **Appeal:** If the family is not satisfied with the resolution, they may appeal to the Whatcom Family YMCA's Association Director of Youth Development.
    - Association Director of Youth Development will conduct a review and provide a written response within fifteen (15) business days.
        - If the family is still not satisfied with the ADoYD's resolution, they may submit another appeal to the Whatcom Family YMCA's Chief Executive Officer, who will review all details and provide a final written response with fifteen (15) business days.

Confidentiality: We are committed to providing an open and transparent process for addressing concerns and grievances. All grievances and related discussions will be handled with the utmost confidentiality, ensuring the privacy of all parties involved. Reporting a complaint will not compromise a family's ability to participate in our programs, nor a staff member's employment. We value the feedback of our families and continuously strive to create a safe and supportive environment for all children and youth in our care.

Special Needs/Inclusion

Meeting the needs of all children includes children with special health care needs such as asthma and allergies, children with emotional or behavior issues, chronic illness or disability.

Inclusion of children with special needs enriches the childcare experience and all staff, families and children benefit, keeping these important elements in mind:

- Confidentiality is assured with all families and staff in our program.
- All families will be treated with dignity and with respect for their individual needs and/or differences.
- Children with special needs will be accepted into our program under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Written individual health care plans will be developed collaboratively with the Center Director, Caregiver, Health Care Provider, and the center's health consultant.
- Children with special needs will be given the opportunity to participate in the program to the fullest extent possible. To accomplish this, we may consult with our public health nurse consultant and other agencies/organizations as needed.
- All staff will receive general training on working with children with special needs and updated training on specific special needs that are encountered in their classrooms. Teachers, kitchen staff and other staff

members will be orientated to any special needs or dietary restrictions by the Center Director or Program Supervisor/Assistant Director.

HEALTHY SNACK AND MEAL PLANS

CACFP Food Program

Whatcom Family YMCA Early Learning Programs participate in the Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP), a reimbursable Federal program that provides healthy meals and snacks. This program plays a vital role in improving the quality of our meals and snacks. The CACFP requires that all enrolled families complete an Enrollment Income Eligibility form at the time of registration and on an annual basis. The information provided to YMCA is confidential. For a child who has a food allergy, a food allergy intolerance form must be completed by the child's health care provider. This form provides YMCA with information regarding food that can be safely substituted for an offending food. Substitutes for offending foods must be of equal nutritional value and must meet the required USDA food component.

Meals and Snacks

Our program serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack through the CACFP. A light evening snack is offered for children that stay until 5:30 pm. Meals are served at the following times:

- Breakfast 8:30 am
- Lunch 11:30 am (Barkley and Heart House)
- Lunch 11:30 am Toddlers & 12:00 pm Preschool/Pre-K (Millworks)
- Snack 2:30 pm
- Evening Snack 5:00 pm

Weekly menus are posted in our entry way, and in Brightwheel. Menus are planned with USDA and state guidelines in mind.

Sample Menus are as follows:

- Breakfast (either a fruit/veggie, a grain/protein, and milk)
- Whole Wheat Pancakes, Strawberries, Milk
- Lunch (a grain, a fruit, a veggie [or two veggies], protein, and milk) Whole Wheat Macaroni and Cheese, Peas and Carrots, Watermelon, Milk
- Snack (two food groups)
- Yogurt, Whole Grain Graham Crackers, Water
- Evening Snack (something light that does not interfere with a family's dinner) String cheese

While children are encouraged to try the various foods served, they are not required to eat anything they choose not to eat.

Food Allergies and Intolerances

When a child or family requires special accommodations to the daily menu, due to allergies or intolerances, DCYF requires that a child's health care provider sign a "Plan of Care" that outlines the following items:

- What foods the child must avoid
- Symptoms associated with the allergic reaction/intolerance symptoms • Foods that can be substituted in place of the menu items
- And a specific treatment plan that lists
    - Name of any medication to be administered (e.g. Benadryl, Epi Pen)
    - How to administer the medication
    - Dosage of the medication

Plan of Care documents must be updated at least annually by the child's health care professional.

All classroom staff, including kitchen staff, will have the opportunity to review a child's Plan of Care before serving the child food.

Please talk with your child's teacher or center director about your child's food allergies or intolerances and to obtain a copy of the Plan of Care.

Family, Religious, and/or Cultural Preferences and Meals
At the YMCA, we support a family's choice for their child to eat food that honors important personal, religious, and cultural preferences. Families can be offered an accommodation for their children to eat a vegetarian or dairy-free menu. For more stringent dietary restrictions, families are more than welcome to bring their child breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack each day. If a family has personal, religious, and/or cultural preferences that are different from our menu, DCYF requires a written plan to be put in place, signed by caregiver and center director, that outlines:

- Special feeding needs
- Special diet
- Religious or cultural preferences
- Personal preferences

If a family chooses to provide their child meals from home, all meals must align with the USDA's CACFP meal pattern (Breakfast: Grain/Protein and Fruit/Vegetable, Milk; Lunch: Grain, Protein, Fruit, Vegetable, and Milk; Snack: 2 Food Groups [only 1 can be fruit or veggie]). Please see your Center's Director for more information.

Infant Meals
Infants are also included in our USDA Meal Planning. Through their first year of life, caregivers can choose to supply their infant with either iron fortified infant formula or breast milk. Our location supplies Target Up & UP brand Gentle, iron fortified formula (compares to Enfamil Gentlease) or Similac Soy Isomil Iron Fortified Formula (or equivalent) to any families that prefer us to supply and prepare bottles on site.

Caregivers must bring pre-made bottles each day for their child, when supplying their own iron fortified infant formula. If providing breast milk, families can either bring in frozen, bagged milk OR pre-made bottles with thawed breast milk. If we are making the bottles (either with our center formula or frozen breast milk), we ask that caregivers bring 3-5 clean, empty bottles each day for feeding. We will send home empty bottles each night to be cleaned and sanitized. Formula and breastfed babies are asked to bring in a supply of milk (either frozen or fresh) for no more than 1-2 days at a time. This is to maximize classroom space as our refrigerator is small. If you should run low on

formula or breast milk, we will let you know verbally or via Brightwheel. You are also always welcome to check your child's supply in our fridge.

All our infants are fed "on demand". We will only feed infants based on their hunger needs and will not over feed or under feed to keep the child "on schedule". However, we accommodate a consistent schedule and work with caregivers to establish a routine similar to their home habits. Sometimes, infant behavior and needs can vary when a child starts in our care. In the first weeks of care, a child's schedule may change quite a bit in response to their new environment. Infant staff work very hard to warm only what the child needs as to not prepare more than your child will eat. After we have heated and served formula or breast milk, we are required by state licensing to use it within one hour. After that hour has passed, we are not allowed to serve it. Unless directed otherwise, we will pour out unused milk after that hour.

Between 5 and 7 months of age, with caregiver cooperation, babies will start to be fed iron fortified cereals, fruit and vegetable purees, and other soft foods such as yogurt, cottage cheese, and hard-boiled eggs that we supply. Most often our infants begin solids with cereal and purees around 6 months of age. When you are comfortable with your child eating solids in our care, please let us know.

A system to keep track of foods your child is eating is used so that they are not exposed to any new foods before your approval. Our goal is to help your child expand his or her selection of foods while helping you to note any potential allergy symptoms.

Between 8 and 12 months of age, with prior caregiver approval, infants in our program will be introduced to table foods from our toddler menu as well as still being served iron fortified cereal, yogurt, cottage cheese, beans, or hard-boiled eggs. All foods are prepared and cut to appropriate size and consistency for an infant.

Infants will never be served honey or nut products. Infants are encouraged to feed themselves when we introduce table foods in preparation for our Toddler room. You may even see them playing with a child-safe fork or spoon for practice. A sippy cup may also be introduced at this time, and you are welcome to bring one from home, if desired.

Birthdays and Special Occasions

Your child's birthday is a special day to celebrate! If you would like to send special birthday food items 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, and plan for the treats ahead of time in tandem with your child's teacher to ensure there are no other dietary restrictions including food allergies that may impact other children.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Water Safety

Children in our program are exposed to many forms of sensory play, including water. For the majority of our age groups, water play consists of children engaging in activities with shallow bins of water at standing height (water tables, etc.). In the summer months, a sprinkler activity may be incorporated into the outdoor playground. Wading pools are not used in our programs for any age group.

At the Preschool age group, we take the children swimming on a regular basis at our facility on State Street. This pool is small (2.5 ft. deep), certified by the state, and chlorinated for health and safety.

When engaging with water in our programs, we take the following precautions:

- All water tables will be emptied, cleaned, and sanitized daily after use.
- Water play will not be permitted in deep containers (such as 5 gal buckets) with toddlers.
- Toddlers will be no farther than arm's reach when engaging in water play that involves more than an inch or two of water.
- When swimming, our program will provide one extra staff (over the required ratio amount) to ensure child safety. A full certified lifeguard will also be on duty at all times.
- While we do not teach swimming lessons during Preschool swim times, water safety will be emphasized.

Pacifiers

If your child prefers to use a pacifier when sleeping or for soothing, you may send one (labeled), in a plastic bag. Due to safety precautions, pacifier clips are not allowed. Toddlers will be limited to using their pacifiers during times that they are sleeping, or if they need to self soothe. As toddlers get older (and more comfortable in our program), we try to limit the amount of time they are using the pacifier to nap-time only. Speech and language development can be hindered by frequent pacifier use during the day. As children get older, pacifiers can also spread illness as children often try to take them from one another.

The YMCA will work with families to eliminate pacifiers by the time our children move to our preschool classrooms.

Toilet Training

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. Home to school collaboration is essential to support healthy potty training efforts.

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 hrs 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" or "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 be a positive experience. 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 and ask that caregivers consult with the classroom teacher.

We ask that the following guidelines are followed:

- 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).
- 2-3 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.
- If possible, please bring an extra set of shoes (since they often get wet during accidents).
- 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.
- 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 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.
- 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.
- 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.

We will follow the following guidelines while your child is learning to use the toilet:

- No child is ever punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
- While every child will be encouraged, reminded, and persuaded to use the toilet, no child will ever be forced to use the toilet if they are unwilling.
- Every teacher will be willing to assist in the toileting process when necessary. We will encourage and coach children to practice the skills of wiping, washing, flushing, and changing their clothing as it helps them learn important skills.
- When assisting children in the toileting process all doors will remain open. We do this to make sure all Youth Protection Protocol is followed and everyone is safe.
- We have small toilets in our facility designed just for young children. We ask that parents do not bring any potty chairs/potty seats for us to use as it creates an extra step in sanitizing and is tough for other children who don't have the same opportunity to use them.
- Encouraging your child to access the bathroom frequently, and incorporating a schedule.

Your child may be considered "potty trained" when they can use the bathroom with minimal reminders during their waking hours, with 2 or fewer accidents a week. Children are free to use pull-ups at naptime for as long as needed without affecting their potty-training status.

Pet Policy

Pets are important for teaching children skills in empathy, responsibility, and caregiving. Occasionally, animals in a classroom may include fish, guinea pigs or rabbits. At times, caregivers may bring their family pets for a visit on a special day, with proof of proper vaccinations, if applicable. All pets can be carriers of various bacteria, pests, and/or viruses. Before a pet is introduced into a classroom, a letter will be distributed with information about any possible risks associated with having a pet in the classroom. To limit exposure of any risks, we do the following:

- Children and staff wash their hands after handling pets.
- Cages are cleaned on a weekly basis by full-time classroom staff.
- Cages are not cleaned in the kitchen or any food prep/serving areas.
- Current rabies vaccinations are required for any cats or dogs visiting the center.
- Staff are always present when children are handling pets.

Please let us know if your child has any allergies to common pets and we will make accommodation for them.

Service Animals

To ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and YMCA values of inclusion and respect by providing clear procedures for interacting with individuals accompanied by service animals within all YMCA facilities and programs. To additionally provide clear language for Staff, Members, Volunteers and visitors to the Whatcom Family YMCA around the presence and admittance of service animals on the premises. If your child requires a service animal to accompany them, please consult with your Center Director.

Injuries

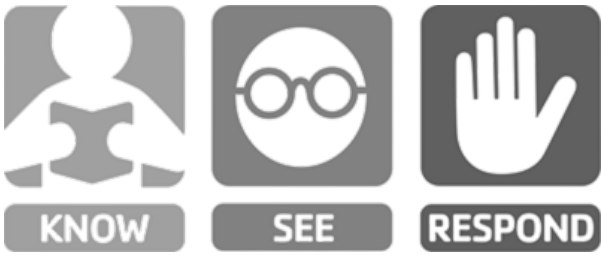
If your child is injured while in our care, staff will do the following:

- Minor injuries: Apply first aid and complete an "Ouch Report" that will be presented to you at the end of the day.
- 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.
- If we cannot reach the primary caregivers, and other designated people, or if the staff feels the situation warrants it, 911 will be called.

If your child has an injury that requires medical follow up (either with a physician or a dentist), we are required to notify DCYF/CPS. They are the agency that monitors us when children are injured in childcare programs. They will frequently reach out to families after an injury occurs to make sure that the staff followed correct protocol in handling your child's injury.

Know, See, 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 a Human Resource representative at 360 733 8630 ex. 1121.

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.

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."

Disaster Preparedness

- Our disaster preparedness policy is located in each classroom.

- Procedures for medical, dental, poison, earthquake, fire, or other emergency situations will be posted in each classroom. The Center Director will review the policies with each staff team regularly. The Center Director will be responsible for orienting classroom volunteers, new staff or substitutes to these plans.
- Evacuation plans and routes will be posted in each classroom.
- Fire and earthquake drills will be conducted and documented each month.
- Staff will be familiar with use of the fire extinguisher.
- Center based staff will identify and mitigate earthquake hazards i.e., securing bookshelves and pictures to walls.
- Food, water, medication, and supplies for 72 hours of survival will be available for each child and staff (checked yearly for expiration dates).

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