



EARLY LEARNING PARENT HANDBOOK

YMCA Mission Statement

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

Early Learning Philosophy

YMCA Early Learning programs strengthen families and boost youth development by offering learning readiness experiences and comprehensive child development programs with a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Our programming at the Y addresses the holistic development of young children by supporting brain development, early literacy, development of healthy habits, and strong parenting skills. Early learning builds a foundation for future and ongoing achievement and success.

PARENT NOTIFICATION OF THE LICENSING NOTEBOOK

Child Care Organizations Act, 1973 Public Act 116
Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs

The center does not keep a licensing notebook, but internet is available onsite. Reports from at least the last three years are available at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

Updated October 2023

Handbook Information

This program handbook contains the policies and procedures of the YMCA Child Care Services Department in outline form. Please take the time to read the Handbook and keep it in a convenient location for reference. The Handbook is meant to serve as a reference guide. It is not meant to cover every aspect of the child care program or every situation that may arise. Parents should feel free to contact the child care office with questions concerning the contents of the handbook.

Handbook Terms

Throughout the Handbook, the term "Parent" will be used to refer to the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the child in care. The term "Provider" will be used to refer to the YMCA Child Care Services Department.

Handbook Changes

The Provider reserves the unilateral right to add, delete, modify or amend the policies and procedures described in the handbook at any time. If there is information in this handbook that is not clear please bring to the attention of the Provider and we will work together to make policies more user friendly to families.

Handbook is Property of Program

The Handbook is the exclusive property of the YMCA Child Care services and is intended for the exclusive use of the parents of enrolled children. The Handbook may not be copied or distributed to any third party without the expressive written permission of provider.

DEI Statement/Cultural Plan

All children deserve an early childhood education that is responsive to their families, communities, and racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. As an early learning staff, we are committed to respecting each child's culture and diverse needs and will always do our best to fulfill those needs. Family is the root of our program, and we involve the family in all aspects of what we do for children. We will maintain and conduct all practices in relation to enrollment, guidance, and all other terms and benefits of child care services provided, in a manner that does not discriminate against any child, parent or family, or staff member on the basis of age, race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, income, faith, sexual orientation, or cultural background.

YMCA DEI Statement: We are an association made up of people from every walk of life, working side by side to strengthen communities. Together we strive to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, income, faith, sexual orientation, or cultural background, has the opportunity to live life to its fullest and is celebrated as a valued part of our community.

Special Needs Care and Inclusion

Our programs are not set up to offer one-on-one care, but we will do our best to accommodate the needs of all children in our program. Provider will accept and care for children with special needs if the child's needs can be reasonably accommodated by the program. A two-week trial period may be initiated to help understand the needs of the child and family.

Confidential Information

Each child has a right to confidentiality. All information pertaining to the children in our programs, including all reports, records, and data are confidential and used for internal purposes only. Information pertaining to children enrolled in the program will not be released to third parties without the express written permission of Parent, unless required by statute, court order, or licensing mandate.

Admission Requirements and Registration

The Y Early Learning Center accepts children ages 2 years, 9 months to 6 years old who are potty-trained. Children must be registered prior to the child attending the program each school year and each summer. We use an online registration process that can be found at our website www.kzooymca.org. At the time of registration, a non-refundable registration fee and all relevant weekly fees are due before a child can attend. This registration fee may not be used to offset other child care fees. Tuition prices vary depending on part time or full time status. To ensure our programs are accessible to all, we offer many resources to reduce or eliminate tuition costs. Please see more details on those resources below. After a child is registered online, all required paperwork including immunization records, must be completed and approved by the Provider prior to attendance. If you are having trouble with the online registration please reach out to childcare@kzooymca.org to set up an appointment for assistance.

Bills and Payments (we are a PRE-PAID SERVICE)

We are a prepaid service and use an automatic payment system. Automatic payment options include: debit or credit cards (VISA or MasterCard) or EFT from a checking or savings account. A payment agreement is required at the time of registration. Late payments or returns may result in a \$20.00 late fee. If payments are delinquent, the child care department reserves the right to terminate your child care services. If for any reason during the program your financial situation changes please let us know so we can do our best to work with you.

Child Development and Care (CDC) Assistance

The CDC program is managed by the State of Michigan and may cover all or a portion of eligible child care fees if your family qualifies. For more information or to see if you qualify, please visit their website. If you do qualify, parents are responsible for submitting a Provider Verification form to ensure we are able to bill the state for attendance, prior to the start of the program. Parents/guardians are responsible to pay all child care fees until we receive approval from CDC. Once approval is in place, the family will receive a credit on their account for any applicable overpayments, which will be applied to

upcoming weeks of service or refunded. Depending on the level assistance a family qualifies for, there may still be a weekly copay. Parents who receive (CDC) assistance are responsible for the remainder of the weekly fee not covered by CDC.

GSRP and KC Ready 4s

Provider participates with both GSRP and KC Ready 4s. These organizations provide tuition support for qualifying families. Families must complete the Kalamazoo County PreK Application to determine eligibility. There are many resources available to assist families in completing the application. Visit www.dreambigstartsmall.org for more information.

Financial Assistance

For families who may not qualify for other sources of tuition support, the YMCA offers an internal financial assistance program. For more information or to apply please reach out to childcare@kzooyymca.org.

Fee Changes

Provider reserves the right to change the child care fee schedule or other fees at any time. If while enrolled in our program, a fee change presents a hardship to your family, please let us know so we can look at available resources.

Required Forms

The forms listed below must be fully completed prior to your child attending the program. Parents are solely responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information contained within these forms. Provider assumes no responsibility for keeping forms updated. These forms are available to download from our website or you can request hard copies from childcare@kzooyymca.org.

- Child Information Record
- Agreement and Permission Form
- Immunization Record and Health Appraisal signed by a medical professional

Please note these forms need to be completed or updated every school year and summer session a child attends to ensure your child has a placement in our programs.

Hours of Operation

The Y Early Learning Center operates Monday through Friday throughout the school year; subject to the holiday schedule listed below. The Center opens at 7:00am and closes at 6:00pm.

Holidays and Other Closures

All Programs are closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Eve and Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and the day after
- Christmas Eve and Day, and the day after Christmas
- Select professional development days that will be shared at the beginning of the school year

When a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the Program reserves the right to close to observe the holiday either the preceding Friday or the following Monday. The Program will provide thirty (30) days advance notice of a closure due to a weekend holiday.

The Program will be closed for one week between the end of the school year and the beginning of summer camp. It will also be closed one week between the end of summer camp and start of the new school year. Families will not be charged for those two closure weeks. We are typically closed for the two weeks of winter break but may offer care if there is a high need. If care is offered, only families who sign up for it will be charged.

- During the **school year**, the fixed child care rate will not be adjusted for holiday closures, days that schools are closed, etc. The weekly fee is a set fee for the week.
- During the summer if the 4th of July falls on a weekday, camp rates will be adjusted accordingly.

Attendance Policy and Absences

Consistent attendance will help ensure children receive the maximum learning experience. The full weekly rate will still be due regardless of individual absences, including sick days, personal days, funerals, doctor appointments, holidays, etc.

Two, one-week periods of excused absence are allowed during each school year with the proper notice. The two weeks may be used separately or concurrently but the full week must be used, individual days will not be credited. After the two weeks are used, Parent will be responsible for all future payments regardless of attendance.

Business Interruption and Virtual Learning Policy

The child care program may be closed due to weather, loss of electricity, fire damage, communicable disease outbreaks, etc. Parent agrees to arrange alternate emergency child care for these situations. If the closure is less than 5 business days no adjustments will be made to program fees.

In the event of a closure of 5 business days or more, our virtual learning policy will be in effect. Weekly fees will be reduced to 35% of a child's current enrollment level. This may either be in the form of a reduced payment or a credit applied to a future week.

Virtual learning will include the following components:

- Communication maintained with all families through the parent communication app
- A weekly virtual class meeting (Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, etc.)
- A weekly at-home activity using common household items
- A weekly teacher-led read-a-loud
- Providing resources to help with successful at-home learning time, including learning packets, activity ideas, suggested daily schedules, etc.
- As needed, individual meetings with families

Parent agrees to resume use of the in-person child care program as soon as operations restart.

Business interruption closures do not alter the contractual provision to the required length of notice for the termination of the child care contract.

Termination

Either Parent or Provider may terminate the child care agreement upon two week written notice to the other party. Written notice can be sent to childcare@kzoymca.org. When parent does not provide two weeks written notice, parent is still required to pay for the final two weeks of care, following the notice of termination whether or not the child attends the program. Provider reserves the right to terminate this agreement immediately without notice to parent if: 1) child care fees and/or other fees are not paid when due, 2) the child's continued participation in the program creates a direct threat of harm to the child, other children, or the provider's staff, 3) parent engages in inappropriate parent conduct (see below). We will do everything in our power to work with you to keep your child(ren) in our care but in the case we can't find a resolution, we reserve these rights.

Arrival and Departure Procedure

All children must be brought into the program by a parent (or other authorized person 16 older) and signed in. Children will be released from the program when a parent (or other authorized person 16 or older) notifies the staff of their arrival. All persons picking up a child must be listed on the child information record (CIR).

Child Release Policy

As a condition of providing child care services, Parent must supply the name of at least one alternative person to whom provider may release the child to in the event of an emergency. Provider will not release the child to any individual whose name does not appear on the CIR. Before provider releases the child, the staff will require that the individual show valid photo identification. Should a parent wish to allow an individual not listed on the CIR to pick the child up, parent must contact the Child Care office before pickup.

Provider and staff respect the family's privacy, however, if questionable child release situations occur; the provider has a duty to maintain its role as the child's advocate. With respect to child custody disputes, until custody has been established by a court order, neither parent may limit the other parent from picking up the child, and the provider will release the child to a known, identified parent. Should a parent not be allowed to pick-up a child, provider must have a court order on file. Parent must be aware that the provider and staff are not properly trained to make assessments relating to intoxication or other impairments of any individual appearing to pick-up the child. Provider assumes no responsibility for any injury or harm to the child who has been released to a person on the CIR.

Late Pick-up

All parents and guardians are expected to abide by the care schedule set forth by the child care department. If a parent is going to be late picking up a child, the parent is required to notify the provider as soon as possible. A late pick-up fee of \$1.00 per minute, or any portion of a minute, will be assessed for all late pick-ups. The late fee will be added to your account.

If a child remains at program after 6:00pm and parent has not notified the provider that they will be late, provider will attempt to contact persons listed on the child information record to pick up the child. If provider is not able to arrange for an authorized person to pick the child up by 6:30pm, provider will contact the police department for further instructions. The provider can under no circumstances take a child from the program to their residence, or the child's residence.

Parent Communication and Participation

We encourage ongoing communication between the staff and parents. Parents should feel free to ask questions about the program or their child's care. Lesson plans, information about group activities, and basic updates will be posted to our parent app. All families will be sent an invitation for their child's group after enrollment. If a family requires an alternative form of communication, please talk to your child's teacher. Parents are welcome at the program any time to observe or spend time with their child. Formal parent communication will include home visits at the start of the school as needed and conferences three times throughout the school year.

Parent Expectations

To ensure consistent care is provided to students while in our program we expect parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect at all times. While in our program parents should not engage in the following:

- Physical punishment of their child while in the child care facility
- Addressing a child who is not their own for the purpose of correction or discipline
- Physically engaging a child who is not their own for the purpose of correction or discipline
- Seeking out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior
- Sharing any information considered to be confidential or pressuring employees or other parents for information that is not necessary for them to know.

All behavior concerns should be brought to the attention of the staff or the Provider who will then address the issue as needed. While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of YMCA programs or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. If a parent feels a situation is not being handled appropriately by staff, then they should contact the Child Care Director.

Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the staff and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective guidance procedures for their child. Staff can also help connect families to resources offered through KRESA and KC Ready 4s.

Private Duty by Employees

Employees of the program are discouraged from accepting offers for private duty (e.g. "babysitting", serving as a "nanny", etc.) for any of the children enrolled in the program. If parents choose to request a YMCA child care staff to participate in private duty then the parent and employee must complete a release form that is available from the Child Care Department.

Volunteer Policy

For the safety of all involved, if a parent wishes to volunteer, they will be asked to follow YMCA volunteer processes and policies. This includes but is not limited to background checks, being supervised by a YMCA employee and not left alone with a child enrolled in the program.

Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting

A principal endeavor of the YMCA is to provide a healthy atmosphere for the growth and development of children. All YMCA staff will receive training in child abuse awareness, how to respond in the case of a suspicion of child abuse, and sign a code of conduct in New Staff Orientation. They will receive at the least, annual training after this point.

As a licensed child care provider, provider and its employees are required by law as mandated reporters to report any instances of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Provider takes these responsibilities seriously with any suspected or reported child abuse or neglect treated in accordance with applicable law and approved policies.

Typical Daily Schedule

7:00am	Drop off and center free play
8:30am	Morning meeting
9:00am	Snack
9:30am	Large group time
9:45am	Small group time
10:00am	Planning time
10:15am	Choice time
11:15am	Recall time
11:30am	Read a-loud
12:00pm	Lunch
12:30pm	Gross motor time outdoor weather permitting
1:30pm	Rest time
3:30pm	Afternoon meeting
3:45pm	Snack
4:00pm	Gross motor time outdoor weather permitting
4:30pm	Free play and pick up

A more detailed schedule is posted on the parent board and a child friendly schedule is located in the meeting area.

Classroom Ratios

We will maintain high quality ratios on all our classrooms. Each class will have at least two staff present. The max group size for our preschool (3 year old) group will be 16. The max group size for our prekindergarten (4 year old) group will be 18 with two staff or up to 20 with three staff.

Emergency Policy

Provider has developed an Emergency Management Plan to be implemented in the event of a natural or man-made emergency situation. If an emergency should occur, provider will follow the instructions of the local authorities. We understand that families will be concerned about the safety of their children and we will communicate updates instructions as soon as we are able via phone, email, and/or our

parent communication app. If we are sheltering-in-place, we ask that you wait until the authorities issue an all clear before coming to pick-up your children. If we evacuate the facility, children will be released to parents or authorized persons as they arrive.

Guidance Policy and Disruptive Behavior

Discipline is the joint responsibility of parents, caregivers and the children themselves. Support and cooperation between all parties is essential to the child's growth and recognition of positive behavior. We understand that children may exhibit disruptive behavior (i.e. biting, hitting, throwing objects or using inappropriate language), and we use a positive guidance approach for handling mistaken behaviors. We believe communication is embedded in behavior and we look for the message they are unable to tell us.

Children are given the expectations of each activity. When misbehavior occurs, children are reminded first of the expected behavior, given redirection and assisted with problem solving skills to learn how to appropriately solve the problem next time. Our teachers will speak one-on-one with children in a firm, friendly and fair manner to protect the child's self-concept.

We will accomplish this through positive guidance techniques of:

1. Setting clear limits and expectations
2. Modeling and encouraging expected behavior
3. Redirecting children to more appropriate activities
4. Encouraging children to use coping strategies and problem solving techniques for next time

When disruptive behavior occurs while in the program, a 3-tiered system of support will be in place:

- Minor behavior incident: Child will be redirected according to our guidance policy. An incident report will be completed the parent will be notified at the next pick up or drop off.
- Major behavior incident: Child will be redirected according to our guidance policy, separation from the group may be necessary. An incident report will be completed and the parent will be notified as soon as possible. Depending on the behavior, parents may be asked to pick up.
- Ongoing behavioral incidents: A parent conference will be held to discuss strategies to support the child in our program. The discussion will include a consideration of any disability that effects the child's behavior. An individual plan will be written and put in place to support the child in the classroom. We have a commitment to support each child and their needs in the classroom. However, there are times that individual child behavior poses a risk to the needs of the other children in the program. If a reasonable solution and/or accommodation cannot be reached or the behavior does not improve significantly, the child will be dis-enrolled from the program with a two-week notice to allow parents an opportunity to find alternate child care. The child will be di-enrolled without notice if the child's behavior is creates a direct ongoing threat to the safety of themselves, the other children or the provider's staff.

Food Policy

The program will provide breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack as part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Our meals and snacks will consist of healthy choices with fresh fruit and/or vegetables as often as possible. We will encourage children to eat their healthy foods first before their treats in an effort to develop healthy eating habits. At no time will staff force children to eat more than they can handle. To help encourage healthy eating please refrain from sending overly-sugared beverages, including pop with your child. For children with food allergies, please speak with the staff about reasonable accommodations that can be made. If an allergy is severe enough, families may still need to provide daily food for the child. If you wish to provide a classroom treat for a special occasion, like a birthday, please speak with the staff beforehand.

Health Care Service Plan

The center has a health care plan that includes policies and procedures to keep staff and children healthy and safe. All YMCA child care staff are trained in blood borne pathogens, which includes an exposure control plan, proper sanitizing procedures, proper labeling of and disposal of milk and food, obtaining and maintaining of children's immunization and physical records, recognition of signs and symptoms of illness in children, emergency plan for handling minor and major injuries of children, medication distribution procedures, and training in child abuse and neglect and what it means to be a mandatory reporter. A copy of the full health care plan is available upon request.

When the Child Becomes Sick at the Program

Provider will report any suspected illnesses or other changes observed in the health of a child to the parent. When a child becomes ill at the program, provider and/or staff will comfortably isolate the child in an area where the child can be supervised and will immediately contact parent, who will be required to pick the child up within one hour of notification. Once the program closes for the day, staff will disinfect all areas of the classroom to prevent further spread.

When to Keep a Child Home

Provider requires a child stay home when ill. A sick child may rest more comfortably in their own home in addition to helping prevent the spread of contagious illnesses to other children in the program. If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, please keep the child home.

- Fever of 100 degrees or more, vomiting, diarrhea, continuous green mucus, lice, pink eye

With the exception of lice, children must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before they can return. If the child has lice, they must be COMPLETELY NIT FREE before they can return to the program.

Parents are asked to notify the program if a child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness. Communication will be shared to make all families aware that an illness has been going around.

Staff and Volunteers will be asked to not participate in the program when they have any of the symptoms listed above.

Accidents and Incidents

We make all attempts to prevent accidents and incidents from occurring, but when they do the following plans will be in place:

Minor accident, not involving the head: First aid will be applied as needed, accident report will be completed and parent notified at next pick up or drop off.

Accident involving a head injury: First aid will be applied as needed, accident report will be completed and parent notified as soon as possible.

Major accident with or without head injury: First aid will be applied as needed, parent notified as soon as possible, medical personnel contacted if necessary, an accident report will be completed. If accident results in visit to a medical professional, provider will report it to licensing.

Lost Child: All staff immediately notified of the missing child, those staff who are not required to supervise other children will search the facility, if necessary 911 will be called to notify the authorities of the missing child, parent notified as soon as possible.

Inappropriate contact: If inappropriate contact occurs immediate action will be taken to separate the individuals involved. Depending on the severity of the situation, parents will be contacted as well as the proper authorities if warranted.

Medication Policy

Provider will administer necessary medications under the following guidelines recommended by the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs. The parent must sign a medication permission form for the duration of the need. Prescription drugs must be in the original container with the pharmacy label, physician's name, instructions, dosage, and name and strength of the medication and shall be given in accordance with those instructions. Over the counter medication will be given only if it's in the original container. Provider will maintain a record as to the time and the amount given or applied. The provider will keep the medication out of the reach of children and return any remaining medication to the parent when it is no longer needed. Any medication not returned will be destroyed.

Sunscreen and Bug Spray

The program strives to take the children outdoors for play on a daily basis. The YMCA will provide sunscreen and bug spray but families are welcome to provide their own if they prefer. Annual permission to administer sunscreen and bug spray is part of the registration paperwork.

Pesticide Use Information

The Y Early Learning program uses Griffin Pest Control Company to take care of any pesticide needs inside and outside of the building and classroom. Centers are required by The Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs to give notice of annual pesticide application; this handbook serves as the

annual notification. If there is going to be any type of spraying going on in or out of the building while your children are in our care, provider will inform parents at least 48 hours in advance in two to different forms. One form will be a notice on the door of the center. Possible other ways of communication include but are not limited to: in a parent newsletter, a mass email, a telephone call, or a posting in our parent communication app or on our website.

Personal Items from Home

We understand that children may be excited to bring items from home and that they may bring a level of comfort to the child. If Parent permits a child to bring an item from home, provider is not responsible for loss or damage to that item.

Clothing

The program strives to take children outdoors for play on a daily basis. Due to the nature of some of the activities the program offers, parents must recognize that children's clothing may occasionally become soiled or damaged. Provider assumes no responsibility for damage to a child's clothing. We also ask assistance with ensuring all children are dressed appropriately according to the weather conditions. Please ensure children are sent with necessary items. Provider will keep spare items on site.

Swimming at the YMCA

As part of the Early Learning program children will receive a weekly 30-minute swim lesson (subject to enrollment status). Lessons are conducted by certified swim instructors with support of classroom staff. All licensing regulations related to swimming and ratios will be followed.

Transportation

For programs not located at our main YMCA facilities, we will arrange transportation to and from the off-site location to the YMCA facility for the purposes of extra activities such as swimming and tennis lessons.

Photo Release

Provider may take photos of the children participating in program activities or field trips. The photos may be posted for parents and visitors to enjoy. We may occasionally be filmed for the local news, YMCA video use, for YMCA brochures, and/or the YMCA Facebook page. If a parent wishes that photos not be taken of their child, a written notice must be delivered to the Child Care Department.