

YMCA OF GREATER ERIE

Early Care & School-Age Enrichment Program

PARENT HANDBOOK



www.ymcaerie.org or find us on facebook @ YMCAofGreaterErie

Edit: 9/8/2025

WHO WE ARE	5
INCLUSION STATEMENT.....	5
OUR MISSION	5
OUR FOCUS	5
OUR CAUSE	5
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	6
CARING AND WELL-TRAINED STAFF.....	7
EASING FIRST DAY JITTERS.....	7
PARENT PARTICIPATION	7
STRONG FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS	8
FOR ALL – SPECIAL NEEDS PLAN	9
INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLANS	10
REFERRING PARENTS TO COMMUNITY AGENCIES	10
SUPPORTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT	10
REDUCTION OF SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION PLAN.....	11
ALIGNING WITH FEDERAL POLICES.....	11
RECRUITING AND RETAINING HIGHLY SKILLED WORKFORCE.....	11
UNIVERSAL SCREENING PROCESS AND SETTING GOALS	13
CHILDCARE PROVIDER RIGHTS.....	14
DISCIPLINARY POLICY	14
BITING	15
PENNSYLVANIA KEYSTONE STARS, PRE-K COUNTS & INFANT/TODDLER CONTRACTED SLOTS	15
KEYSTONE STARS.....	15
PRE-K COUNTS	16
PRE-K COUNTS ATTENDANCE POLICY	16
INFANT/TODDLER CONTRACTED SLOTS (ITCS)	16
ITCS ATTENDANCE POLICY	17
INCLEMENT WEATHER	17
EMERGENCY CLOSINGS/EVACUATIONS.....	17
EMERGENCY PLAN	17
PREVENTION OF SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME, ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA AND CHILD MALTREATMENT REQUIREMENTS	18
BELIEF SYSTEM	18
BACKGROUND.....	19
RECOGNIZING.....	19

RESPONDING.....	19
REPORTING	19
HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY STANDARDS.....	19
MEALS AND SNACKS	20
FOOD ALLERGIES.....	20
INFANT MEAL PLANS.....	20
FAMILY EVENTS.....	20
FIELD TRIPS.....	20
COMMUNITY CONNECTION.....	21
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW	21
WHAT TO BRING	21
YOUR CHILD’S ROUTINE	21
DIAPERING	21
OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	21
SUNSCREEN	22
CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS.....	22
BABYSITTING	22
ILLNESS.....	23
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES	23
HEAD LICE.....	23
MEDICATIONS	23
ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE PLAN	24
EASING THE TRANSITION	24
COMMUNICATION	24
CHILD OBSERVATIONS AND SCREENING.....	24
CLASSROOM AND PROGRAM TRANSITION.....	24
KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION	25
SELF CARE TRANSITION	25
ACCOUNTING POLICIES.....	26
ENROLLMENT FEE	26
UNDERSTANDING OUR TUITION.....	26
VACATION LEAVE FOR CHILDREN	26
HOLIDAYS/INSERVICE DAYS	26
NO SCHOOL DAYS	27
EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS.....	27

PRE-K COUNTS WRAP ENRICHMENT PROGRAM	27
SIBLING RATE	27
Y MEMBER DISCOUNT.....	27
PAYMENT RESPONSIBILITY.....	27
PAYMENT OPTIONS.....	28
LATE PICK-UP FEE	28
RETURNED CHECKS	28
RECEIPTS & STATEMENTS	28
WITHDRAWAL	28
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	29
GRIEVANCE.....	29
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM.....	30

WHO WE ARE

At the Y, we are committed to nurturing the potential of every child and teen, promoting healthy living and fostering a sense of social responsibility.

The Y provides services to all families without regard to race, religion, or national origin. Financial assistance is available.

INCLUSION STATEMENT

We welcome, value, celebrate and respect individuals of all abilities, age, backgrounds, ethnicity/race, faith, gender, self-reported gender identity and/or expression or sexual orientation. We are committed to treating all people with dignity and respect in an honest, open, fair and friendly manner. We are committed to the highest standards of civility and decency toward all. We are committed to promoting and supporting a learning community where all people can learn and work together in a safe and secure atmosphere free of fear, bias, discrimination and other negative treatment. We understand that creating a diverse and accepting community also means working to educate ourselves and one another, without bias, and apply critical analysis to our curriculum and materials. Together we will learn and work to use inclusive language, challenge discrimination and stereotypes and advocate for positive change. Our goal is to create a community of learners who feel safe expressing themselves, explore the world around them and grow.

OUR MISSION

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

OUR FOCUS

Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility

OUR CAUSE

At the Y, strengthening the community is our cause.

CHILDREN are like sponges – they watch and absorb knowledge, skills, and values from everyone and everything around them. At the Y, we believe the values and skills learned early on are the building blocks for quality life and future success.

Babies develop trust and security, preschoolers experience early literacy, and learn about their world, and school-age kids make friends, learn new skills and do homework.

YMCA character values – caring, honesty, respect and responsibility help kids – even our youngest- discover who they are and what they can achieve.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Children will benefit from experiences that encourage:

- Self-esteem & positive self-image: Provide experiences that enhance each child's sense of identity, independence and support his/her group identification
- Social interaction: Provide opportunities for each child to interact with both peers and adults. Develop a sense of responsibility and respect for self and others
- Self-expression and communication skills: Provide activities that enhance and develop language skills. Learn to give as well as receive affection
- Creative expression: Provide opportunities for each child to be original
- Large and small muscle development: Provide opportunities for each child to participate in activities to enhance muscle development
- Intellectual growth: Provide opportunities and resources for each child to

develop cognitive skills for more effective communication and interaction

- To support children and their families in being successful in our environment, the classroom teacher will research commonly expected interactions and practices that are dominant from the child's culture. In addition, the YMCA will contact an outside agency with any specific questions or support for a translator.
- Consistency for Children: Each year when a child enrolls in our program we will place the child with the same teacher, if possible. We work to retain our staff and center directors. When a teacher is absent from our centers, we replace them with substitutes. These substitutes will remain consistent. By doing so, we are supporting the relationships between your child and the teachers.

CARING AND WELL-TRAINED STAFF

Our staff nurtures the healthy, successful growth of every child by emphasizing values such as caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Annually staff continue their education with courses in child development, first aid, water and fire safety and CPR. All classroom lead teachers hold post-secondary education degrees or Child Development Associate Credential, the most widely recognized credential in early childhood education.

EASING FIRST DAY JITTERS

DON'T FORGET!

Completed application form
Fee services agreement
Child's immunization record
Child's health assessment
(physical form signed by doctor)
Application for Food Program
Special Needs Plan (if needed)

Incomplete forms will be returned
for completion prior to the child's first

We encourage parents to schedule an appointment with your Program's Director and/or classroom teacher prior to their first day so that you and your child can ease those first day jitters, have any last-minute questions answered and ensure that all your paperwork is complete for a smooth start.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

An open and respectful relationship between all people who interact with our program is important to the wellbeing and safety of all children. It is essential that parents adhere to standards of interaction with children, staff, and other program participants. These standards of interaction are:

- Treat others, including your child, the way you want to be treated; by treating children with respect and consideration, you are setting a good example for them on how to treat others.
- Should you have a concern, address your concern in the privacy of an office rather

than out in the open. For your child's development, it's essential that we present a united front; it's important to avoid discussion in front of "listening ears" until a resolution is reached.

- Parents should direct disciplinary or policy concerns to the Childcare Director or Assistant Director. We will work together on a resolution.
- While parents are volunteering in the YMCA childcare program, any concerns they may have including another child's behavior must be addressed to the Childcare Director or Assistant Director. The volunteering parent may not address the situation themselves.
- Parents are asked to always model appropriate language and behavior.
- Parents are responsible for reading materials sent home and communicating changes to your child's Childcare Director, including changes to child's emergency contact information, health and medical care. This includes maintaining proper immunization status and current physicals at 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 and 24 months and then yearly thereafter.
- The Y will not tolerate any behavior from parents/guardians that endangers the wellbeing or safety of anyone in the program or visiting the program such as profanity, physical threats or verbal threats. This includes threats shared on social media platforms. Keeping with the Y's character values, families and children will be asked to leave the program should they be unable to treat others in a caring, honest, respectful and responsible manner.
- We have an open-door policy for visiting your child during the day. Check with your Childcare Director for what times are best to visit. We believe it is very important to have open communication between staff and parents given the shared responsibility of caring for your child. Communication and cooperation between parents and caregivers are important for the wellbeing of your child.
- Questions, suggestions, and discussions regarding any concerns you have are highly welcomed by every staff member. Sometimes a few words at drop off or pick up may be sufficient. Otherwise, you are welcome to arrange for a meeting with your child's teacher regarding your concerns.

STRONG FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

To support teacher-family relationships, the YMCA has developed multiple processes to intake parent input and align it with Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) goals. The following are examples of how we strive to have strong teacher-family relationships:

- parent meetings at enrollment with tours of the facilities

- family open house events
- infant and toddler information shared daily through the ProCare Connect digital app
- family educational workshop nights two per year/per site that are based on the needs of the families in each center's community
- family getting to know you forms at time of enrollment
- parent-teacher conferences offered 2 times per year at minimum or at parent's request
- ProCare Childcare app is used exclusively for communication. Upon enrollment you will be invited via email to establish your ProCare account. Please download the app and sign in prior to your child's first day. At some facilities, this app is used for clocking your child in and out.
- family fun events that are offered association-wide
- digital newsletters that are shared with families and provide examples of how parents can support their child's development that support the curriculum goals

FOR ALL – SPECIAL NEEDS OR SPECIAL CARE PLANS

We welcome children of all abilities and medical needs and strive to provide the best experience for children and families, we require a one-on-one appointment before their first day. No child will be discriminated against no matter the gender, age, race, disability, or ethnicity. We must have all pertinent information about the child's physical, emotional, or social needs from the outset of enrollment. If services have been received from an outside agency such as Primary Care Physician, Sarah Reed, Achievement Center, Barber National Institute, IU5, or local school, please notify us. Our enrollment process includes:

- Observation of the child in a classroom setting
- Preparation and sharing of a Care Plan (example)
- Assessment of the staff's ability to handle various special needs and consider whether additional training, the cost of which is not unreasonable, would assist the staff in confidently handling needs and behavior circumstances.
- Observation of the child's adaption to the group of children
- Discussion of child needs with staff person
- Trial enrollment - not to exceed two weeks
- Discussion with family of possible and necessary accommodations that are reasonable and do not fundamentally alter the nature of the group atmosphere of the program
- Notification to the family if the Y is not able to accommodate the child's needs because of unreasonable modifications or somehow alters the group's dynamic in the program. If a proposed accommodation is prohibitively costly or would fundamentally alter the nature of the group, the Y may propose an additional cost or propose the presence of a teaching aide at the family's expense at which point the child may enroll for a trial period to determine whether the child will thrive in

the classroom environment

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLANS

We acknowledge and work with families that have children with an IEP. The following steps are taken to ensure that the child's needs are being met:

- Families that turn in an IEP will meet with the director and teacher before the child's first day
- The classroom teacher will do informal observation and individualize for the child on the lesson plan
- The teacher will meet with everyone included in the child's IEP team, as stated on the IEP
- Updated goals will be made for the child based on new IEP goals and the child's assessment
- This process is ongoing as the child continues with their IEP plan

REFERRING PARENTS TO COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Through culturally and linguistically respectful relationships, Y staff support the best outcomes for children and families in the areas of social-emotional, cognitive, language and literacy, and physical well-being. Research shows that when families are engaged in their children's learning, it supports better overall outcomes for children's school readiness. At the Y, staff support the needs of families by identifying families' unique needs at time of enrollment through the "Getting to Know You" survey and actively gathering resources that best meet those needs by reaching out to nearby organizations to make connections and learn about services. Using a strengths-based approach, staff guide families to resources that may benefit them. A list of resources, such as social service agencies, adult education programs, community mental health clinics, early intervention services, housing authorities, and the public library is available at each location for staff to provide to families. An online resource is also available to parents at www.ymcaerie.org.

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

High-quality, intentional, and consistent exposure to the home language and to English can set children on a positive trajectory toward school success and bilingualism, a desirable trait in the job market. Language growth in bilingual children is associated with the quality and quantity of language exposure they experience in each language. The skills needed for young English Language Learners/Dual Language Learners to become proficient in English are fully embedded

in the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood which are used in all Y early education classrooms. Additional strategies families may see in Y classrooms to support dual language learners are:

- English use of visuals, props, and realia (objects from real life used in classroom instruction to improve children’s understanding of other cultures and real-life situations)
- Providing forms, information, and other methods of communication in multiple languages
- Making every effort to screen and assess children in their home language
- Intentionally incorporating professional development opportunities for staff related to supporting DLLs and cultural responsiveness
- Employing a diverse staff, some of whom are bilingual and speak the home language of most DLLs in the program
- Creating family engagement activities and actively invite all parents to participate
- Implementing the use of a “Getting to Know You” survey requesting parents to report home language allowing staff to create a plan of action to support the needs of the child(ren) and family members
- Supporting and encouraging families to maintain the use of the child’s home language while the child is also learning English.

REDUCTION OF SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION PLAN

High quality childcare and early learning programs are important to preventing suspensions and expulsions in the early learning setting. Early childhood education programs are responsible for creating positive learning environments that focus on preventing expulsions and suspensions, encouraging partnerships between programs and families to support healthy development, and ensuring fairness, equity and continuous improvement to support children’s social, emotional and behavioral health.

It is recommended that early childhood education programs focus on fostering social emotional development and responding to challenging behaviors by incorporating positive discipline practices and policies before ever considering expulsion or suspension from early childhood programs.

The YMCA of Greater Erie is committed to ensuring that all children attending our program have access to a high quality early childhood education program that provides developmentally appropriate experiences and nurtures positive learning and development. We will involve the child's family in our efforts to support the child's successful inclusion in our program. The YMCA of Greater Erie will make every effort to successfully include and maintain children in our program.

Definitions

Suspension: an action that is administered because of a child's developmentally inappropriate behavior and requires that a child not be present in the classroom or the program for a specified period

Expulsion: the complete and permanent removal of a child from an early learning program because of challenging behavior or non-infectious health condition

Practices for prevention of expulsion and suspension

To prevent expulsion and suspension of children, the YMCA shall adopt the following practices in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner:

- Conduct a developmental and behavioral screening within the first 45 days of enrollment and then as needed.
- Use developmentally appropriate practices that provide for stimulating and interactive learning environments, diversity, age-appropriate expectations, small group activities, teachable moments and knowledge of research-based evidence and best practices in child development, early learning and education.
- Invest in professional development, training and education to ensure classroom teachers have the competencies to support children's social and emotional health including but not limited to Cultural Competence, Implicit Bias, and trauma informed practices.
- Ensure intentional teaching of social-emotional skills for all children by implementing Conscious Discipline® behavior strategies in classrooms.
- Develop and implement classroom schedules that meet the needs of the children paying close attention to mealtimes, nap time, transitions, and gross motor times.
- Adapt learning environments to promote healthy social interactions with others.
- Develop healthy and nurturing relationships with children and their families through daily interactions, parent teacher conferences, intake questionnaires and family engagement opportunities.
- Develop and implement classroom expectations and consequences that are developmentally appropriate, clear, consistent and address disruptive behaviors.
- Ensure fairness, equity and continuous improvement in all practices.

Other Options Prior to Expulsion

Prior to the expulsion of any child from this program, the Childcare Director will follow these guidelines:

- Identify and engage mental and behavioral health consultants and community resources after obtaining parent permission.
- Reduce the number of days or amount of time child spends in care for a specified amount of time.
- Conference with parents to discuss positive behavior interventions and development of goals.
- Document efforts to prevent and reduce expulsion by using strategies that match the child's developmental abilities.
- Provide reasonable accommodation.

Transition Procedures

If a child's challenging behaviors persist despite multiple positive strategies and pose a safety risk, expulsion may occur. In such cases, the Childcare Director will help the child and family transition to another program by connecting them with mental/behavioral health consultants and community resources to find the best placement.

Resources

The following list will assist YMCA staff and families in locating services and resources.

1. CONNECT Helpline: 1-800-692-7288, help@connectpa.net
2. Early Learning Resource Center- Region 1, 3823 W 12th St, Erie, PA 16505 (814) 836-5898
3. Achievement Center, 4950 West 23rd Street, Erie, PA 16506, (888) 821-3110
4. Gertrude A. Barber Center, Inc., 100 Barber Place, Erie, PA 16507, (814) 874-5671
5. Northwest Tri County Intermediate Unit 5, 252 Waterford St, Edinboro, PA 16412 (814) 734-5610
6. Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Consultation, PAIECMH@pakeys.org
7. Erie School District- Early Intervention Department, 124 W. 21st St., Erie, PA 16502, (814) 874-6155, lkitcey@eriesd.org

CONTINUITY OF CARE

When children are with the same teachers over time, they get the attention and affection they need to have meaningful relationships and learn about themselves. Children thrive in these close relationships developed through continuity of care. It is the goal of the YMCA to implement continuity of care through primary caregiving—when one primary teacher cares for a child or small group of children—which is a big part of continuity of care. It helps children develop close relationships with their teachers, peers, and families. It is the goal of the YMCA to limit the number of transitions a child experiences from birth to 3 years.

THE DISCIPLINARY POLICY ONLY RELATES TO CHILDREN 3 YEARS AND OLDER

It is the goal of the YMCA to develop the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility in the children enrolled in our programs through positive, non-threatening teaching techniques. Support and teaching missing skills are the standard method of discipline. There will be no harsh or cruel punishments.

Parents will be contacted when serious safety problems occur with their child. Children will receive the appropriate step stated in our policy for the following behaviors:

- Physical harm to staff or other children (examples: hitting, kicking, scratching, pinching, biting if not developmentally typical for that age)
- Destruction of personal, school, other childcare participant property
- Leaving space assigned as licensed by Department Human Services or his/her assigned group
- The child is a safety threat to themselves, other children or the staff
- Possession of weapons, firearms, ammunition and/or explosives
- Possession of drugs, tobacco, and/or alcohol
- Creating an unsafe bus/walking environment
- Leaving school grounds while waiting for bus or Y staff to arrive

Should any child exhibit any of the previously mentioned behaviors the following steps will be taken:

1st step – the child will be sent home for the remainder of the day and will receive a 1 day suspension. The parent/guardian will be required to have a meeting with the Director, classroom teacher, and Behavior Specialist. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the child's behavior and set-up a plan to help the child be successful in the Y's program.

2nd step – the child will be sent home and receive a 2-day suspension. The child will not be allowed to return to the program after the 2-day suspension until the meeting has been

held. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the child's behavior and set-up a plan to help the child be successful in the Y's program.

3rd step – the child will be sent home and receive a 3-day suspension from care. The child will not be allowed to return to the program after the 3-day suspension until the meeting has been held. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the child's behavior and set-up a plan to help the child be successful in the Y's program.

4th step– a. The child will be sent home and terminated from the program **or**
 b. The child is suspended as of today while our ability to care for your child moving forward is evaluated or outside behavior services are received.

The YMCA reserves the right to terminate the child from the program without completing the 4-step process if the seriousness or the incident so warrants.

The YMCA also reserves the right to remove/suspend a child from the program for any one of the following reasons:

- Failure to submit a physical as mandated by law
- Failure of a parent or guardian to maintain payment schedule
- The child's needs are not being met by the YMCA program

The YMCA intends to work with parents/guardians for the best care of each child. Working as a team is a necessary step to correct repeated inappropriate behavior. Your patience, support, and follow-through are not only appreciated, but necessary. The YMCA provides a safe and caring environment for all children.

BITING

Biting in the infant or toddler rooms is a behavioral stage that some young children pass through. The staff and Childcare Director will track behaviors during this stage and give recommendations to classroom teachers as needed.

PENNSYLVANIA KEYSTONE STARS, PRE-K COUNTS & INFANT/TODDLER CONTRACTED SLOTS

KEYSTONE STARS

Y programs are licensed by the Department of Human Services and meet YMCA of the USA Quality Check Standards. Like a hotel rating system, Y programs are accredited by the Pennsylvania Keystone Stars program.

That's important to you as a parent because you can be sure your kids are thriving in the highest quality learning environment with qualified, certified teachers who annually seek



continuing education and certifications in CPR/First Aid, Water Safety, Fire Safety & Child Development.

All Y programs participate in Keystone STARS. Each STARS designation has its own research-based performance standards. These standards support areas of safety and education.

What you can expect from the quality rating is:

- Professional development and training for our teachers; half to two-thirds of the staff have completed or are enrolled in credentials or degrees
- Literacy activities including reading, storytelling and encouraging written and verbal communication
- Parent and community resources are used effectively in the quality delivery of the program
- Business, organizational and staff compensation practices are maximized
- A review of the program center by a nationally recognized environment rating scale that indicates a high-quality score

PRE-K COUNTS

The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program makes quality pre- kindergarten programs available to Pennsylvania residents at no cost to qualifying families. It is funded through a grant from the State of Pennsylvania. Full day program instructional time is 5 hours and part-day instructional time is 2.5 hours. The Y offers several Pre-K Counts classrooms throughout Erie County. A Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts application must be filled out completely and submitted for consideration.

PRE-K COUNTS ATTENDANCE POLICY

Pre-K Counts classrooms observe a traditional school district calendar in which the program center is located and runs Monday-Friday. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning require regular attendance in Pre-K Counts classrooms. Accepted excuses include quarantine, personal illness, religious reasons, death in the immediate family, natural disaster/severe weather, educational tips (approval required by teacher) and reasons agreed upon by classroom teacher. Excessive absences may result in an immediate loss of funding and removal from the classroom. PKC Slots are limited so please speak to your Childcare Director.

INFANT/TODDLER CONTRACTED SLOTS (ITCS)

The Infant/Toddler Contracted Slots program makes quality care affordable to Pennsylvania Childcare Works (CCW) subsidized families. This high-quality program provides for a smooth transition from infant/toddler classrooms to Pre-K Counts classrooms. There is no fee for qualified families while enrolled in ITCS. Slots are limited so please speak to your Childcare

Director.

ITCS ATTENDANCE POLICY

All families are encouraged to maintain regular attendance in the Infant Toddler Contracted Slots. Staff will support families by identifying barriers to regular attendance and will provide support as appropriate. The program keeps track of absenteeism to ensure maximum benefits to children. If the monthly average daily attendance rate falls, the program will analyze the causes of absenteeism. The analysis will include a study of the pattern of absences for each child, including the reasons for absences as well as the number of absences that occur on consecutive days.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If weather conditions warrant, our program centers may close without prior notice. If there is any doubt about attendance, listen to the radio, TV news, view ProCare Connect parent messaging app., visit www.ymcaerie.org or our Facebook page - ymcaofgreatererie. Parents will be notified via ProCare Connect as soon as possible so you may make arrangements for your child.

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS/EVACUATIONS

The Y has a detailed emergency operation plan in accordance with the Department of Human Services and PEMA. Programs located at locations other than a YMCA Membership Branch will follow the emergency plan as determined by their host location. This plan is available at every location. Should a Childcare Center be forced to close early or evacuate, the staff will follow the emergency operations plan. Parents will be notified via ProCare as soon as possible so you may arrange for your child's care.

EMERGENCY PLAN

This is to assure you of our concern for the safety and welfare of children attending the YMCA. Our Emergency Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- Shelter at center: sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous material related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building. Parents will be notified if they need to pick up their child before their regular time.
- Evacuation to another site: total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to a relocation facility (see branch specific information). A note will be placed on the door to tell you where to pick up your child.
- Modified operation: may include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of hazardous weather or building problems that make it unsafe for students (such as utility disruptions)

but may be necessary in many situations.

- Lockdown/Shelter in place center: The children will be cared for indoors at the center and all windows and doors will be locked. No one will leave and no one will enter until the threat has ended.
- Emergency over/reuniting with children: Parents will be called and reunited with their child as soon as possible after the emergency.

To properly and safely plan for an emergency, please notify your Childcare Director of any special situations or needs that your child may have, even temporarily. This will allow the Childcare Director to properly plan for the removal of any special equipment, medication, or other care instructions separate from the child's emergency contact numbers. If your child requires special care in an emergency, you may be required to complete an Emergency Information Form. You will receive this form from your Childcare Director if it is required. Infants and toddlers who require special assistance due to their physical abilities will be accommodated using special equipment and extra facility staff.

Please listen to your local radio/television stations, social media, and ProCare Connect App. for announcements or notifications relating to any of the emergency actions listed above.

We ask that you not call during the emergency. This will keep the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information.

The facility director may provide an alternate phone number (i.e. cell phone number, etc.) to call in an emergency event.

The YMCA realizes that emergency circumstances may require changes to your plans, but I urge you not to try to make different arrangements if possible. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

To ensure the safety of your children and our staff, I ask for your understanding and cooperation.

Should you have additional questions regarding our emergency operating procedures, contact your director.

PREVENTION OF SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME, ABUSIVE HEAD TRAUMA AND CHILD MALTREATMENT REQUIREMENTS

We believe that preventing, recognizing, responding to, and reporting shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma (SBS/AHT), and child maltreatment is an important function of keeping children safe, protecting their healthy development, providing quality childcare, and educating families.

SBS/AHT and child maltreatment is the name given to a form of physical child abuse that occurs when an infant or small child is violently shaken and/or there is trauma to the head. Shaking may last only a few seconds but can result in severe injury or even death. According to Pennsylvania Childcare Rule (certified childcare facilities operating under 55 Pa. Code Chapters § 3270, § 3280, and § 3290), each childcare facility licensed to care for children up to five years of age shall develop and adopt a policy to prevent SBS/AHT and child maltreatment.

Children are observed for signs of abusive head trauma including irritability and/or high-pitched crying, difficulty staying awake/lethargy or loss of consciousness, difficulty breathing, inability to lift the head, seizures, lack of appetite, vomiting, bruises, poor feeding/sucking, no smiling or vocalization, inability of the eyes to track and/or decreased muscle tone. Bruises may be found on the upper arms, rib cage, or head resulting from gripping or from hitting the head.

If SBS/ABT is suspected, staff will:

- Call 911 immediately upon suspecting SBS/AHT and inform the director.
- Call the parents/guardians.
- If the child has stopped breathing, trained staff will begin pediatric CPR.
- If child maltreatment is suspected, staff will:
- Report suspicions to ChildLine by calling 1-800-932-0313 and inform the director.

Physical Examinations and Immunizations

It is the YMCA's responsibility that all children attending childcare are in good health and up to date on required immunizations to reduce the spread of infectious diseases and promote the overall well-being of all children and staff in the facility.

- All children must have a completed physical examination by a licensed healthcare provider within 30 days of entering the childcare program. The exam should be conducted within the last 12 months prior to enrollment.
- Children must be up to date on immunizations in accordance with local health department guidelines and the recommended immunization schedule of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Proof of immunization must be submitted to the childcare facility at the time of enrollment. Immunization records must include details of the type of immunization, date of administration, and the child's name.
- Medical Exemption: If a child has a documented medical condition that prevents them from receiving specific immunizations, a signed note from a licensed healthcare provider must be submitted. The exemption must include the specific immunization(s) the child cannot receive and the reason.
- Religious or Philosophical Exemption: Some jurisdictions allow parents to exempt their child from immunizations for religious or philosophical reasons. If permitted by local laws, parents must submit an exemption form indicating their request.
- Immunizations and physical exams must be kept current. Parents are required to submit updated records if the child receives additional immunizations or a new physical exam.
- Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child meets all health and immunization requirements and for submitting required documentation in a timely manner.

MEALS AND SNACKS

The Y participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) which enables us to provide breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack for toddlers and above at no additional charge to your family. The meals and snacks follow the Federal Nutrition Guidelines. A monthly menu is available at each Childcare Center. Additional information on the CACFP program can be found at www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program-cacfp. Parents may also choose to send meals for their child.

FOOD ALLERGIES

Any child who has a food allergy must have a written note from your physician on file. This note is due within 30 days from the time of enrollment or from the diagnosis. The Y will provide a food substitution, if agreeable by the parent, and is allowable by the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

INFANT MEAL PLANS

The Y offers age-appropriate meals to all infants including formula, and table foods. We ask parents of infants to complete infant meals and schedule forms. You may choose between the following infant formulas: Similac Advance and Similac Sensitive.

FAMILY EVENTS

Family is important to us! All our program centers provide special opportunities for families to get together from picnics to family fun nights. These events are offered at little or no cost to you. Watch your child's newsletter and ProCare for dates and times.

We offer a minimum of two conferences a year to discuss your child's strengths, progress, behavioral, social, and physical needs, and to incorporate the family's goals for their child.

FIELD TRIPS

Children of all ages attending our Y Early Care & School-Age Enrichment and Summer Camp programs will attend field trips throughout the year. Some of these trips include the Erie Zoo, local parks and playgrounds, swimming and the movies. During the school year field trips usually tie into the curriculum and area of study. Safety precautions used while on field trips include having a cell phone, first aid supplies and emergency books with all emergency information and an alternate plan for transportation. Before leaving for field trips, children are broken into small groups and assigned a teacher for the entire trip allowing for a more personal and enriching experience for the child.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION

We connect families to appropriate services within the community through providing the Success By 6 booklet, called Children Do Come with Directions. The book contains a table of contents for the organizations in our county that provide services to families with contact information. Each of our centers has these booklets to distribute as needed or upon request.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

WHAT TO BRING

While we provide most everything for your child, there are a few items you'll want to bring from home. These items may vary based on your child's age and classroom, so please talk with your child's teacher for an exact list. Suggested Items include:

- A set of extra clothes, labeled with their name
- Crib sheet
- Small blanket
- Diapers/pull-ups
- Wipes
- Other comfort items such as pacifier, special blanket or stuffed animal

YOUR CHILD'S ROUTINE

Maintaining a routine for your child to include regularly scheduled naps helps your child thrive in our educational environment. Children, preschool and younger will have daily rest time. Children in the Infant Room sleep in their own crib, spaced three feet apart on all sides (linens are changed and washed weekly). Toddlers, preschool and Pre-K children rest/sleep on individualized and labeled cots. The cot is covered with a bottom cover (provided by parents), and you may use a blanket from home. All linens/blankets are washed weekly or when soiled. Cots are spaced three feet apart on all sides. Children who do not fall asleep are provided with a quiet activity on their cot such as books or puzzles.

DIAPERING

According to the Department of Human Services, our state licensing agency, children must have a diaper inspection every two hours and change when soiled or wet. Please ensure you have an adequate supply of diapers (provided by the parent) and wipes for your child weekly.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

All children will go outside daily unless we are experiencing severe weather – defined as a wind chill of 25 degrees or less and a heat index of 90 degrees or higher. Please send your child appropriately dressed for the weather (hats, gloves, boots etc.).

SUNSCREEN

Soaking up the sun's rays used to be considered healthy before we learned about the dangers of ultraviolet rays. Protecting young people from the sun is especially important as most of our lifetime exposure comes before the age of 20. Y participants spend time outdoors and are thereby exposed to the sun's harmful rays. Since it is our commitment to promote healthy spirits, minds and bodies for all, we have the following sunscreen policies:

- All participants will wear sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 on all exposed skin, including lips, even on cloudy days.
- Parents or legal guardians will be responsible for applying the first layer of sunscreen prior to morning drop-off.
- Parents or guardians will be responsible for providing sunscreen if they do not wish to use the sunscreen provided by the Y. Sunscreen may not be shared between siblings. Label the bottle(s) and hand them directly to staff. The bottle will remain on-site with the child's name on it.
- Staff will be responsible for ensuring thorough follow-up applications after one hour in the water, after two hours of activity in the sun (due to perspiration) and/or any other times as needed.
- Please note, this will mean your child will have sunscreen applied to them by staff. Please explain this to your child before their first day.
- Approved swim shirts are permitted when swimming outdoors.
- Sunscreen must be worn and provided year-round, not just in the summer months.
- The Y reserves the right to disallow anyone to participate in outdoor activities for failure to comply with this policy.
- Please note that this is a requirement of the Department of Health and Human Services, and this requirement was made to protect your child. Our staff members have been trained on this subject and understand their responsibilities and the consequences for failure to follow this policy.

CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

We look forward to celebrating your child's birthday with their friends. Parents may send in "healthy" snacks to be served during snack time. Please review the Healthy Eating & Physical Nutrition Standards in this handbook for guidance. Please notify your classroom teacher of your plans.

BABYSITTING

We view babysitting children enrolled in our programs as a conflict of interest for our staff. Please honor this policy and do not invite any of our staff to privately babysit.

ILLNESS

The YMCA of Greater Erie uses [Caring for our Child](#) to establish policies and practices regarding care plans for children with special needs, asthma, medical needs, food allergies, and medication administration. Forms are given to parents at time of enrollment or as needed to ensure we are following the necessary steps in keeping their child safe.

The Department of Human Services authorizes the Y to deny attendance at Y programs for an ill child. Children thrive in a healthy environment, so we ask that you keep your child home if they are exhibiting any of the following symptoms: *fever of 100.4 or higher, persistent cough, contagious rash, vomiting or diarrhea, or too ill to participate in activities.* Report all symptoms to Y staff. A visit to the child's Primary Care Physician (PCP) may be required to return to care.

Parents will be called when a child becomes ill during the program day. If the Childcare Director determines the child is too ill to remain at the program, parents will be asked to pick their child up within one-hour of the call.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

All communicable diseases **MUST BE** reported to Y staff. Examples of communicable diseases include but are not limited to COVID-19, chicken pox, ringworm, strep throat, scarlet fever, pink eye, impetigo, and scabies. All notifications will be posted anonymously to alert other parents of a communicable disease diagnosis in the childcare center. The child may not return until a Primary Care Physician (PCP) sees them, and the parent presents a note that the child is not contagious and may return to the program.

HEAD LICE

Head lice is a nuisance that parents dread but can occur in a group care setting since head lice is present in all socioeconomic groups and does not represent poor hygiene. If your child is discovered to have head lice, which is spread through head-to-head contact or using a shared objects (hat, helmet, hairbrush), notify your Childcare Director immediately so the staff can quickly control the spread. If your child is discovered to have head lice while they are at the childcare center, parents will be notified and can pick up their child at normal pick-up time. The child can return to the childcare center once they have received treatment recommended by their PCP.

MEDICATIONS

Medications given during the day must be prescribed by a doctor and must be in its original, child-resistant container, be labeled by a pharmacist with the child's name, name and strength of medication, the date of the prescription, name of physician who wrote the prescription, medication's expiration date, administration/storage/disposal instructions. Medication will be given at EXACT times as instructed on the prescription.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE PLAN

To ensure your child's safety, parents are required to check their child in and out each day. Children must also be escorted in and out of the building with a responsible adult. Your child will only be released to persons listed on the child's application form as authorized release persons. We will ask for a photo ID to verify the pick-up person. All people identified by the parents that their child can be released to must be at least 16 years old. Anyone under 18 years may require written permission from the parent in advance. Anyone not listed on the application as a release person may not pick up the child.

The Y requires all parents to be listed on the application. Should you not want the child's mother/father to be an authorized release person, you must provide the Y with a court order stating the custody arrangement and/or a protection from abuse (PFA). The Y is required by law to follow the court ordered arrangement. Should you have questions about this policy and law, please see your Childcare Director or call the Vice President of Youth Development at 452-1432 ext. 1244.

EASING THE TRANSITION

COMMUNICATION

We believe communication between parents and our staff is crucial in ensuring a positive, enjoyable experience for the child. The Y provides notice regarding changes in policy, scheduling or special events via the ProCare app. It is the responsibility of the parent to check for communication daily. You may also use these communication centers to give specific instructions/notes about your own child.

Included in the ProCare app is the sharing of daily activities. Infant and toddler classrooms also share diet, nap times and diapering information within the app.

CHILD OBSERVATIONS AND SCREENING

Children will be formally observed for milestones by classroom teachers three times annually with the first observation and screening called Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) completed within 45 days of enrollment or classroom transition. Parents are encouraged to also assess milestones using the screening tool and share their results with classroom teachers. All observations and screening results are confidential and seen by teachers, early intervention staff (if needed), directors and parents. Assessments help our teachers to write and adapt lesson plans, ensuring they meet all children's needs and abilities. Copies of the screening tool are kept on file.

CLASSROOM AND PROGRAM TRANSITION

Transitions are a celebration of your child's development! Alongside parents, we begin the transition slowly with small time periods in the new classroom every day to adjust to the

new setting; we allow the child to dictate the length of time needed to move to the room so that the child is most comfortable. A transition letter is given to families outlining the process and offering a meeting with parents prior to the transition taking place. All transitions are discussed well in advance with parents

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION

Staff work hard to prepare all children for kindergarten and school success. We follow the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for kindergarten readiness. We have established links to our local school districts and participate in Erie Together programs ensuring that all children have competencies in 50 identified skills for kindergarten readiness.

SELF CARE TRANSITION

We want your family to know that as your child is transitioning from our school age program to self-care, that you are not alone. Our staff can provide your family with tools to ensure your child is ready for self-care. Kids in Control is a packet that teaches about responsibility which can be sent home as well as a family questionnaire. These packets are available at each center and will be offered to parents in the self-care transition letter as a tool to prepare their children for the transition.



Upon arrival and departure, please check your child in/out in ProCare (our electronic attendance record) touchscreen/keypad. You'll be given a unique user ID and password for ProCare.

It is the parent or caretaker's responsibility to provide transportation for the enrolled child to and from the Y's program. Persons designated or authorized to pick up an enrolled child must be listed by name, address and phone number on the child's application form. Each parent or caretaker must provide at least one designated person authorized to pick up an enrolled child.

It is the responsibility of the parent or caretaker to assure that whoever picks up the child is mentally and physically competent to do so and is not under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Any violation of this policy may, at the sole discretion of the Y, result in immediate dismissal of the child from the Y's program. The Y assumes no liability for negligence or otherwise for the release of the child to a parent or caretaker authorized to pick-up an enrolled child.

If a pick-up person arrives who appears to be mentally or physically incompetent and/or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the Y staff shall have the right to take any one or more of the following steps:

1. To contact others on the child's application form regarding pick-up
2. To arrange alternative transportation at the parent's expense

3. To notify the police

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

As part of the childcare tuition fee, the YMCA of Greater Erie will provide supervision, care, and developmentally appropriate activities for your child's age group during center operating hours. These activities will include meals, care, supervision, planning, and implementation of developmentally and age-appropriate activities.

ENROLLMENT FEE

The enrollment fee is \$20/child or \$30/family and is due upon enrollment and is nonrefundable. If your child transfers to another YMCA childcare center, you are not required to pay the enrollment fee. If your child has withdrawn and returns to the program after 6 or more months, you will be required to pay the enrollment fee again.

UNDERSTANDING OUR TUITION

Our weekly rate is based on a 4-day week, receiving the 5th day free. Parents complete a fee agreement upon enrollment stating days and time of care needed. Finance directors determine the weekly contracted fee. This fee will be charged weekly.

VACATION LEAVE FOR CHILDREN

These days may be used individually or in weekly increments. Once these days are used, payment will be expected for any absence. Vacation days will run from January to December; days may not carry over from year to year. No credit is available for unused days. The number of vacation days your child shall receive is based on the number of contracted days weekly.

**This policy does not apply to families receiving ELRC funding, sliding fee discounts or families ONLY enrolled for the summer. **

Days contracted weekly	Vacation days per year
5	10
4	8
3	6
2	4
1	2

Families wishing to take vacation should complete a Vacation Request Form found on the YMCA website. The form is on the Childcare page. Choose your child's age group from the drop-down menu and then scroll down to "additional forms".

HOLIDAYS/INSERVICE DAYS

YMCA of Greater Erie Early Care & School-Age Enrichment Centers observe the following

public holidays and will be closed in observance: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve Day, and Christmas Day. The YMCA also observes Martin Luther King Day each year, the first Friday after the last day of school each year, and the last Friday before the first day of school each year as Teacher Inservice Days. Additional closings are site/program specific, and the intent to close will be posted for all closings at least one month in advance.

NO SCHOOL DAYS

We offer our School-Age Enrichment Program on days the children do not have school during the regular school year. You must sign your child up in advance for all No School Days. We staff according to the number of children enrolled each day; if your child is not signed-up in advance, your child will not be able to stay for the program.

EARLY DISMISSAL DAYS

We offer our School-Age Enrichment Program on days that the school district dismisses prior to their ordinary dismissal time. Advance sign-up is required for this service.

PRE-K COUNTS WRAP ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Children enrolled in our Pre-K Counts program may also be enrolled in our Pre-K Counts Wrap Enrichment Program. This program is NOT covered by the Pre-K Counts grant and payment for this program should be received on Friday for the upcoming week.

SIBLING RATE

The Y offers a \$1/day/child sibling discount program. Ask your Childcare Director for more information.

Y MEMBER DISCOUNT

One of the many benefits of Y membership is a generous discount on Y programs and childcare. Youth memberships (\$25.57/month) allow you to receive a member discount for the child with the membership.

PAYMENT RESPONSIBILITY

Parents are responsible for the full cost of the program. Should you receive any funding through ELRC, the Y's Sliding Fee and Scholarship Program or any other source, you must comply with the funding sources guidelines including timely reporting of wages, employment schedules, child support, payment of weekly fees/copays and deposit.

Should you run into difficulty meeting your payment responsibility, please contact your Childcare Director BEFORE becoming delinquent. Because Y programs are for everyone, the Y offers many different types of financial assistance.

It is the policy of the Y that no person be denied membership or program participation because of inability to pay fees. Funds made available for scholarships are provided by the Y's Annual Campaign fund, which was generously donated by staff, members and the community. Additional financial aid is available through Erie's Futures Fund and Pre-K Counts.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Our program is set up on a weekly rate system with payment due on Friday for the upcoming week. All payments must be made by check or money order and placed in a locked box at the Program Center or made in person at a YMCA of Greater Erie Membership Desk. Families wishing to pay with MasterCard, Visa and Discover may only do so at a YMCA of Greater Erie Membership Desk. Payments may also be made through automatic bank draft using Tuition Express or online through the parent's ProCare account at myprocare.com. Receipts will be given only to those making payment in person at a YMCA Membership Desk.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

It is important that your child is picked up on time. If you are late past our closing time, we will charge \$1/minute per child as a late fee due at the time of pick-up for any child picked up after our closing times - 6p.m. If you will be later than your normal pick-up time, please call.



RETURNED CHECKS

There is up to a \$35 handling fee for any Non-Sufficient Fund check. After 2 returned checks per calendar year, checks will not be accepted.

RECEIPTS & STATEMENTS

Each family will receive a monthly statement detailing your account activity. Families needing documentation should retain their receipts and/or monthly statements for this purpose.

WITHDRAWAL

If you wish to withdraw your child from a Y program, a written notice must be given to the Childcare Director within two weeks of the child's last day. You are responsible for fees during the notice period. We also request written notice to obtain copies of your child's records.

If the Y deems it necessary to withdraw your child, we will consider the following grounds for withdrawal:

- Delinquent fees & failure to maintain the contracted payment schedule
- Failure to comply with Department of Human Services regulations
- Failure to comply with the policies in this handbook

- Behavioral challenges (refer to discipline policy)
- Failure to submit a physical exam within the approved timeframes
- Child's needs not being met by the Y

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Because Y programs are for everyone, the Y offers many different types of financial assistance. Financial assistance is available for working families needing help through Pennsylvania Childcare Information Services (ELRC) - call (814) 836-5898. ELRC shares the concern of parents that programs and centers in Pennsylvania meet health and safety standards. Through their Certification Services Bureau, they certify and register facilities to make sure they meet specific standards. In Erie, our ELRC office is located at:

Early Learning Resource Center
Crawford/Erie/Mercer/Venango
3823 W. 12th St.
Erie, PA 16505-3381
Phone: (814) 836-5898
Toll-Free: 1-800-860-2281
Fax: (814) 836-9615

It is the policy of the Y that no person be denied membership or program participation because of inability to pay fees. Funds made available for scholarships are provided by the Y's Annual Campaign fund, which was generously donated by staff, members and the community. Additional financial aid is available through Erie's Futures Fund and Pre-K Counts. Speak to your YMCA Early Care & School-Age Enrichment Center Director for more information.

GRIEVANCE

Even in the highest quality program, you may have questions or concerns about your child and the program. Here at the Y, we believe that communication is essential. If you have an issue or concern, please take the following steps:

- Talk with your child's lead teacher
- Talk with the Assistant Childcare Director/Childcare Director
- Talk with the Branch Executive Director or call the Vice President of Youth Development at 452-1432 ext. 1244
- Talk with the CEO at 452-1432 ext. 1230

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I have reviewed and understand that the YMCA of Greater Erie has an **Emergency Preparedness Plan** for all childcare centers.

I have reviewed and understood the YMCA **Early Childhood Expulsion and Suspension Policy** and the consequences of unsafe behavior.

I have reviewed and understood the YMCA **Childcare Discipline Policy** and the consequences of unsafe behavior.

I have reviewed and understood the YMCA **Sunscreen Policy**. If I choose not to comply, my child may not participate in the Y childcare program.

I, the undersigned parent and/or legal guardian, hereby release and agree to indemnify and hold harmless, the Greater Erie Young Men's Christian Association from all liability which might result from the release of a child to the parent or legal guardian, or anyone designated or authorized to pick up an enrolled child.

I HAVE READ THE YMCA FAMILY HANDBOOK AND, BY CONTINUING ONLINE ENROLLMENT, I CONSENT AND AGREE TO THE POLICIES WITHIN.

Parent/Guardian signature

Date