

YMCA OF GREATER ERIE

Early Care & School-Age Enrichment Program

PARENT HANDBOOK



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

Edit: 8/2026

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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.

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.

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.

CURRICULUM

The YMCA is proud to implement The Creative Curriculum® across all of our Early Learning and School-Age locations. During the summer months, we expand on this curriculum by incorporating key components alongside resources from Learning Lamp to design engaging, developmentally appropriate lesson plans for our school-age students.

The Creative Curriculum® provides a comprehensive, research-based framework that supports differentiated instruction and nurtures the whole child—cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development. Learning Lamp enhances this work by offering high-quality educational programs and lesson plans aligned with Pennsylvania Learning Standards, ensuring consistency, enrichment, and continued growth in your child's learning journey.

Throughout the year, we schedule opportunities to meet with families to review each child's developmental progress and discuss their readiness for upcoming milestones or transitions. We also offer conferences at multiple points during the year to partner with families on specific goals, interests, or skills you would like us to focus on, ensuring consistent support and alignment between

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

At the YMCA, 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.
- 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, water and fire safety and Pediatric first aid/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

We require all 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. 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

We welcome children of all abilities and medical needs and strive to provide the best experience for children and families; **we require all families to have a one-on-one meet and greet with the Childcare Director before their first day.**

TRIAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

All children participate in a trial enrollment period of up to two weeks. This trial period allows everyone—the child, family, and staff—to see how the placement is working in real time.

During the trial period, staff observe how the child adjusts to daily routines, interacts with peers, and responds to the classroom environment. Families and staff communicate regularly to share observations, address questions, and ensure the program is a good fit.

At the conclusion of the trial period, the program will confirm ongoing enrollment or discuss next steps with the family to support the child's success.

OUR ENROLLMENT PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Observation of the child in a classroom setting and child's adaption to the group of children
- 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.
- Discussion of child's needs with staff person
- 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
- Meeting with 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 Individualized Education Plan (IEP)/Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). The following steps are taken to ensure that the child's needs are being met:

- Parents are required to submit a copy of their child's IEP/IFSP in advance to first day of care, if one has been developed.
- The classroom teacher will do informal observation and individualize activities 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 online at www.ymcaerie.org.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT & CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Our childcare program celebrates the diverse languages, cultures, and traditions that families bring to our community. We believe that children learn best when their identity is honored and when they see their home language and cultural background reflected in their daily environment.

We are committed to creating a space where every child and family feels respected, included, and valued. To support this, we:

- Welcome and use children's home languages
- Staff greet children in their home language when possible, learn key words from families (such as "water," "all done," "hug," or "bathroom"), and encourage children to express themselves in the language they are most comfortable with.
- Include culturally diverse materials
- Our classrooms feature books, dolls, music, art, and play materials that represent a wide range of cultures, family structures, and languages.
- Partner with families to learn about traditions and routines
- We invite families to share cultural celebrations, songs, stories, or special activities. We also ask about home routines—such as comfort items, feeding practices, or greetings—so we can support consistency for children.
- Provide translation and interpretation support when needed
- We work to ensure families receive important information in a language they understand. This may include translated documents, interpretation during meetings, or visual supports.
- Celebrate cultural diversity throughout the year
- We highlight cultural holidays, foods, and traditions in ways that are respectful and inclusive, ensuring all children see themselves represented.
- Support multilingual development

We encourage children to maintain their home language while also building English skills through songs, stories, conversations, and play.

YMCA of Greater Erie SUSPENSION, EXPULSION & INCLUSION POLICY

The YMCA of Greater Erie is committed to ensuring that all children have access to a high-quality, inclusive early childhood program that supports their social, emotional, and behavioral development. We believe that challenging behavior is a form of communication—not a reason for removal—and that children thrive when families, teachers, and leadership work together.

Our goals are to:

- Prevent suspension and expulsion through proactive, developmentally appropriate practices
- Build strong, culturally responsive partnerships with families
- Support teachers with training, coaching, and reflective practice
- Ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement
- Protect the rights of children with disabilities under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Suspension and expulsion are used only as last-resort safety measures after all supports have been attempted, documented, and reviewed with families.

DEFINITIONS

Suspension:

A temporary, time-limited removal from the classroom or program due to behavior that presents an immediate safety concern and cannot be safely managed in the moment.

Expulsion:

The permanent removal of a child from the program. This is extremely rare and only considered after all supports, accommodations, and collaborative planning have been exhausted.

PREVENTION PRACTICES: How We Support Children Every Day

To prevent suspension and expulsion, the YMCA uses the following practices consistently and equitably:

- Developmental & behavioral screening within 45 days of enrollment and as needed
- Developmentally appropriate practices that match children's ages, abilities, and cultural backgrounds
- Intentional social-emotional teaching using Conscious Discipline®
- Predictable schedules that reduce stress around transitions, meals, rest, and movement
- Adapted learning environments that promote positive interactions and independence
- Clear, consistent expectations taught through modeling and positive reinforcement
- Ongoing professional development in cultural competence, implicit bias, trauma-informed care, and social-emotional learning
- Strong relationships with families through daily communication, conferences, and engagement opportunities

HOW TEACHERS ARE SUPPORTED

Challenging behavior is often a sign that the environment or routine needs adjustment. Teachers receive coaching and leadership support to reflect on:

Transitions

- Reducing long waits
- Using visual schedules and cues
- Preparing children for changes

Daily Schedule

- Ensuring balance between active play, rest, and learning
- Minimizing rushed or overstimulating periods

Physical Environment

- Organizing materials
- Reducing clutter and noise
- Creating calm, predictable spaces

Lesson Planning

- Designing engaging, hands-on activities
- Matching instruction to developmental levels

ASSESSMENT

- Using observation and data to understand triggers, strengths, and needs
- Adjusting strategies based on what the data shows

These supports ensure teachers are never left alone to manage challenging behavior without tools, coaching, or leadership involvement.

How Families Are Supported and Included

Families are essential partners in preventing suspension and expulsion. We intentionally build relationships and incorporate family values into daily practice through:

Relationship-Building Practices

- Parent-teacher conferences
- Intake questionnaires to understand culture, routines, and strengths
- Family visit nights and engagement events
- Clear expectations for staff-family communication in the staff handbook
-

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS WHEN BEHAVIOR BECOMES CHALLENGING

Families will always know what to expect. We follow a clear, supportive process:

Step 1: Early Communication & Observation

- Teachers observe patterns and triggers
- Families are contacted early to share insights
- Strategies are tried in the classroom and at home (if families choose)

Step 2: Classroom Support Plan

- Adjustments to environment, schedule, and teaching strategies
- Increased positive reinforcement
- Visual supports and social-emotional lessons
- Families receive a simple written plan and regular updates

Step 3: Team Meeting & Individualized Behavior Support Plan

If challenges continue:

- Meeting with family, teacher, director, and behavior specialist
- Review of observations and screening results
- Creation of a written plan with goals, strategies, and progress measures

Step 4: Accessing Additional Supports

If a disability is suspected or known:

- Referrals to Early Intervention, mental health consultants, or school district
- Collaboration with specialists
- Implementation of reasonable accommodations
-

LEGAL PROTECTIONS

- IDEA ensures eligible children receive services in the least restrictive environment
- Section 504 prohibits discrimination and requires accommodations
- Children cannot be suspended or expelled for behavior related to a disability without first

PROGRAM LEVEL GOAL SETTING, DATA TRACKING & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

TO ENSURE FAIRNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS, the YMCA :

- Identifies clear indicators of success for new policies
- Includes staff representatives in reviewing behavior data and planning supports
- Trains staff on referral processes, documentation, and goal-setting
- Identifies resources for children needing intensive services
- Creates a tracking system documenting all supports provided
- Provides staff time to document behaviors and progress
- Reviews past suspension/expulsion data to identify root causes and inequities
- Uses data to select teaching strategies that match developmental abilities

This ensures decisions are informed, equitable, and aligned with best practices.

SAFETY-BASED SUSPENSION (Last Resort)

If a child's behavior presents an immediate, serious safety risk:

- Families may be asked to pick up the child for the remainder of the day
- A meeting will be scheduled before return to strengthen the support plan

Suspension is never used as punishment and is always paired with increased supports.

EXPULSION (Extremely Rare)

Expulsion is considered only when:

- All supports, accommodations, and referrals have been attempted
- Safety concerns remain severe and ongoing
- Families have been fully involved in planning
- Documentation shows that continued enrollment is unsafe

If expulsion is necessary:

- Families receive written documentation of all supports attempted
- The director assists with transition to another program
- Referrals to mental/behavioral health and Early Intervention are provided

RESOURCES:

1. CONNECT Helpline – 1-800-692-7288, help@connectpa.net
2. Early Learning Resource Center – Region 1, (814) 836-5898
3. Achievement Center – (888) 821-3110
4. Gertrude A. Barber Center – (814) 874-5671
5. Northwest Tri-County Intermediate Unit 5 – (814) 734-5610
6. Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation – PAIECMH@pakeys.org
7. Erie School District Early Intervention – (814) 874-6155

Teachers/Caregivers: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#teachingskills>

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– the child will be sent home and terminated from the program or 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, and natural disaster/severe weather. 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.

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 do not call during the emergency. This will help keep the main telephone lines free to ~~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.

If you are interested on reviewing the Y's Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome, Abusive Head Trauma and Child Maltreatment please request access from your child care 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 at 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
- 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.).

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 the same 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 experience from birth to 5 years.

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 policy: 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.

CELEBRATING BIRTHDAYS

Please note that this is a requirement of the Department of Health and Human Services, and this requirement was made to protect your child. 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. Our staff members have been trained on this subject and understand their responsibilities and the consequences for failure to follow this policy.

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 ill, parents will be asked to pick up their child.

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 headlice, 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.

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.

SUPERVISION OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN FROM CHILD CARE CENTER TO SCHOOL OR SCHOOL TO CHILD CARE CENTER

Your child's safety is our top priority. To ensure children are always supervised, we clearly define when responsibility for care begins and ends during pick-up, drop-off, and transportation to and from school.

From Child Care to School

Our program is responsible for your child until one of the following happens:

- Your child gets on the school bus, or
- Your child enters the school building.

At that point, supervision transfers to the school. If a different arrangement is needed, it must be documented in a written agreement signed by the parent or guardian.

From School to Child Care

Our supervision begins when:

- Your child gets off the school bus,
- Your child enters a childcare bus or van, or
- A childcare staff member meets your child at school and walks them to the childcare facility.

From that moment on, your child is under the supervision of our program unless a different plan has been agreed upon in writing.

Any special arrangements related to transportation or supervision must be approved in advance by childcare director and documented in writing and placed in child's file.

ARRIVAL AND 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 an authorized release person, will ask for photo ID to verify the pickup person. All people identified by the parents that their child can be released to must be at least 16 years old. Anyone under 18 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.

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.

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 children to a parent or caretaker authorized to pick up an enrolled child. If a pickup person arrives who appears to be mentally or physically incompetent and or under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the Y shall have the right to take any one or more of the following steps:

- To contact others on the child's application form regarding pickup.
- To arrange alternate transportation at the parent's expense.
- 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 Child Care 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 each year Martin Luther King Day, Columbus Day, 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 child care 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.

Tuition Rate Changes (Ages 0–3)

Child care tuition rates for children ages 0–3 are based on the child's age. Rate changes will occur on the child's birthday, when the child reaches the next age category.

Families will be notified in advance of any upcoming rate change. The updated rate will take effect on the first billing cycle following the child's birthday unless otherwise stated.

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:

- 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

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 the YMCA of Greater Erie childcare policies located in the parent handbook, including:

- The Emergency Preparedness Plan for all YMCA childcare centers.
- The Early Childhood Expulsion and Suspension Policy.
- The Child Care Discipline Policy, including the consequences of unsafe behavior.
- The Sunscreen Policy. If I choose not to comply, my child may not participate in the Y childcare program.
- The policy for transferring care from school to childcare center and childcare center to school.

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 ENROLLMENT OF MY CHILD IN ANY YMCA OF GREATER ERIE CHILDCARE LOCATIONS, I CONSENT AND AGREE TO THE POLICIES WITHIN.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date