

YWCA Hartford Region Early Learning Programs

Parent Handbook
Revised July 2008

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
hartford region

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WELCOME

Welcome to the YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc.'s early learning programs. We look forward to building a partnership to assure your child's healthy development. Our programs provide full- and part-time programs for children ages 6 weeks to 5 years.

The YWCA is a membership organization. We require an adult membership of all families whose children under 12 are enrolled in our programs, unless you have a child participating in a school readiness program.

YWCA STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

- We believe that children learn best in a setting that respects their unique patterns of growth and development.
- We believe that the setting must be physically and emotionally safe if children are to develop trust in their world.
- We believe that children benefit from the company of others. We encourage the development of social skills by arranging opportunities for small and large group activities.
- We believe in a child's desire for independence. We provide an environment rich with opportunities to help children develop a positive self-concept.
- We believe in the natural creativity of children. Each individual's creative expression is unique and valued.
- We believe that children should exercise and play. We plan time for fine and gross motor skill development activities.
- We believe in families. We see ourselves as part of an extended family, working with families to provide the very best care for their children.
- We believe that children learn best in an accepting and nurturing setting that reflects the world around them. We provide opportunities that empower women and families.
- We believe in demonstrating responsive attitudes and practices to diverse cultures throughout the organization.

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM OFFERINGS

The YWCA of the Hartford Region programs welcome children from diverse backgrounds, knowing that playing and developing together from a very young age form the basis for better understanding in the future. All programs are state licensed and adhere to strict state guidelines and regulations, while providing safety and structure for children. Early learning programs prepare children for kindergarten following the State Department of Education (SDE) Preschool Curriculum Framework and Benchmarks for Children. Daily activities in early learning programs may include: literacy, science, math, cognitive, arts and crafts, outside play (weather permitting), cooking, music, circle time, gross motor activities, group games, story time and dramatic play among others.

PROGRAM SCHEDULES AND CLOSINGS

Early learning centers operate year-round from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. All YWCA programs are closed on the following days/holidays:

New Years Day	Martin Luther King Day	Presidents Day
Memorial Day	Independence Day	Labor Day
Thanksgiving and Friday following	Christmas Day	

In addition, programs close at 3:00 PM on the eve of Christmas and New Years Day. Also programs close early on a Friday in June for a staff retreat and are closed for three days in August for mandatory staff training. Specific dates are announced at least 30 days in advance.

In the event of inclement weather – closings, late openings and early dismissals will be announced on WTIC AM and WFSB Channel 3.

STAFFING

We hire qualified staff members who, at a minimum, meet all licensing requirements of the State of Connecticut. Child/staff ratios are 10:1 for all children over 3 years old and a 4:1 for children under 3. In many cases, the ratio exceeds these minimums. Substitutes, students and volunteers are also part of our programs. All staff and volunteers are screened and trained as required by State of Connecticut regulations.

We have taken steps to promote the safety and protection of children at YWCA programs. Careful pre-employment screening is one method of protection. Additionally staff members receive training in appropriate childcare and behavior modeling techniques, and the YWCA maintains strict guidelines as to the nature and type of staff/child interactions.

Babysitting: Staff members are not permitted to provide babysitting services for families enrolled in YWCA programs.

ADMISSION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The YWCA of the Hartford Region, Inc. believes there is strength in diversity. We offer equal access to all programs and services and do not discriminate in admission or employment on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, gender, religion, marital status, disability, political belief, military status or language differences. All childcare programs are inclusive and made available to children without regard to individual ability according to federal and state law.

- Prior to enrollment families must complete the registration process as described below and deliver all requirements to the Center.
- A transitional visit for your child will be scheduled prior to the first day of participation in the program.
- Families are asked to schedule a visit with the program Site Manager for you and your child to review policies and procedures.

At registration the following is required:

- a) A current non-refundable YWCA membership or membership fee and member registration (not required for School Readiness Participants and TOP programs), along with the first tuition payment.
- b) Program Registration Form
- c) Up to date Physical Health Form (including immunization record)
- d) Child Development History Intake Form and Nutrition Questionnaire
- e) Emergency Forms (including Childcare Enrollment, Authorization, and Emergency Medical Permission Forms)
- f) Signed Letter of Agreement that includes a statement indicating the family has read and understands the Family Handbook
- g) Food Program application
- h) School Readiness eligibility form (if applicable)
- i) Authorization Form regarding photo, video, recording
- j) A recent photo of your child
- k) Birth Certificate
- l) Proof of address (for example: a utility bill, in your name, that is sent to your home address)
- m) Valid photo ID of parent(s)

When you enroll your child, you are asked to state the hours during the day that you need childcare and you must adhere to this schedule. We plan our staffing patterns around this information, and need to maintain adequate teacher-child ratios at all times.

In our childcare facilities, **we ask that you not exceed a nine-hour day** – not only is it difficult to ensure appropriate teacher-child ratios, but it makes for a very long day for your child.

HOME – SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

We firmly believe that one important key to a high-quality child care is parent participation and strongly encourage parent involvement. We offer a wide variety of suggestions for ways that you can become involved, make the YWCA a better place for the children and have fun!

Parent involvement is encouraged in the following areas:

- Parent Meetings
- Ongoing planning, development and evaluation of the program
- Parent-teacher conferences
- Fund raising
- Involvement with day-to-day activities (i.e., read a story, do a favorite cooking activity, share a special interest or hobby)
- Educational and community activities
- Participation in center-based family events
- Field trip supervision and planning

Special announcements and other information will be posted on the Parent's Bulletin Board. Each classroom has its own bulletin board where you will find a variety of wonderful information, such as daily schedule, snack menu, lesson plans, special events and information on newly enrolled children/families.

Childcare staff will also provide you with a personalized daily report to inform you of your child's day, samples of your child's work and creativity and administrative notices. All of these materials can be found in your child's cubby and should be taken home and reviewed on a daily basis.

Parent meetings are another way to stay informed of all the events happening within the Center. Childcare is available on a sign-up basis at no cost to the family and light refreshments are usually provided.

It is important to establish open parent-teacher communication to ensure the most positive educational and nurturing experience for your child. Staff will share a variety of information with you on a daily basis. If a concern arises, we will share it with you in a direct, professional and timely manner; PLEASE do the same with us. Our goal is to develop a parent-teacher team that is committed to open and direct communication on all issues.

QUALIFYING FOR SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS

Certain early learning centers are approved School Readiness sites. These programs are supported by state funds that are designed to increase preschool enrollment in designated towns and cities. Families eligible for the programs are expected to share the program costs with the state and other agencies. Tuition is based on a sliding fee scale, determined by family income and size.

Grant awards are subject to approval by SDE and local School Readiness Councils. Families cannot assume that these subsidies are automatic. According to the Department of Social Services, all families are required to provide proof of income and residency at the time of enrollment and every six months thereafter. If a family's financial situation changes for any reason they **MUST** reapply for this program. All families that apply for the

School Readiness program must also apply for the Care4Kids Program. Also note: If approved by Care4Kids, families are responsible for the parent share noted on the Care4kids certificate.

DAILY PROCEDURES & COMMUNICATION

Emergency Contacts

Emergency contacts must be individuals other than parents or guardians. All emergency contacts must be kept current. It is essential that any changes to telephone numbers (home, cell or work), emergency contacts names, and addresses be given to your child's teacher or the Center's Site Manager. Beeper numbers will not be accepted. Failure to notify the Site Manager of changes to emergency contact numbers can result in a child's dismissal from the program.

Daily Drop Off and Pick Up

It is ESSENTIAL, and required by state regulations, that parents sign their children in when they arrive and sign out when they depart from the Center every day, as well as noting the time of day. This is critical information for us to have in the event we need to evacuate the Center. The sign in/out sheets are displayed prominently in each classroom.

Children are NOT allowed to enter or exit the program site without a parent or designated adult. Adults must present photo ID if they are not known to the staff on duty. If someone else will pick up your child, please notify the staff in advance. It must be a person you have designated on registration forms. Please note this information on the daily report. No one under age 18 (including siblings) may be listed as an emergency contact or may sign your child in or out.

Childcare Centers have secured entrances to assure that only authorized persons enter the Center. Please do not hold the door for any person not authorized to gain access to the Childcare Center.

Daily Reports

Daily reports allow you to give us vital information about your child, while the YWCA is able to record your child's activities, eating habits and any unusual events of her/his day upon arrival. Families/guardians are asked to complete their portion of the daily report. Staff will add details of your child's daily activities.

Arrival

We believe your child's learning experience begins the moment they walk in the door. You can help teach your child valuable social skills by greeting staff when dropping her/him off in the morning. Parents are asked to refrain from using their cell phones during arrival time. Children must be dropped off at the Center no later than 9:30 AM. Arriving after 9:30 AM interrupts important group activities, distracts other children, and may make for a more difficult transition for your child. We do understand that on occasion you will be unable to be on time due to scheduled appointments. On these occasions, please notify the Center at least a day in advance and notify us of your anticipated late arrival. If we are not notified, we will not accept your child for the day. Please observe the following when dropping off your child each morning:

- Hold your child's hand from car door to Center door. When you are dropping off your child in the morning, please bring him/her directly into the classroom.
- Provide us with the phone number where you can be reached each day right on the sign-in sheet.
- Notify the child's teacher of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. The parent must present the special instructions IN WRITING and verbally discuss them with the classroom teacher. These special instructions include but are not limited to: early pick-up, alternative pick-up person, health issues over the previous night that need to be observed but do not warrant exclusion from care, and/or any general concerns that the child care providers should be aware of to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

Pick Up

Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on the sign-out sheet located prominently in each classroom. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on YWCA premises. The parent should not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms and/or playground. Please take home all papers from the child's cubby each day.

The staff of the YWCA will contact local police and the child's other custodial parent should a parent appear to the staff to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit the Center from denying a custodial parent access to their child if the parent is or appears to be impaired. Any other authorized person who attempts to pick up a child and appears to the staff of the YWCA to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. The staff of the YWCA will contact the child's parent(s), and/ or local police to notify them of the situation.

No one under age 18 (including siblings) may be listed as an emergency contact or may sign your child in or out of a program.

Parents are encouraged to talk to staff and their child about the days activities when they pick up their children. In order to give your child your full attention, please refrain from using cell phones.

Absences

If your child will be absent for any reason, you must notify the program center before 9 a.m. on the day of absence or write a note in advance with the date(s) of her/his absence.

Conferences

The staff is always available to work cooperatively with your family to meet your child's individual needs. During drop off and pick up times you should take the opportunity to learn about your child's day. At any time should you or the staff find it helpful to talk more formally about progress and issues, we will arrange a conference. Formal parent teacher conferences are scheduled throughout the year.

"Open Door" Policy/ Visits & Volunteering

Once you have enrolled your child at a YWCA program, you are welcome at any time. You never need to call ahead to announce your intention to visit. We look forward to having you drop by as your schedule permits. Other visitors should request an appointment in advance. We believe that your involvement enhances the program and we encourage participation by families and members of the community. We also are eager for you to share personal talents or interests with us. Crafts, computer skills, storytelling, and other activities are welcome additions to our programs.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order or Protection from Abuse Order), the YWCA must be provided with a certified copy of the most recent order and all amendments. **Court orders will be strictly followed.**

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, the YWCA is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of the YWCA cannot, at the request of anyone except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated.

In the absence of a court order on file with the YWCA, both parents shall be allowed equal access to their child as stipulated by law. The YWCA cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent at the request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, the YWCA suggests that the parent keep the child with him/herself until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody as per the court order. For example, if a parent is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays that parent is only able to volunteer on those days. Parents with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements) are only permitted to volunteer with the express written permission of the custodial parent.

Fundraising

The YWCA may sponsor fundraising events throughout the year for special projects and activities. Participation in fundraising events is voluntary and greatly appreciated.

Family Information Area

Each site offers a family resource area. Information in the family resource area includes program happenings, special upcoming events, current health and education information and program newsletters. We encourage families to check the resource area frequently.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Health experts agree on the importance of fresh air and exercise as a part of children's daily routine in order to release energy and develop gross motor skills. We schedule outdoor play and activity and it is expected that all children will participate daily.

We play outside throughout the year. When the temperature drops below 32 degrees F, playtime is limited to 30 minutes. In warm weather, children are kept hydrated with frequent drinks of water.

CLOTHING

The most appropriate kind of clothing is easy fitting, comfortable, washable and easy to maintain as clothes are likely to get soiled.

- Please provide proper clothing for outdoor play in all weather, including long pants in cold weather and shoes suitable for running and climbing (flips-flops and sandals can lead to serious injury). Layers of warm clothing that fit loosely for cold weather are especially important. Your child will need gloves or mittens, boots, and a hat.
- A complete change of clothing including shirt, pants, underwear, and socks must be provided. All clothing is to be labeled with indelible marker or cloth name labels. The YWCA cannot be responsible for lost or damaged clothing.
- Please do not dress young children in clothing with difficult fasteners. This presents particular challenges for children in relation to toileting.

JEWELRY AND ACCESSORIES

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Hair beads, barrettes, etc. are not to be worn by children under age 3. These accessories are a safety and a choking hazard.

TOYS FROM HOME

Children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Parents are encouraged to consult the classroom teacher should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy. A cuddly friend for naptime is welcome; however, at no time will super hero toys, toy guns and/or weapons be allowed in any of our programs.

HOLIDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

The YWCA stands with firm roots in our belief in diversity. We expose children to a variety of cultural experiences as part of our curriculum. Holidays and special celebrations from many cultures throughout the world are part of our programs.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are special days for children. We encourage families to celebrate these events with your child and their classmates. Parents may send in a special birthday treat. Prepackaged low sugar cookies, quick breads or muffins are recommended (rather than sugary treats such as cupcakes). Please let the Site Manager or teacher know what ingredients are in birthday treats as some children may be allergic to items. **NOTE: WE DO NOT PERMIT BALLOONS IN OUR PROGRAMS.** Please notify staff in advance if you plan to provide birthday treats.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The YWCA does not permit outside agencies or vendors to photograph or videotape children without consent signed by families. However, we reserve the right to take photographs of children in our programs for educational purposes. We identify children only by first name and age for use in our program site. Any photographs for YWCA publication will not be used without family authorization. Authorization forms are provided at time of registration.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

All YWCA programs are continuously monitored for health and safety. In order to reduce exposure to illness, we adhere to the following practices:

- Children wash their hands upon arriving in the morning, entering the classroom from the playground, after using the bathrooms, before eating, or when otherwise necessary.
- Children are assisted with proper hand washing techniques.
- Toys are washed and disinfected regularly.
- Tables are sanitized with an approved solution.
- Cots for young children are sanitized and washed weekly.
- Equipment is checked regularly to ensure safety.

Illness/ Exclusion Policy

If your child becomes ill during the day, we will contact you to pick her/him up immediately. If we cannot reach you, staff will contact name(s) on the emergency information form. After trying to reach a family and/or emergency contact for one hour, we will seek medical attention for the child. Families are responsible for any medical costs.

The following are guidelines for exclusion from the program:

- A temperature of 100 degrees axillary
- One or more episodes of vomiting
- One or more episodes of diarrhea
- Symptoms of communicable/contagious conditions (chickenpox, head lice, conjunctivitis, etc.)
- Severe nasal and chest congestion and a cough that interferes with daily activities
- Behaviors indicating pain or distress
- Children who cannot participate in normal daily activities/schedule

You must notify staff immediately if your child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness. **When an illness such as diarrhea, vomiting or fever requires exclusion, we require children to remain at home until they have been symptom free (without any kind of fever-reducing medication) for 24 hours.**

Infant Sleep Position Policy

Unless the child has a note from a physician specifying otherwise, infants under 12 months of age shall be placed on their backs on a firm, tight-fitting mattress for sleep in a crib to lower the risk of SIDS. Soft mattresses, pillows and other soft surfaces are not allowed in the crib. If a blanket is used, the infant shall be placed at the foot of the crib with a thin blanket tucked around the crib mattress, reaching only as far as the infant's chest. The infant's head shall remain uncovered during sleep.

When infants can easily turn over from the back position to the prone position (stomach), they shall be put down to sleep on their backs, but allowed to adopt whatever position they prefer for sleep. Unless a doctor specifies the need for a positioning device that restricts movement within the child's crib, such devices shall not be used.

Children's Health Records

Children are required to have a current health form and immunization record. All health forms, annual physicals and immunizations must be kept up-to-date according to state licensing regulations.

Special Care Policy

Special diets, health conditions and/or allergies must be recorded in the child's health history upon enrollment and brought to the attention of the Site Manager and teacher. A "Special Care Plan" will be completed by parent(s), staff, child's physician and the YWCA Nurse Consultant, if appropriate prior to the first day of attendance. We make every effort to make all reasonable accommodations for a child's specific health issues.

Medication

The YWCA recommends that prescription medicine not be administered during the program day. Ask your child's physician to prescribe medications in dosages that can be done before or after program hours. If it is necessary to administer medication, the staff will do so only in accordance with state regulations and our policy.

The following procedures must be followed and forms must be completed prior to a trained staff member administering the prescription/medication: *Medication Permission Forms must be filled out and signed by 1) the child's physician 2) the parent/guardian 3) a staff member.* They will be kept on file at the Center. Permission forms are available from the staff. Medicine must be provided to the YWCA in the original prescription container. The name of the medication, expiration date, child's name, date of birth and strength of medication must be clearly labeled on the prescription container.

YWCA staff will not administer the first dosage of a medication. The first dose should be administered by the parent/guardian at home in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the medication, and to observe possible side effects.

Children may not be in possession of any medicines. This includes leaving medications in a child's lunch box, bottle, food, etc. Families/guardians must provide the medication to the YWCA staff directly. Medication is stored in a locked box at the Center and is inaccessible to children. All unused medication shall be returned to the family. If medication is not picked up, the staff will discard it.

No "over the counter" medications will be administered (unless prescribed by a physician in conjunction with the administration of an Epi-Pen). "Over the counter" topical treatments such as sunscreen and diaper changing ointments require parental permission forms for staff to use them. Authorization forms will be provided during registration and are available from staff.

Emergency Care Procedures

At least one staff member in each center is trained in first aid/CPR for children. In the event of an accident that requires medical attention, we employ the following procedures:

If immediate, emergency medical treatment is required a staff member will call 911 and families are contacted immediately. If families can't be reached, designated emergency contacts will be called. If necessary, your child will be transported to the nearest hospital emergency room by paramedics. A staff member will accompany her/him.

If a less serious injury occurs, staff administers first aid on site. Families will be contacted and families will receive an Incident Report stating the details of any injury.

Despite precautions, minor accidents occur in the course of everyday play and activity. When a minor injury (i.e. small bumps, scraped knees, etc.) occurs that requires first aid, you will receive a written "Ouch Report". The "Ouch Report" includes the following information: description of what happened, first aid administered, description of the mark that remains, who treated the child and who the incident was reported to. A parent or guardian must sign the form when picking up your child.

Emergency Supplies

During an emergency or disaster situation, communication with those outside the Center may be extremely difficult. It is absolutely crucial that we have accurate phone numbers for:

- Home
- Work
- Cell (if appropriate)
- Pick-up contacts
- Emergency contacts

Upon enrollment, each family will be given a canvas bag to fill with the following emergency supplies to be stored at the center:

For Infants/ Toddlers:

- 32 ounce bottle of water
- Powdered formula (if appropriate)
- Jars of infant/toddler food for three days and/or cans of ready-to-eat food that your child will eat
- Pre-packaged "space blanket" (if introduced previously and appropriate for the age of the child)
- A few extra diapers, if appropriate. It is important not to let your child's everyday diapering supplies fall below what we might need for three days
- One-gallon container of distilled water (to be stored separately)

Preschoolers:

- 32 ounce bottle of water
- Ready-to-eat canned meat, beans, soup, pasta, stew, etc. for three days
- Box of breakfast bars
- Pre-packaged "space blanket" (available in automotive sections of department stores)
- A few extra diapers/pull-ups, if appropriate
- One gallon container of distilled water (to be stored separately)

Nutrition

Nutritious snacks are provided in the morning and afternoon. Parents should provide a bag lunch for their children. **MICROWAVE OVENS ARE NOT USED TO HEAT LUNCHES.**

Children's nutritional needs must be met for them to maintain the energy and interest needed to have a productive day. Parents must provide a nutritionally sound lunch. Staff routinely monitors the types of food brought from home and will speak with you about any concerns regarding your child's eating habits.

If your child requires a special diet or has food allergies, please notify the teacher and supplement your child's snack when needed. Allergies for children in our programs are posted so that all staff is aware and take appropriate precautions.

Other important guidelines:

- Grapes, hot dogs and other small, round foods must be cut lengthwise and then crosswise to prevent choking. It is not the size but the round shape that causes choking.
- Certain foods cause allergic reactions. Please try all foods at home twice before sending them into the Center for your child.
- Due to the limited amount of space in our refrigerator, please send only one day's worth of food that needs to be refrigerated at a time.
- Please make sure that your child's lunch and all its contents are labeled with his/her name and place all items requiring refrigeration in the classroom refrigerator. Because of food allergies, we ask that children not share foods brought from home with each other.
- Bottles or food containers must be covered.
- Glass bottles or containers of any kind are not permitted.

The YWCA participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program. You will be required to complete a form for participation in this program on an annual basis.

Please send in 100% fruit juice if you choose to send in a drink in addition to the milk we provide. **Please do not send in candy, gum or excessive desserts.** Even though you are packing your child's lunch at home to be brought to the Center, the lunch must meet the Child and Adult Food Program guidelines. These guidelines ensure a healthy lunch for your child.

Guidelines for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

Recommended Lunch Nutritional Components

	Toddler	Preschool
Vegetable or Fruit	¼ cup	½ cup
Bread or pasta	½ slice or ¼ cup	½ slice or ½ cup
Protein:		
Meat or cheese	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.
Beans or peas	¼ cup	3/8 cup
Yogurt	4 oz.	6 oz.
Soy or other alternate protein	½ oz.	½ oz.

MANAGING AND MODELING BEHAVIOR

Our Philosophy

Discipline, like any other life skill, is a learning process. In our programs, this process is carried out by:

- Providing a positive learning environment where there is consistency and routine
- Setting reasonable rules, limits and expectations that are developmentally appropriate
- Using redirection to refocus a child's attention, achieve a more positive outcome and avoid unnecessary confrontations
- Praising and reinforcing appropriate behavior
- Modeling behavior and language for other children to follow
- Teachers serving as role models for appropriate behavior
- Creating an environment that is safe and comfortable for all children
- Stating clear and consistent rules
- Acknowledging and respecting each child's feelings
- Developing consistent and ongoing communication between teaching staff and families

This is a children's program – they need to feel safe here. We cannot let the child's trust in us or in the program be broken. To that end, we will never yell, curse, hit, physically mishandle or humiliate a child. Consequently, we firmly insist that no parent ever hit, physically mishandle, humiliate, yell or curse at their child or any other child while in the program or while on a program outing.

Conflict Resolution

The YWCA does not permit its staff to use any form of punishment. Staff members are trained to implement positive and proactive methods of dealing with challenging behaviors with the goal of developing children's abilities to discipline and control themselves. We are very conscious of appropriate behavior by both children and adults in our programs. The YWCA defines unacceptable behavior as:

- Inflicting physical or emotional harm and/or
- Using abusive language

The YWCA acknowledges that individuals should be encouraged to articulate feelings and frustrations in a constructive manner and work out solutions with guidance from staff. Our goal is to foster development of these problem-solving skills and help children and adults learn from their experiences.

Biting

Biting is common among young children, and can be a frustrating problem to address. Staff will not punish or harshly discipline children for biting; rather, they will redirect the child to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior." Learning not to bite is part of the socialization process. This is the method by which we address biting:

- For infants and toddlers, positive teething activities are provided to comfort sore gums.
- If children bite out of frustration or anger in a confrontation, we redirect behavior to another activity, or we show the child how to get what s/he wishes in another, positive manner. We model and encourage language to express wants and needs.
- If a child bites frequently, the staff will utilize a more intensive approach that involves careful observation to determine what precipitates biting incidents. Conferences with families may be necessary to consider other alternatives to modify this behavior.
- Families will be notified if their child has been bitten. However, in order to adhere to confidentiality, the biter's identity is not shared with a family.
- If a child cannot refrain from biting, despite our efforts, the YWCA reserves the right to remove the child from our program.

NOTE: If a child is removed from the program due to behavioral issues, no credit or refund will be given.

PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The YWCA requires the parents and any adults who drop off or pick up children to behave with courtesy and respect. One of the goals of the YWCA is to provide the most appropriate environment for a child to grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of the YWCA, but also of each and every parent or adult involved with the Center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will no longer be permitted in YWCA programs and their child may be asked to withdraw from the program.

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language at any time whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is offensive and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using inoffensive language. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the YWCA will not assume the risk of a second chance.

For the health of all YWCA employees, children and parents, smoking is prohibited anywhere on Center property. This includes in the building, on the grounds and in the parking lot of YWCA property. Parents are required to follow all safety procedures at all times. The procedures are designed to protect the welfare and best interest of the employees, children and volunteers of the YWCA.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY & PROCEDURES

Closing and pick-up times are strictly enforced. If you are unable to arrive by scheduled closing time, you must notify the program staff to reassure your child, as well as staff. Late pick-up fees are imposed if a child is not picked up by closing time. They are assessed on your account the next business day and must be paid immediately. Charges are:

- *\$10 per child for the first 15 minutes or any part thereof; plus*
- *An additional \$20 per child for each extra 15 minute period or any part thereof.*

After 30 minutes, the staff will contact local authorities for action (see next section).

Late Pick-up Procedures

If a parent/guardian has not contacted the program center by closing time, the staff members will attempt to reach the family using contact numbers provided. If the family is unreachable, staff members will contact the emergency names provided by the family.

If no one can be reached 30 minutes after the posted closing time, staff members will contact the Site Manager who will call local police authorities. Police will assist in trying to locate the family up until 60 minutes after posted closing time.

After 60 minutes, the Site Manager will notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Care Line at 1-800-842-2288. A DCF representative generally is dispatched to the program center to pick up the child and place her/him in protective custody until the family is located.

Repeated Late Pick-ups

On the first incident of lateness, the Site Manager will issue a reminder about our policy. On the second occasion, a written report is added to the child's file. If a parent/guardian is late in picking up a child 3 times, the YWCA reserves the right to remove the child from our program.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

Withdrawal from Program

Families must notify the Site Manager in writing at least two-weeks in advance if withdrawing their child from the program. If two weeks notice is not provided, you will be charged for that period. If you need to withdraw your child due to financial reasons, the YWCA may be able to set up a payment plan to clear the outstanding balance.

Re-enrollment

Any request to re-enroll your child must be made in writing to the Site Manager. Re-enrollment is on a space available basis and contingent on previous balances being paid in full.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Trust is a key component to the relationship we will be building with your family. Information that is gathered concerning your family will be treated with the greatest care. Information on registration forms, child or parent referral services, as well as any other data added to a child's file during her/his enrollment, is confidential. This information is available only to the appropriate program staff, personnel from the State of Connecticut Childcare Licensing Unit, and the YWCA Nurse Consultant. Families may access a child's file to review or update information at any time. When a child leaves a program, the family should obtain a release form from the program staff. Copies of all releases are kept on file.

Records are kept in a secure cabinet in the office. Before information is shared with anyone, two factors are considered: 1) Does this person need to know this information? 2) Do I need to get the family's permission to share this information?

Children's files are accessible to the Director of Early Learning and Site Manager. Your child's teacher has access to all file information with the exception of income documentation. The YWCA nurse consultant has access to the child health records. State of Connecticut Department of Public Health licensing personnel, State Department of Education personnel and Hartford School Readiness personnel and NAEYC assessors (if appropriate) have access to information when they monitor our Center. It is critical to remember that you, as parents, have access to these files.

Should anyone outside of Center staff, whose review has been approved, view your child/family file, s/he will sign an "Access to Record" form that includes the date of review, name of individual, agency, reason for review and signature. This form is kept in your file for your review.

Prior to sharing information with outside agencies, an "Authorization for Release of Information" will be signed by the parent. There are four exceptions to strict confidentiality:

1. As Mandated Reporters, staff will report suspected child abuse and neglect to DCF.
2. If subpoenaed, staff will cooperate with the court, releasing files and testifying.
3. Staff have a "duty to warn" which means that if a family member is dangerous to self or to others, they will take steps to ensure safety.
4. The Department of Health and National Association of Education of Young Children (NAEYC) may review your child's files for childcare licensing, and accreditation purposes.

You may observe children at our Center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate. You may be curious about the other child. However, our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy, and employees of the YWCA are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

PARENT CONCERN/ COMPLAINT

Should you have a concern about any aspect of a program, we ask that you follow these steps in addressing the issue(s):

- Contact the Site Manager or Director of Early Learning and School Age programs, to state the nature of your complaint.
- If you feel that your concern has not been adequately addressed, contact her/his supervisor. You may obtain the name of the staff member by calling (860) 525-1163 for further information.
- Finally if you feel that your problem should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director, you may call her at (860) 525-1163 or write c/o: YWCA of the Hartford Region, 135 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105.

If you have questions about your child's well being while s/he is enrolled in a YWCA program, please speak to the Director of Early Learning and the Site Manager.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

We take our obligation to protect children from harm very seriously. All staff of the YWCA are Mandated Reporters to the State Department of Children and Families. It is required by law "that where there is evidence of abuse or neglect...or when there is reasonable cause to suspect or believe a child is in danger of being abused", it must be reported to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCF). This means that any situation that appears out of the norm must be reported. Occasionally, a child's appearance and behavior may raise concerns about possible abuse or neglect.

We have taken certain steps to promote the safety and protection of children at YWCA programs. Careful pre-employment and screening is one method of protection. Additionally staff members receive training in appropriate childcare and behavior modeling techniques, and the YWCA maintains strict guidelines as to the nature and type of staff/child interactions. (NOTE: *A complete copy of abuse and neglect policies is available upon request.*)

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND REFERRALS FOR SERVICES

The YWCA believes in inclusion for all children in its programs and we work to ensure that whenever possible. If a child requires an Individual Education Plan (IEP), the staff will assist families in obtaining and implementing it.

Occasionally the staff and family may conclude that a child requires additional types of diagnostic and support services beyond the scope of the YWCA program related to her/his emotional, physical or psychological development. These may include psycho-educational testing, medical evaluation or specialized ongoing services. The staff will work closely with a family in identifying and obtaining such services, as well as providing an appropriate program whenever possible.

No referrals for diagnostic or support services are made without prior written consent from the family. Staff members will work with the family in implementing recommendations resulting from evaluations to support the child. Family confidentiality is maintained in all referrals. Referrals to agencies and persons who provide evaluations, child observations, family counseling, ESL classes, job training and other services that support families are made upon request.

CHILDREN WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY ADJUSTING TO OUR PROGRAM

The YWCA employs a professional and experienced staff that is adept at helping children comfortably and successfully transition into our program. In the event that a child experiences continued difficulties, the following steps will be taken:

- The teacher will alert the Site Manager and parents to the concern.
- The Site Manager, teacher and parents will meet to define the situation and map out a course of action to help with adjustment.
- The Site Manager will confer with all staff who work with the child to share information and agree on a consistent course of action.
- Within one month, the Site Manager, teacher and parents will meet at a follow-up conference. Areas of discussion will include, but not be limited to:
 - a) What progress is being made
 - b) The effect on the other children
 - c) Goals for further progress or whether the YWCA is the appropriate setting for this child

If the child is still having difficulties, or if the safety of other children cannot be assured, the family will be asked to find alternate childcare arrangements. Assistance in this process will be offered to the family.

COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Collaborations with outside community agencies are vital to the quality of our programs. The YWCA works with many agencies in an effort to provide information, opportunities and assistance beyond referrals for special services noted previously. Family resource areas in each program offer information about such collaborations.

TUITION AND PAYMENTS

The YWCA tuition has been established to provide your child with the best possible care at the most reasonable cost to you. We endeavor to keep our fees low and review them annually.

Payment for all programs is required in advance of the child's participation for that period.

- Tuition payments are due on Friday prior to the week of childcare being provided.
- All payments, other than credit card, must be submitted to the program center office by mail or in person.
- Tuition payments can be made by a check, money order, MasterCard or VISA. Credit card payments may be authorized by phone. **NO CASH PAYMENTS ARE ACCEPTED.**
- Payments not made by Friday of the current week of care are subject to a \$20 late fee.
- If a child has left a program while an account is in arrears, the child may return to the program when full payment has been made, providing space is available.
- Selected in-service training days will be deducted from the tuition rate for that week/month as outlined in the "Admission Policies and Procedures" section.
- If payment is not received by Wednesday at 5:30 PM the child is subject to immediate removal from the program.
- Monthly payments are due by the 20th of the month preceding service. Payments not received by the 1st of the month are subject to a late fee and the child may be removed from the program.

Credits and Refunds

The YWCA does not provide tuition reductions, credits or refunds for individual absences due to illness or for personal reasons such as vacations. Tuition payment is expected regardless of daily attendance. Only in the case of an illness of a week or more requiring hospitalization will credit be given (maximum of two weeks). A doctor's note must accompany your written request for credit.

Returned Check/ Credit Card Denial Policy

Non-sufficient funds (NSF) checks are re-deposited only one time by the bank against an individual's account. If the redeposit is rejected, the bank returns the NSF check and a \$25 NSF fee is added to the family's account. The family must replace the payment within 2 (two)-business days or the child may be removed from the program. If a family presents an NSF check twice within the same school year, all future payments must be made by money order or credit card.

State of Connecticut Financial Assistance

The YWCA program staff will assist a family with the process of applying for state childcare subsidy. Families must inform the YWCA of any state program with which they are affiliated or to which they are applying for assistance. Any family that wishes to enroll a child in a YWCA program and requires financial assistance must first apply to State of Connecticut through CCAP (Childcare Assistance Program -- Care4Kids). If a family has applied to the School Readiness program they must also apply for Care4Kids.

Once approved for State Assistance through Care4Kids, the family must provide written confirmation from Care4Kids showing the amount of subsidy prior to enrollment for the child. No child will be accepted into a program without a certificate. The YWCA completes and signs our portion of the Care4Kids parent provider form, makes copies for both the Center and the family, and then mails or faxes the form directly to Care4Kids. If a family requires childcare prior to approval for subsidy, the family must pay the full fee until the subsidy starts. Once the subsidy begins, all applicable payments are credited to the account. If a family's financial situation changes they must reapply for this program.

It is the responsibility of the family to ensure payment to the YWCA even when receiving state subsidy. Although we may be able to assist in resolving problems with state agencies, payments remain the responsibility of the family. Payments may be made by personal check, bank check, money order or credit card. Please Note: NO CASH PAYMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Sibling/ Multiple Children Discount

Families with more than one child in a YWCA program are offered a tuition discount. Tuition discounts are applied as follows: the first child (with the highest tuition) is charged full tuition, second and subsequent children from the same family receive a 10% discount each. The tuition discount is offered only to families with children enrolled in 5 day programs (full day, AM or PM). Please Note: This does not include families where the YWCA accepts a reduced rate because of any arrangement including Care4Kids, School Readiness, Department of Children and Families, or any other subsidy.

NOTE: *We ask that you please sign and date the Parent's Letter of Agreement indicating you have received, read and understand the parent handbook. If you have any questions or comments about the contents, please speak to the Site Manager or Director of Early Learning.*

All policies and procedures are subject to change. Families will be notified of changes. The YWCA reserves the right to change schedules or programs due to inadequate enrollment.