Early Learning Program
Family Handbook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Philosophy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission &amp; Philosophy</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child &amp; Families Outcome Statement Philosophy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Conduct</td>
<td>7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Provided</td>
<td>10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment- Policies &amp; Procedures</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuition and Fees</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payment Options</td>
<td>12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Pick Up Fees</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credits And Refunds</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned Check, Credit Card Denial Policies</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care4kids, and Sibling Discount Policies</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal and/or Termination Of Services</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop Off &amp; Pick Up Procedures</td>
<td>14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phone Usage</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion and Children With Disabilities , Children with Special Needs &amp; Referrals For Service</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety Procedures</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion For Illness, Medication Policies</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Screenings, Universal Precautions, Infant Sleeping Position</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking, Absences, Inclement Weather &amp; School Closures</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Readiness</td>
<td>19-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Staff</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Conferences</td>
<td>20-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Into Kindergarten</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and School Partnerships, Visits and Volunteering,</td>
<td>21-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Satisfaction, Fire &amp; Emergency Preparation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline Policies and Procedures</td>
<td>22-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents and Incident Reports</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspected Abuse or Neglect</td>
<td>27-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA Potty Training Policies</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor Activities, Appropriate Clothing, Jewelry &amp; Accessories, Toys From Home</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays &amp; Celebrations, Birthdays, Taking of Photographs</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Eating and Nutrition &amp; Healthy Eating Initiative</td>
<td>30-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero Tolerance/Parent Code of Conduct Policy</td>
<td>32-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Concern/Complaint Policy, Collaboration With Other Agencies</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning A New Program</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Staff and families will be notified in writing, at least 30 days in advance, of any changes to the operating policies and procedures of the Center that have any direct effect upon employment or participation, unless those changes are required by law or are implemented for the immediate protection of health and safety, in which case notification will be made at the time those changes are required.

Welcome to our Early Learning Centers!!!

Dear Families,
Welcome to our YWCA Early Learning Programs! We are thrilled that you have chosen our Center to meet your child’s educational and developmental needs. We believe a holistic approach to early education is the best way to ensure the future success of your child. That means we meet each child’s physical, social, and emotional needs while supporting their cognitive development. We believe in a holistic approach to our service of families as well. We are a relationship based program meaning we are here to support and nurture all relationships within our walls. The trust built and strength of the relationships within our program is crucial to our mission.

This handbook contains YWCA Early Learning philosophy, goals, policies and procedures. Please read through the contents of this manual and keep it for your reference. At YWCA, we strive to ensure consistency in our policies and use this manual as our guide to communicate with you. You are strongly encouraged to become involved in future policy development by joining our Parent Advisory Council. Look for more information to follow!

At the heart of the YWCA Early Learning Programs is the mission of YWCA. Our mission is addressed through intentional activities designed to help children grow to be caring, responsible citizens. This responsibility will be reinforced by our teachers as they guide the children to be kind and compassionate in their interactions. Children are reminded to be helpful to each other and learn civic responsibility through shared tasks. Our goal is for each child to have fun and be safe, while learning valuable skills to help them throughout their life. Through a variety of activities they will learn about each other and all the ways each person expresses their individual identity.

Established in 1867, YWCA Hartford Region is the third oldest affiliate of YWCA USA, a women’s membership movement dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. YWCA Hartford Region provides valued programs and services in the greater Hartford area including childcare, supportive housing, teen development, racial justice awareness and financial literacy.
YWCA HARTFORD REGION’S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

- We believe that children have the right to a nurturing, safe environment where they can feel comfortable and secure.

- We acknowledge that the family is the primary unit in any child’s development. We believe that children are largely dependent on their families for identity, security, care and for a general sense of well-being. We know that in order to reach our goals, we must work cooperatively with parents to provide for the well-being of each child.

- We recognize that each child is a unique individual and that he/she must be allowed to develop at his/her own pace. We support inclusive childcare settings. We accept and respect differences among and between children, both developmental and physical differences. We believe that every child, regardless of gender, race, religion or ethnic origin, must have the same opportunities and advantages as every other child.

- We believe that each child has the right to develop a positive self-image. It is our hope that in treating each child with love and respect, that each child, in turn, will learn to treat others with love and respect.

- We believe that children learn best through active participation in their environment; in other words, through play. We provide a variety of opportunities and experiences to promote growth in the area of physical, social and intellectual development. We plan developmental programs for the children which follow sound early childhood developmental principles.

- We are committed to involving family members in the child’s experience as much as possible for they are the prime educators of their children. The Center has an open door policy and encourages parental involvement at all times.

- The Center is committed to giving parents the opportunity for meaningful involvement in the decision-making process for their individual child as well as for the overall program. Parents are encouraged to participate in various programs and invite parents to assist in the planning and implementation of special events and activities based on their unique interests and skills.

- The Center encourages families to share their personal cultural information, materials and observations with the Center in order to bring diversity into the program in a meaningful way. It is our goal to recognize and support family cultural beliefs.

Our Mission and Philosophy

Established in 1867, YWCA Hartford Region is the third oldest affiliate of YWCA USA, a women’s membership movement dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. YWCA Hartford Region provides valued programs and services in the greater Hartford area including childcare, supportive housing, teen development, racial justice awareness, and financial literacy. The YWCA Hartford Region Early Learning Programs are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and receive Connecticut School Readiness Grant funding to serve children who may not otherwise have access to quality early childhood education. The educational philosophy of the YWCA Early Learning Programs is built upon widely accepted child development theories. Lev Vygotsky emphasized the social context for learning, including family, culture, and society as important influences on cognitive and social development. John Dewey believed in a learn-by-doing approach that is authentic and relevant to the child, and that the child is capable of constructing his own knowledge. The work of Howard Gardner portrays human intelligence as multidimensional, therefore we believe that each child
should be viewed holistically and provided an education that supports individual strengths and talents. Abraham Maslow constructed a hierarchy of needs by which every human being develops. In order to support the development of each child’s full potential, we will first meet their physical and psychological needs. The YWCA Early Learning Programs provide a safe environment where children learn through play. The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards, Creative Curriculum, as well as NAEYC Developmentally Appropriate Practice are utilized to create an intentional learning environment that is responsive to the needs of young children and families. Family involvement is highly valued; therefore family members are encouraged to have a voice and meaningful presence in our programs.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Meet Basic Needs First to Support Social and Emotional Development
CHILD AND FAMILIES OUTCOME STATEMENT

Participation at our centers brings with it hopes for specific outcomes for both child and family, including safe, stimulating care that supports positive behavior and optimal development. Additionally, our goal is to meet parental expectations for quality care by building trusting relationships between home and the Early Learning Centers. To best prepare your child for school, we will support their learning throughout their participation in our programs. It is our goal that each child will demonstrate skills in the following developmental areas:

- Cognition
- Social Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Language, Communication, and Literacy
- Creative Arts
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies

YWCA EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS PURPOSE STATEMENT

YWCA Early Learning Programs provide excellence in care and education to children ages six weeks through preschool age. We recognize that the family is the primary unit in each child’s development. It is our goal to work in partnership with families to develop unique programs to meet the individual needs of each child.

Revised December 2021

6
ETHICAL CONDUCT
(Adapted from the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct)

Childhood is a unique and valuable stage in the life cycle. Our paramount responsibility is to provide safe, healthy, nurturing and responsive settings for children. We are committed to supporting children’s development by cherishing individual differences, by helping children to learn to live and work cooperatively, and by promoting children’s self-esteem.

We believe that program staff has the following ethical responsibilities to children:

a) To be familiar with the knowledge base of early childhood education and to keep current through continuing education and in-service training.
b) To base program practices upon current knowledge in the field of child development and related disciplines and upon particular knowledge of each child.
c) To recognize and respect the uniqueness and the potential of each child.
d) To appreciate the special vulnerability of children.
e) To create and maintain safe and healthy settings that foster children's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development and that respect their dignity and their contributions.
f) To support the right of children with special needs to participate, consistent with their ability, in regular early childhood programs.

Ethical Principles:

a) Above all we shall not harm children. We shall not participate in practices that are disrespectful, degrading, dangerous, exploitative, intimidating, psychologically damaging or physically harmful to children.
b) We shall not participate in practices that discriminate against children by denying benefits, giving special advantages, or exclude a child from programs or activities on the basis of their race, religion, gender, national origin, or the status, behavior or beliefs of their parent.
c) We shall involve all of those with relevant knowledge (including staff and parents) in decisions concerning a child.
d) When, after appropriate efforts have been made with a child and the family, the child still does not appear to be benefiting from a program, we shall communicate our concern to the family in a positive way and offer them assistance in finding a more suitable setting.
e) We shall be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect and know and follow community procedures and state laws that protect children against abuse and neglect.
f) When we have evidence of child abuse or neglect, we shall report the evidence to the appropriate community agency and follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken. When possible, parents will be informed that the referral has been made.
g) When another person tells us of their suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected but we lack evidence, we shall assist that person in taking appropriate action to protect the child.
h) When a child protective agency fails to provide adequate protection for abused or neglected children, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to work toward improvement of these services.
i) When we become aware of a practice or situation that endangers the health or safety of children, but has not been previously known to do so, we have an ethical responsibility to inform those who can remedy the situation and who can keep other children from being similarly endangered.
Our Ethical Responsibilities to Families:

Families are of primary importance in children’s development. (The term family may include others, besides parents, who are responsibly involved with the child.) Because the family and the early childhood educator have a common interest in the child’s welfare, we acknowledge a primary responsibility to bring about collaboration between the home and school in ways that enhance the child’s development.

a) To develop relationships of mutual trust with families we serve.
b) To acknowledge and build upon strengths and competencies as we support families in their task of nurturing children.
c) To respect the dignity of each family and its culture, customs, and beliefs.
d) To respect families’ child rearing values and their right to make decisions for their children.
e) To interpret each child’s progress to parents within the framework of a developmental perspective and to help families understand and appreciate the value of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs.
f) To help family members improve their understanding of their children and to enhance their skills as parents.
g) To participate in building support networks for families by providing them with opportunities to interact with program staff and families.

Principles:

a) We shall not deny parents access to their child’s classroom.
b) We shall inform families of program philosophy, policies, and personnel qualifications, and explain why we teach as we do.
c) We shall inform families of and, when appropriate, involve them in policy decisions.
d) We shall inform families of and, when appropriate, involve them in significant decisions affecting their child.
e) We shall inform the family of accidents involving their child, of risks such as exposures to contagious disease that may result in infection, and of events that might result in psychological damage.
f) We shall not permit or participate in research that could in any way hinder the education or development of the children in our programs. Families shall be fully informed of any proposed research projects involving their children and shall have the opportunity to give or withhold consent.
g) We shall not engage in or support exploitation of families. We shall not use our relationship with a family for private advantage or personal gain, or enter into relationships with family members that might impair our effectiveness in working with children.
h) We shall develop written policies for the protection of confidentiality and the disclosure of children’s records. The policy documents shall be made available to all program personnel and families. Disclosure of children’s records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).
i) We shall maintain confidentiality and shall respect the family’s right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we are concerned about a child’s welfare, it is permissible to reveal confidential information to agencies and individuals who may be able to act in the child’s interest.
j) In cases where family members are in conflict we shall work openly, sharing our observations of the child, to help all parties involved make informed decisions. We shall refrain from becoming an advocate for one party.
k) We shall be familiar with and appropriately use community resources and professional services that support families. After a referral has been made, we shall follow up to ensure that services have been adequately provided.
Our Ethical Responsibilities to the Community and Society

Early childhood programs operate within a context of an immediate community made up of families and other institutions concerned with children's welfare. Our responsibilities to the community are to provide programs that meet its needs and to cooperate with agencies and professions that share responsibility for children. Because the larger society has a measure of responsibility for the welfare and protection of children and because of our specialized expertise in child development, we acknowledge an obligation to serve as a voice for children everywhere.

a) To provide the community with high-quality, culturally sensitive programs and services.
b) To promote cooperation among agencies and professions concerned with the welfare of young children, their families, and their teachers.
c) To work, through education, research, and advocacy, toward an environmentally safe world in which all children are adequately fed, sheltered, and nurtured.
d) To work, through education, research, and advocacy, toward a society in which all young children have access to quality programs.
e) To promote knowledge and understanding of young children and their needs. To work toward greater social acknowledgment of children's rights and greater social acceptance of responsibility for their well-being.
f) To support policies and laws which promote the well-being of children and families. To oppose those which impair their well-being.
g) To cooperate with other individuals and groups in these efforts.
h) To further the professional development of the field of early childhood education and to strengthen its commitment to realizing its core values as reflected in this Code.

Principles

We shall communicate openly and truthfully about the nature and extent of services that we provide.

a) We shall not accept or continue to work in positions for which we are personally unsuited or professionally unqualified. We shall not offer services that we do not have the competence, qualifications, or resources to provide.
b) We shall be objective and accurate in reporting the knowledge upon which we base our program practices.
c) We shall cooperate with other professionals who work with children and their families.
d) We shall not hire or recommend for employment any person who is unsuited for a position with respect to competence, qualifications, or character.
e) We shall report the unethical or incompetent behavior of a colleague to a supervisor when informal resolution is not effective.
f) We shall be familiar with laws and regulations that serve to protect the children in our programs.
g) We shall not participate in practices which are in violation of laws, and regulations that protect the children in our programs.
h) When we have evidence that an early childhood program is violating laws or regulations protecting children, we shall report it to persons responsible for the program. If compliance is not accomplished within a reasonable time, we will report the violation to appropriate authorities who can be expected to remedy the situation.
i) When we have evidence that an agency or a professional charged with providing services to children, families, or teachers is failing to meet its obligations, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to report the problem to appropriate authorities or to the public. We shall be vigilant in our follow-up until the situation is resolved.
j) When a child protection agency fails to provide adequate protection for abused or neglected children, we acknowledge a collective ethical responsibility to work toward the improvement of these services.
PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents and/or guardians are the primary influence in the child’s life and the YWCA Early Learning Centers strive to provide care in partnership with parents. Parents are welcomed to visit their child’s center at any time. Parents are invited to visit with their child, to participate in parent advisory council meetings, parent events, and other activities that are posted each month on the parent bulletin boards. Although parents are not required to give prior notice of such visits, we ask that as a courtesy, you let the teachers know you will be visiting. This way, they can ensure you are visiting at a time that will be best for both you and your child. Please be sure to let your child’s teacher know if you would like to volunteer and/or do a special project with the children!

The center also provides monthly newsletters and hand-outs that keep parents informed of upcoming events, scheduled closings and educational components. Handouts describe a variety of math, literacy, and science activities that can be done at home, providing opportunities for parents to extend children’s learning to the home environment.

To support parents’ efforts to educate their children, our program provides parent workshops that address a variety of topics, including positive guidance, sibling mediation, literacy, etc. These workshops provide opportunities for parents to develop and acquire skills that will benefit their children and family. The program will also direct parents to resources for employment, adult education, job training, etc.

To involve parents and families in program design, policies and activities, the program hosts bi-monthly Parent Advisory Council meetings. These meetings give families opportunities to express concerns, recommend policies, and discuss strategies to improve educational services. Because parents have the greatest influence on children, we value parents’ participation in the decision-making process and strive to work cooperatively with parents to enhance program services.

SERVICES PROVIDED

YWCA Hartford Region provides programs for children from 6 weeks of age through preschool age that are open year round from 7AM until 5:30 PM Monday-Friday at all four of our early learning locations. Currently, we offer school readiness preschool spaces to children between the ages of 3-5 in Hartford, East Hartford, and Elmwood. These spaces are available to children who reside in the city of the center. We welcome children from diverse backgrounds, knowing that playing and developing together from a very young age forms the basis for better understanding in the future. We provide full-time day programs at all our sites. Part-time programs may be considered on a space available basis. Additionally, in accordance with our anti-discrimination policy, we accept children whether or not they are toilet trained at the time of enrollment.

We offer all enrolled children a structured yet flexible curriculum that supports children’s development in the physical, emotional, cognitive and social domains. Teaching strategies and activities are responsive to children's individual needs, and reflect a cycle of observation, planning and assessment to guide program activities.

Our centers often provide on-site annual screenings for vision, dental and hearing as well as offer information on free screenings in the community. Families in need of health insurance, information on medical homes, housing, well-child care, immunizations, health and nutritional screenings will be referred to the appropriate agency for services.

ENROLLMENT- POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

YWCA 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, physical disability or language differences. All childcare programs are inclusive and made available to children without regard to individual ability according to federal and state law.

In order to serve children with disabilities, our centers are handicapped accessible. Classrooms are tailored, designed and well-equipped to prevent frustration and/or hazards for children with unique abilities. The daily routine provides adequate time for play, a sense of security, and stimulating activities. Teachers are involved in on-going training that is useful in addressing and responding to children with special needs. Centers also seek assistance from the local Board of Education in developing an individualized educational plan for children who are recognized as having special needs.

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health requires that every child entering a group setting (day care or school) have an up to date physical form on file. A current doctor’s physical form (Early Childhood Health Assessment Form), including a current list of immunizations, TB, and flu shot and any food allergies, and indicate whether or not a developmental assessment has been completed. Additionally a consent form for emergency treatment must be on file with the Center at all times. Families that receive notice that their child’s physical/immunization records are nearing expiration or have expired are expected to make immediate plans for a well-child physical. Failure to provide current proof of medical care in a reasonable period of time is grounds for suspension of care. Allergies must be listed in writing and a Care Plan is required before the Center can accommodate variations in its menus.

Additionally, children who have special health care needs or developmental variations are required to have an individual care plan completed and on file. No child will be permitted to attend until current health documentation is on file. Where religious beliefs conflict with medical practice, a statement requesting a religious exemption, which must be signed by the parent and legally notarized, must be provided. The parent shall accept complete responsibility for the health of the child and certify that the child is in good health. In the event that the unimmunized child shows symptoms of a disease that is preventable by immunization the child shall not attend the center until cleared by a physician.

A pediatric nurse visits the Center once weekly to monitor all children’s physical forms and immunization records. The nurse also assists parents and staff in meeting a child’s special needs by answering any questions parents may have.

- Prior to enrollment, families must complete the registration process as described below and deliver all documentation to the Center.
- Families are asked to schedule a transitional visit for their child. This visit will be scheduled prior to the first day of participation in the Center. At this time, the Early Learning Center policies and procedures will be discussed.

**Registration Requirements for all Families**

a) YWCA Membership – Membership is $35.00 and is renewed annually.
b) One time Registration fee of $50.00
c) Registration Form – includes hours of attendance
d) Child Health Assessment Form and Immunization Form
e) Signed Letter of Agreement
f) CACFP Food Program application
g) Birth Certificate
h) Valid photo ID of parent/guardian
TUITION, FEES AND PAYMENT OPTIONS

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, but we review them annually and may adjust them if necessary. **Payment for all programs is required in advance of the child's participation for that period.**

- Tuition payments are due **on Friday for the upcoming week of care.**
- All payments must be submitted to the center’s office by mail or in person.
- Tuition payments may be made by check, money order, or credit card, using the EZCare Parent Portal. **NO CASH PAYMENTS ARE ACCEPTED.**
- A $20 late fee is applied to accounts when payment is not made by the close of business on Friday.
- If payment (including any late fees) is not received by the Wednesday following the due date by 9:00 A.M. of the current week of care, the child is subject to immediate removal from the program until all fees are paid in full.
- If a child has left a program while an account is in arrears, the child may return to the program only when full payment is made, providing space is available.
- If the Center is closed on a Friday, **tuition is due the last day of the week the center is open.**
- Tuition fees are inclusive of holidays and professional development day closures. **Discounts are not applied for shorter weeks, holidays, and/or professional development day closures.**
- **Parents are responsible to pay tuition regardless of their child’s attendance.** Your weekly tuition holds your child’s space in the program and we staff according to the number of children that are enrolled.

PAYMENT OPTIONS

Tuition payments can be made by check, money order, or credit card. Credit card payments must be made via the EZCare Parent Portal.

LATE PICK-UP FEES

Working parents are eligible for care during our regular hours of operation; Monday-Friday from 7:00 A.M.-5:30 P.M. Whenever possible, it is best for your child not to be in care in excess of 9 hours each day. **Non-working School Readiness parents are eligible for care from 8:30 A.M.-3:30 P.M. daily.**

As we staff our centers to accommodate the number of children we have on site throughout the day, it is important that parents are considerate about picking up on time. Late pick-ups often result in staff having to work beyond their scheduled hours.

Therefore, late pick up fees will be charged as follows:

- **Working families are expected to pick up their children so that we may close the center promptly at 5:30 p.m.** Please plan accordingly and leave ample time to arrive and depart the center no later than 5:30 p.m. Families leaving the building after 5:30 will be subject to a $20.00 late pick up fee for the first 15 minutes late. After the initial 15 minutes, the late pick up fee will be charged at a rate of $15.00 for each additional 15 minutes or fraction therein.
- For nonworking School Readiness preschool families, you are expected to pick up your child no later than **3:30 P.M.** Families arriving after this time will be subject to the same late pick up fee at $20.00 for the first 15 minutes late. After the initial 15 minutes, the late pick up fee will be charged at a rate of $15.00 for each additional 15 minutes or fraction therein.

Revised December 2021

12
CREDITS AND REFUNDS

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. If you will be on vacation, it is your responsibility to ensure payment is made in advance of your vacation to avoid late fees. Only in the case of an illness of a week or more requiring hospitalization will credit be given (maximum of two weeks). A physician's note must accompany your written request for credit.

RETURNED CHECK/CREDIT CARD DENIAL POLICY

If the bank returns a check due to non-sufficient funds (NSF), a $35 fee will be applied to your account. Additionally, declined credit card payments (after two failed attempts) will be assessed a $25 fee. A $20 late fee will also be assessed if the declined credit card payments cause the account to be past due. After three returned checks or declined credit card payments, you will be required to pay by money order or credit card.

Tuition information is provided to all families yearly and upon enrollment into our programs. Please speak to your Site Manager for specific program and fee information.

CARE4KIDS SUBSIDIES

Income eligible families may apply for a subsidy through the state sponsored Care4kids program. If so, the Center will provide you with an application packet, assist you in completing it, and can fax it on your behalf. Families who do not qualify are responsible for the full cost of care. Please note that all fees are the responsibility of the parent until Care4Kids approves the application. Should there be any credits or balances once your application is approved, we will either issue you a refund check and/or work out a payment schedule for you to reconcile the balance. With the exception of School Readiness spaces that charge via a sliding fee scale, parents are responsible for paying the difference between the Care4kids reimbursement and the full weekly tuition.

SIBLING DISCOUNT

Families with more than one child in a YWCA childcare 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 full time programs, not part-time enrollment. 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, nor does it apply if any of the aforementioned agencies pays for care in full for any child/family.

WITHDRAWAL AND/OR TERMINATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICES

Parents may terminate their child's enrollment at any time with at least two weeks written notice. NOTIFICATION MUST BE IN WRITING. The Center is committed to meeting the needs of the children and families it serves; however, if in the opinion of the professional staff, a child is not benefiting from the experience at the Center, or if it is not possible for the program to meet a particular child's individual needs with the resources available, the Center reserves the right to terminate enrollment at any time.
Additional reasons for disenrollment from the program include:

- Behavioral, medical or emotional needs of a child or family that poses a direct threat to the physical or emotional well-being or safety to the child/other children.
- Failure to provide proof of required medical information in a reasonable period of time
- Lack of parent cooperation with the program policies, procedures, or guidelines. No effort to resolve differences and/or meet the child’s needs through parent/staff meetings.
- Parent failure or refusal to provide required paperwork and documentation relevant to regulatory requirements.
- Frequent lateness at pick up time
- Abusive behavior and/or verbal threats by parents toward Center children, staff or other parents.
- Willful or malicious destruction of property at the Center.

Families are responsible for the payment of the child’s tuition through the last week of the child’s attendance. Any tuition paid beyond the date of termination will be refunded by check in approximately 14 days. Families will be billed for any outstanding balance. Children may not re-enroll, nor can siblings be enrolled in any YWCA program, until all outstanding tuition balances and fees have been paid.

**DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES**

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 and/or pick up times.

Due to the nature of the schedule and the need to provide ample time for meals and rest periods, the majority of the planned learning experiences begin shortly after breakfast. Parents need to keep in mind that arriving later than 9:00 AM will result in your child missing very important educational components of the curriculum. Additionally, it interrupts important group activities, distracts other children, and may result in a more difficult transition for your child.

We do understand that your families schedule may require you to drop your child off after 9:00 AM; we ask that you call the center to let us know you will be dropping off later than 9:00 AM. This will allow us to ensure there are enough lunches ordered and that we are ready to support your child in completing any activities upon their arrival.

**DROP OFF PROCEDURES**

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. For your child’s safety, please do not allow them to wander.
- Please remember to sign in each morning when you drop your child off and leave a phone number where you can be reached in the event of an emergency. If you forget to sign in, you will be called to return to the center to sign your child in.
- Notify your 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.
- We ask that you refrain from using your cell phone during drop off and pick up time. It is important for your child to see that you value education and your relationship with their teachers.

These special instructions may include information regarding an early pick-up, alternative pick-up person, health concerns from the previous evening that do not warrant exclusion from care, and/or any general concerns that the teachers should be aware of.
PICK UP PROCEDURES
Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child/ren 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING DROP OFF & PICK UP PROCEDURES
• Without legal documentation, we will not prohibit a legal guardian access to his/her child.
• Non legal guardians under the age 18 (including siblings) may pick up a child at the center or be listed as an emergency contact.
• The center reserves the right to contact the local authorities if there is suspicion that a parent or assigned designee is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
• We reserve the right to require proof of identification at pick up times.
• Parents need to keep in mind that during hours of operation that the teachers main responsibility is the supervision of the children. If parents feel that they need to have an in depth conversation that may last more than three to four minutes with the teacher they should speak to the teacher and ask them to set up a meeting. This way the site supervisor can make arrangements to have another teacher cover them in the classroom.
• Vehicles may not be left running in the parking lot, except if vehicles need to idle in extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures

CELL PHONE USE
It is in our best interest to have open communication and eye contact with families during the times when they are in the building. Therefore, the use of cellular phones is not permitted during drop off and pick up at during center visits. If you enter the building talking on the cellular phone, a staff member will remind you of our policy and ask that you refrain from cellular phone use during the time that you are in the building

INCLUSION AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES
Our programs are compliant with the ADA (American Disability Act) in matters related to the admission and accommodation of children with disabilities. It is important that parents disclose the nature and extent of the disability to the Site Manager prior to enrollment. When indicated, a meeting between staff, parents, and relevant support service providers will be held to determine the child’s needs and to design program modifications necessary for the child’s comfort, functioning, and access to equipment, activities and materials. An individual plan of care is required by the Department of Public Health and will be completed prior to admission. The Center will work cooperatively with support services and agencies to the extent possible. Children whose behavior is a risk to themselves, others, or property or whose accommodations significantly disrupt the nature of the program will be addressed under the atypical development and challenging behavior policy on page.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND REFERRALS FOR SERVICES
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 as related to his/her social emotional, physical or psychological development. Observations and assessments are documented for all children and shared with parents and, with the appropriate permission from parents, are shared with special education service providers. No referrals for diagnostic or support

Revised December 2021
services are made without prior written consent from the family. Referral services may include psycho-education 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 to avoid duplication of services.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES**

The health and safety of the children in our care is of primary concern to the YWCA Early Learning Centers. Administrative staff continuously monitor classrooms to be sure that they remain in compliance with all applicable state regulations, local health codes and standards considered best practice in the field of early childhood education. To prevent the illness of children and teachers, we engage in the following hygiene practices:

- All children and adults are required to wash their hands upon entering the rooms.
- Children are taught and assisted with proper hand washing techniques.
- Children and staff wash their hands after toileting and before eating/serving meals and snacks.
- All tables are sprayed and sanitized before and after meals with a bleach and water solution.
- Toys are washed and disinfected on a daily basis for infants and toddlers and at least weekly in preschool. Cots and cribs are not shared between children. We ask that you do not bring big blankets and/or full sized pillows.

**EXCLUSION FOR ILLNESSES**

Children need to be in good health in order to get the most out of their school day and to protect others from illness. Children who have symptoms of illness and cannot fully participate in both indoor and outdoor activities will not be allowed to attend the program. The following symptoms will exclude the child from participation:

- **Fever of 100.5 or above**: The child will be sent home and may not return to the center for 24 hours after the fever has broken and without the use of fever reducing medication.
- **Green or yellow nasal discharge** with or without a fever or cough: Any discharge other than clear may be a sign of infection. The child may return to the center when symptom-free or if child has been seen by a physician who verifies in writing that the child is not contagious and may fully participate in the program.
- **Vomiting and/or diarrhea**: The child will be sent home if they have had two episodes of diarrhea or have vomited once. (This excludes infants who have a documented pattern of vomiting after bottle feeding.) They may return when symptom-free without the use medication.
- **Conjunctivitis/pink eye**: A child who exhibits redness, itching, or discharge from the eye will be sent home. The child may return 24 hours after the start of antibiotic treatment.
- **Chickenpox**: Symptoms of chickenpox are fever accompanied by a rash or blisters. The blisters take several days to appear and to scab over. The child may return to the center once ALL scabs have dried over. All cases of chickenpox must be reported to the health department.
- **Head Lice**: Children may return to school once the child has been treated with a specific shampoo designed for lice and all the eggs are removed from the child’s hair. Staff or director will recheck the child’s hair upon return to the center.
- **Skin rashes and cold sores**: A physician must see any rashes that are in question. The child may return to school with either a physician’s note stating that the condition is non-contagious, or when symptom-free.
Staff will contact the Site Manager should any of the above take place. The Site Manager will determine if the child should be excluded from the Center. If so, the parents will be immediately notified of their child’s illness. If the parent cannot be reached, the emergency contact will be notified. It is expected that the child will be picked up within an hour after notification. The child will be separated from the other children, with supervision to prevent possible spread of infection whenever possible. Children returning after illness must see the teacher or Site Manager upon arrival and provide any pertinent information regarding the illness as well as leave medication and instructions if needed. At the discretion of the Site Manager, a note from the child’s pediatrician may be required prior to re-admittance into the program.

**MEDICATION POLICIES**

Parents may request that YWCA staff administer needed medications to their child. The request must include written permission from the child’s doctor, as well as the parent's consent. Staff is authorized to administer medications in accordance with the State of Connecticut Department of Public Health policy for the Administration of Medications.

Requests for staff to apply non-prescription creams and ointments must be authorized by the child’s parent filling out the proper form. This includes sunscreen and insect repellent (only repellents containing DEET are used, insect repellent will not be used on children less than six months of age). This form may be obtained at the Center.

All medications must be properly labeled and marked, in their original bottle, tube or jar, and with clearly defined dispensing directions.

The parent form and prescription medication label must contain items 1-5; the physician’s form must include items 1-9 of the following information:

1. The child’s name, address, and date of birth (not necessary on container label).
2. Name of medication and the date of the physician’s order.
3. The exact dosage and method of administration.
4. The time the medication is to be administered.
5. The length of time the medication is to be administered.
6. The possible side effects and Physician’s / Dentist’s management plan if they occur.
7. Notation if medication is a controlled drug.
8. List of any allergies to drug or food.
9. The Physician’s / Dentist’s name, address, phone number and signature.

**HEALTH SCREENINGS**

To monitor the health and physical development of children in our care, the program coordinates annual vision, hearing, and dental screenings with health agencies from the community. Where possible, the program will provide screenings on-site. For children to participate in these screenings, parents must sign an authorization form indicating that they permit the program to screen their child. Should parents request additional screenings, or if the program feels that the child would benefit from additional health assessment, the program will coordinate these screenings with local health service providers and families.

**UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

All staff members annually receive OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) training and are required to practice universal precautions when dealing with body fluids. This means that all staff members who help children with their toileting or perform first aid wear gloves at all times during the process.
INFANT SLEEP POSITION POLICY

Unless the child has a note from a physician specifying a medical health reason, infants less than 12 months of age shall be placed on their backs on a firm, tight-fitting mattress for sleep in a crib. No blankets, soft toys or bumpers are permitted in cribs with sleeping infants. Parents may provide a sleeping gown to be placed on the child at naptime to keep them warm as programs are air conditioned. Infant’s heads 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.

SMOKING

Smoking is not allowed in the parking lot or within the premises of the Early Learning Centers at any time.

ABSENCES

If your child will be absent for any reason, you must notify the program Center before 9:00 AM the day of absence or write a note in advance with the date(s) of her/his absence. Should a child be absent for an extended period of time (3 or more days) without notification and we are unable to reach you, your child will risk losing their enrollment.

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. If you will be on vacation, it is your responsibility to ensure payment is made in advance of your vacation to avoid late fees. Only in the case of an illness of a week or more requiring hospitalization will credit be given (maximum of two weeks). A physician’s note must accompany your written request for credit.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY & PROGRAM CLOSURES

The Early Learning Centers operate year-round from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. A calendar of program closures will be provided to you and documentation will be provided at least 30 days in advance as a reminder. We close for holidays and six days throughout the year for staff professional development.

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

CONFIDENTIALITY

A confidential file for every child is maintained in a locked file cabinet in the Site Manager’s office. That file contains registration information, health records, emergency contacts, individual care plans and other information pertaining to the child and family. The confidential file is available to the administrative staff and will be shared with teaching staff as necessary. Medical records are also accessed by the nurse for the purpose of immunization tracking and meeting individual needs as in the case of allergies or medical restrictions. This information is shared with teaching staff as necessary. Parents have the right to access their child’s confidential files at any time upon request. Developmental assessments, documentation and portfolios are kept by classroom teachers and shared with parents at scheduled conferences. Parents can request additional conferences to discuss this information at any time.

Revised December 2021
SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS

The Connecticut State Board of Education is committed to ensuring that all of the state’s preschool-age children, including children with disabilities, are afforded an opportunity to participate in a high-quality preschool education. Such an experience fosters a child’s overall development, including literacy and readiness for the public school kindergarten curriculum. The Board’s focus on preschool education is a cornerstone of the state’s school reform efforts, with attention to high expectations and the assurance that preschool-age children will demonstrate performance and proficiency at each age and stage of development and will enter school ready to learn.”

Currently, three of our Early Learning Centers, (Hartford, East Hartford, and West Hartford) provide School Readiness preschool programs. Children who turn 3 years of age by December 31st of any given year are eligible to enroll in September for the school year if they reside in the city where the program is located. As our enrollment is ongoing, we accept preschool aged children as soon as they turn 3 at all other times throughout the year.

Payment for school readiness services is based on a sliding fee scale that is established annually through the CT State Department of Education. Parents are required to show income verification in order to benefit from the reduced rates. Once the family fee is assessed, parents will sign a Parent Share Determination Form acknowledging the fee to be charged and will also be given a copy of the sliding fee scale form.

Parents will review and sign a tuition contract that is required by the CT State Department of Education and be given a copy of it for their records. A copy of the sliding scale will be provided to parents upon request and is posted in the lobby. All School Readiness families are required to provide updated information every 12 months or sooner should a family’s situation change from initial enrollment (i.e. income, family size, etc.). Family fees will be re-determined at that time. YWCA Hartford Region reserves the right to update information more frequently as needed.

QUALIFYING FOR SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS

CT SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAMS

School Readiness 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 (State Department of Education) and local School Readiness Councils. All families are required to provide proof of income and residency at the time of enrollment and every twelve months thereafter. (Or sooner should a family situation change) If a family’s financial situation changes for any reason they MUST reapply for this program. All working 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.

PROFESSIONAL STAFF

Teachers are the cornerstone of quality early education and care programs. With well-trained and educated staff, YWCA Early Learning Centers are better equipped to give every child a safe, stable environment that address the child’s needs, and fosters growth. While partnering with families, we support each child’s optimal development.

We are proud of the quality care that our teachers give to each child at our centers. Their commitment to the early childhood profession benefits every family who participates in our programs. Employees are selected on their
education and work experience. Teachers in our centers are required to have a degree in Early Childhood Education and must receive continued coursework in the field. Additionally, as professional preparation and ongoing professional development (PD) for the early childhood education workforce is essential to providing high-quality services to children and families, the YWCA assists staff with yearly goal setting and provides staff with bi-monthly staff development opportunities, and onsite coaching support. All staff is required to be pediatric CPR/First Aid certified.

**CURRICULUM & CONFERENCES**

YWCA Early Learning Programs utilizes The Creative Curriculum. The Creative Curriculum includes goals and objectives in the following domains of development: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, language, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, the arts, and English language acquisition.

Our preschool programs base their curriculum upon NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) Developmentally Appropriate Practice, The Early Learning Development Standards as published by the CT State Department of Education, and the Preschool Creative Curriculum. The Early Learning Development Standards, the Creative Curriculum, and the Assessment Frameworks (ELDSPAF) are used as the basis for planning learning experiences, observing and documenting child progress, and implementing teaching strategies. Content includes topic explorations relevant to the interests and environment of the children either emergently or as planned by teachers.

Both the Creative Curriculum and the Early Learning Development Standards focus on a continuum of learning. Teachers plan for different standards (domains) each week, record observations, and enter information into an on-line assessment tool that creates individualized child profiles. The data gathered is used by teachers to inform instruction. Profiles are shared with parents at Parent-Teacher Conferences three times a year. The goal is to ensure children show progress over time. Information shared with parents includes next steps for planning and learning. On-line assessments are used to report to the School Readiness Council in each district.

Parents will be provided with a daily sheet in the infant and toddler programs outlining your child’s day. Specific information as it relates to eating and diapering will be shared with you. Monthly newsletters will be provided updating you on classroom and Center wide events. Preschool parents will receive a weekly newsletter; “Here’s the News!” which outlines the standards of study; the activities planned for the week, and will provide hands on experiences that can be shared with your child at home.

**TRANSITION INTO KINDERGARTEN**

To effectively transition children to the formal academic setting of elementary school, the center strives to develop the cognitive foundations necessary for optimal academic performance. We believe that when children are academically and socially prepared for kindergarten, the transition into the formal school setting is less difficult. To further support this effort, teachers talk to children about what kindergarten is and discuss what they will learn there.

Our Early Learning Centers also host annual transition to kindergarten meetings for participant families. During this informational session, the program details the procedures parents must follow to register their children for the public school system, the Open Choice program, and/or the Magnet School program. Parents who are uncomfortable with the registration process will be assisted by center staff.

The center also strives to transition individual children’s information on assessments and development from the program to the public school system when children enter kindergarten. When children leave preschool, copies of assessment materials are given to parents to provide to kindergarten staff. This information allows kindergarten teachers to make more informed decisions about teaching strategies. Further, the program enrolls all children who reside in the city/town of the center in the Pre-Kindergarten Information System (PKIS) so that their educational history can be tracked from preschool on.
HOME – SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

YWCA firmly believes that one important key to a high-quality child care is parent participation and strongly encourages parent involvement. YWCA offers a wide variety of suggestions for ways that you can become involved, make 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 (picture days)
- Involvement in the classroom (i.e., reading to children, cooking activity, sharing 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 Bulletin Board. Each classroom has its own bulletin board where you will find a variety of wonderful information, such as daily schedule, menus, lesson plans, special events and information on newly enrolled children/families.

Infant and toddler childcare staff will provide you with a personalized daily report to inform you of your child’s day, including what they ate and number of diaper changes. Special information, messages, and upcoming events will also be shared with you. Preschool families will receive weekly News of the Week which will share the standards of study for the week ahead, special projects and activities, and things you can do at home to support their learning. 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 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.

VISITS AND VOLUNTEERING

Once your child is enrolled at a YWCA Early Learning Center, you are welcome to visit and/or volunteer at any time. We look forward to having you spend time in the classroom as your schedule permits. We believe that your involvement enhances the program and we encourage participation by families and members of the community. We 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), 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, YWCA is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of 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 YWCA, both parents shall be allowed equal access to their child as stipulated by law. 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, 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.

**CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

It is our goal to be proactive in meeting the needs of families while striving to excel in offering a high quality, developmentally and age appropriate programs for all children. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback with the center staff at any time. On an annual basis, we ask parents to complete a parent satisfaction survey to assess the quality of our program. We also host bi- monthly Parent Advisory Council meetings, where parents can express their concerns and visions for the program and work cooperatively with program staff to enhance program components. We welcome feedback and suggestions at all times!

**FIRE AND EMERGENCY PREPARATION**

To ensure the center is prepared in the event of a fire, all classrooms have fire escape plans with exit routes posted near their doors. Monthly fire drills are conducted and documented. As part of the preparation, each teacher has a list of the children enrolled in her classroom and checks those in attendance that day. A name to face count is taken and the room is searched before leaving the room. Each class has a designated outdoor location to report to, once safely outside the building. Immediately upon reaching the safe location during a fire drill, the teacher conducts a role call with a name to face identity check.

In the event of an emergency that requires an immediate evacuation, each Center has made alternate arrangements for the children where they can remain safely until picked up by a parent or authorized designee. All evacuation and emergency plans are posted in the classrooms and on the Parent Bulletin boards at each Center.

During an emergency or disaster situation, communication with those outside may be extremely difficult. It is absolutely crucial that we have accurate daytime e-mail addresses and phone numbers for:

- Home
- Work
- Cell
- Pickup contacts
- Emergency contacts

It is recommended that you provide extra supplies for your child in the event of an emergency. These may include at least two extra sets of clothing, extra diapers and wipes, and for infants, extra pre-mixed formula. The Center is prepared with adequate water supplies and food supplies should an emergency arise where children cannot get home right away (example: bad snow storm where roads are closed.) Each family is given a cubby area where an extra bag with supplies can be stored.

**Discipline Policy**

It is the philosophy of the Early Learning Centers to use discipline to enhance a child’s self-esteem, social development, and problem solving skills.
Staff may never use:

- Physical Punishment to include (but not limited to) shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, squeezing, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling, and pulling arms, hair, or ears; requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time, nor tie or bind. Corporal punishment is prohibited.
- Psychological Abuse to include (but not limited to) shaming, name-calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, frightening a child; ostracism, withholding affection.
- Coercion when disciplining a child, to include (but not limited to) rough handling (shoving, pulling, pushing, grasping of a body part); forcing a child to sit down, lie down, or stay down; physically forcing a child to perform an action (such as eating or cleaning up)

Our goal is to teach children self-control and pro-social behaviors through positive behavior support procedures. In this process, we support the child in learning to function both as an individual and as part of a group. Staff will:

- Guide children by setting clear, consistent and fair limits for behavior:
  - We are nice to our friends, We take care of our things, We listen to our teachers
- Use mistakes as a learning tool.
- Acknowledge positive behavior whenever observed; use descriptive praise that ties approval to a specific action rather that “good girl” or “good job.”
- Redirect a child to a more acceptable behavior or activity rather than using punishment.
- Use “do” instead of or in addition to “don’t” to teach the child a replacement behavior.
- Set simple rules that are consistent, fair, impartial, enforced and clearly communicated.
- Communicate with the child that you are disappointed with the incident and not with the child himself.
- No corporal or physical punishment may be used at any time.
- No isolating or humiliating punishment may be used at any time – children are to be fully supervised during any disciplinary action.
- Refrain from using consequences that involve restriction of food, outdoor play, and special activities.
- Consider the communicative value of a child’s challenging behaviors such as:
  - Escape from a disliked or uncomfortable situation
  - Need for attention
  - To gain access to something he can’t get in a more acceptable way
  - For self-stimulation or gratification
- Ignore minor misbehavior that is not harmful or potentially harmful to avoid giving too much attention to negative actions.
- Consider and plan to address factors that negatively affect child behavior such as health, over stimulation in the environment, developmental disorder, family situation, etc.
- Use a variety of appropriately applied strategies such as redirection, natural consequences, sit-and-watch, and conflict resolution procedures when children need behavior support.
- Unsafe or disrespectful behavior will be handled by leading the child away from the situation to calm down. The teacher states the rule that was broken firmly and without emotion. The child must sit, under the teacher’s supervision until ready to re-enter activities. The teacher then prompts the child about the rule, and what he will do instead or next time. The teacher then facilitates re-entry into classroom activities. Removal from a particular activity for the remainder of the day may be necessary, but the child must be reassured that he will have another chance the next day. Reward the child soon after he/she demonstrates any appropriate behavior in a descriptive, genuine manner.
- Conflicts between children will be resolved using the following steps
  - Position yourself between the children in conflict
  - Allow each child to state his side of the story and express his feelings
  - Reflect what each child says so they know they have been understood
  - Ask the children to suggest solutions to the problem
- Repeat those solutions as choices and help the children negotiate the most workable and fair choice
- Ask for agreement from each child and restate the solution chosen
- Facilitate and supervise the children until the new behavior occurs
- Use descriptive praise to acknowledge cooperation

- Document all challenging behavior using an ABC behavioral log and bring it to the attention of the Site Manager for behavior management planning using positive behavior support procedures.
- Bring to the attention of the Site Manager any child whose development, in any domain, is of concern for referral to a consultant or outside agency.

ATYPICAL AND CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Children’s development and behavior is taken seriously at YWCA. It is the responsibility of our staff and administration to provide a safe, supportive, and developmentally appropriate program to all children to the highest degree possible. The following policy on the management of children with atypical development and/or challenging behaviors will be adhered to without exception.

The purpose of the Atypical and Challenging Behavior policy is meant to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. Additionally, the goal is to outline the policy and steps to be taken by family, staff, and YWCA in order to ensure that the child is able to be successful in the program.

Atypical development shall be defined as that which does not meet established norms for children of the same age group in any of the domains of development including physical, language, motor, self-help, cognitive, and social/emotional. Challenging behaviors shall be defined as aggression such as biting, hitting, pushing, kicking or other potentially dangerous acts toward other children or staff. Also, foul language, inability to follow rules and comply with directives, escaping from the classroom, outbursts and tantrums, disruption of classroom activities or any act which endangers the health and safety of self or others, damages property, or disrupts program quality. The step-by-step process for assessing, referring, and accommodating children with atypical development and/or challenging behaviors is as follows:

- Teachers will bring concerns about a child’s development or behavior immediately to the attention of the Instructional Leader who will document those concerns and schedule classroom observations.
  - The Instructional Leader will observe the child in the classroom on several occasions, within a week’s time frame. (At different times during the day and during different activities) The Instructional Leader will then share Teaching Strategies and environmental changes that can be made to address the child’s challenging behavior with the staff, documenting the recommended strategies on a Coaching Form to be implemented immediately. (All staff members will sign off on the Coaching Form)
  - The Instructional Leader will go back and observe the child within two weeks to determine if the Teaching Strategies are effective and assist the staff with making adjustments to the Teaching Strategies if necessary. This will be documented on a new Coaching Form.
  - As the Instructional Leader is taking observations of the child, the teachers will begin the use of an ABC Chart (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence) This will help in determining if there are any triggers (antecedents) that cause the behavior, and the consequences applied with the behavior occurs.
  - The Instructional Leader and the Teachers will keep the Site Manager in the loop during the process.
  - At the four week mark the Instructional Leader will observe the child again and determine if the behaviors are able to be addressed by adjusting Teaching Strategies OR if additional supports are needed.

Revised December 2021
If the Instructional Leader feels that the child’s behavior or needs cannot be addressed by implementing teaching strategies they will request a meeting with the Site Manager and the Head Teacher to discuss the observations, ABC Chart, and implemented teaching strategies.

At the Manager’s discretion, an education, health, or mental health consultant who has contracted with the program can be contacted for the purpose of advice on assessing, referring, managing and/or accommodating the behavior/development of concern. In many cases, such informal guidance is enough to handle those concerns satisfactorily. Parents will be informed about how these issues will be addressed at the center before there are any modifications to the child’s program and to share the recommendations of any consultant.

If it is determined that the child’s challenges cannot be managed by teaching strategies and adjustments to the environment the following steps will be taken:

- The Site Manager will request a meeting with the family.
- All key members of the team will be present at this meeting: the Family, Site Manager, Instructional Leaders, and the classroom staff. The following documentation will be brought to the meeting: Instructional Leader observations, observations of the child, completed ABC Chart, and Accident /Incident Reports.
- The Inclusion support plan and Individualization Plan will be completed.
  - The intent of the Inclusion Support Plan and meeting with the family is to ensure that all those concerned with the care of the child are involved in the creation of the Inclusion Support Plan. The goal is to ensure that the child develop the skills to be successful in the environment and thrive.
  - Additionally, the Inclusion Support plan lays out the steps and actions that all parties involved will take to assist the child in being successful in the classroom environment.
- If the Social Services agency and the Site manager feel that the child would benefit from additional outside assistance it will be the responsibility of the parent to seek evaluation services through one of the following choices:
  - Health care specialist (if a physical concern) of the parent’s choice
  - Mental Health professional (if a behavioral concern) of parent’s choice
  - Public school early intervention/special education programs (children over 3)
  - Connecticut’s Birth to Three System (for children under 3)
  - Public services (Help Me Grow, Early Childhood Consultation Partnership, etc.)

- The parent agrees to provide the results and recommendations of assessment to the Center for the purpose of implementing recommendations into the Inclusion Support Plan. This information will be presented in writing at an Inclusion Support Plan meeting between the parent, center staff, and outside agency or professional. Any cost associated with such planning meetings will be the responsibility of the parent unless otherwise agreed upon. The Center agrees to follow professional recommendations regarding the accommodation and support of the child’s development to the greatest extent possible while maintaining program integrity and within budgetary, regulatory, or building restrictions that would prohibit making modifications or accommodations to the program.

- The parent agrees to provide a copy of an IFSP or IEP and grant permission for the program to communicate with special education personnel and therapists for the purpose of consistency and support in a detailed plan of care as required by OEC. YWCA Early Learning Centers are fully compliant with the ADA. Support service professionals, therapists, and special educators will have full access and cooperation to provide services on site during regular business hours provided they agree to follow program policies and procedures. Program transitions will

Revised December 2021
25
be facilitated by the center in cooperation with other agencies and transportation systems.

- The Inclusion Support Plan will be reviewed by the same parties thirty days from the original meeting. (Or sooner if the child’s behavior or actions are causing potential harm to them selves, other children, or staff. OR if any of the parties are not providing the support agreed up in the original meeting.)
  - If after the first thirty days, the Inclusion Support plan is working, all parties will agree that the plan will remain in place, until it is either no longer needed or no longer affected. In this instance all parties will sign and date the form again.
  - If the action plan is ineffective in addressing the dangerous behaviors or any of the parties’ failure to adhere to the original plan all parties will meet again to discuss new strategies and create a new plan.
  - If after a three month time frame and at least three meetings with family, the site manager and the family will meet to determine if an alternative placement would be best for the child. In such cases, or in the case of non-compliance with this policy, parents will have 2 weeks to make new arrangements unless the child is a danger to himself or others, or disruptive to program quality in which case dismissal from the program shall be immediate.

- The method and schedule for continual monitoring of the child’s growth and development will be determined by the Site Manager and will be dependent on the effectiveness of the program in place for the child. Parents have the right to access any information regarding their child’s program and/or development and will be immediately informed should any issues of concern occur. Parents have the right to make on-site visits at any time the program is in session.

This Guidance/Discipline Policy will be communicated to the staff and documented by the staff signing an acknowledgement of them receiving the policy under the following guidelines:
1. During New Employee Orientation
2. Annually
3. As the supervisor deems necessary

It will be communicated to the families in the following ways:
1. It is stated in the Family Handbook
2. It is posted in the classroom on the Parent Board

**ACCIDENTS AND INCIDENT REPORTS**

Constant and adequate supervision is the best safety precaution in guarding against accidents. Unfortunately, accidents do occasionally occur. If a child has an accident, staff members first provide immediate care to the child. They will then fill out an incident report form. Parents will be notified immediately if any injury or bump to the head occurs and/or if medical attention is necessary. For minor injuries, parents will be provided with an incident form at the end of the day to be signed.

We appreciate you bringing our attention to any visible injuries on your child's body that may not have occurred while in our care.

**SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of the YWCA Early Learning Centers are considered mandated reporters,
under this law. The employees of the YWCA Early Learning Centers are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if:

- They fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. The Department of Children and Families Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.
- As mandated reporters, the staff of the YWCA Early Learning centers cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in “good faith.”

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child’s body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate meals including a drink for your child
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Consistently sending a sick child to school over, when medical attention is recommended.
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

All child care staff members have a legal responsibility as mandated reporters in the state of Connecticut to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the CT State Department of Children and Families. Any evidence, or reasonable cause to believe, that a child is at risk must- and will – be reported immediately. Please notify the classroom teacher of any identifiable bruises or cuts on your child’s body.

**YWCA TOILET TRAINING POLICIES**

AT the YWCA Early Learning Centers, we believe that successful toilet training requires a team effort. Often, it is the very fact that a child is around other children in underwear in a care setting that serves to motivate a young child to use the toilet.

Parents and providers will meet to discuss and agree upon on the planned school/home training process. A consistent approach and common encouragement techniques can minimize confusion of a child during this time, and help to set the environment for a successful transition to becoming a big kid!

We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. Toilet training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family. We require that the child show signs of readiness. Should you feel your child is ready to make that step towards toilet training please ask your child’s teacher for the YWCA’s Toilet Training Information Packet. Once you have reviewed the packet and are confident that you can work with the teachers, within the steps outlined in the Toilet Training Information Packet please let the teachers know that you are ready to discuss the toilet training of your child.

No preschool child is excluded from participating in our setting because they are not yet toilet trained. We work with parents towards toilet training, unless there are medical or other developmental reasons why this may not be appropriate at the time. We make necessary adjustments to our bathroom provision and hygiene practice in order to accommodate children who are not yet toilet trained. Please note, unless medically or developmentally indicated by the appropriate medical professional, we do not permit diapers or pull ups in our preschool classrooms.
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 at the discretion of the center. In warm weather, children are kept hydrated with frequent drinks of water.

APPROPRIATE 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. Layers of warm clothing that fit loosely for cold weather are especially important. Snow pants and boots are required for winter days since playing in snow is part of our curriculum. Your child will also need gloves or mittens and a hat.
- **SHOE POLICY:** *Open toes shoes such as flip flops or sandals of any kind without backs are dangerous and will not be permitted.* Children must wear proper shoes such as sneakers or rubber soled shoes to ensure safety while running, climbing, and biking as well as protection from the wood chips on the playground.
- 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.
- Hoods on coats and sweatshirts may not have dangling strings. If found, strings will be removed to avoid strangulation.
- No necklaces may be worn as they can pose a strangulation danger.

JEWELRY AND ACCESSORIES
It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program for children to be wearing jewelry. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. If a child has pierced ears, earrings must be studs with childproof backs and no hoops or dangling jewelry will be allowed. Loose hair beads, barrettes, etc. are not to be worn by children under age 3. These accessories are a safety and a choking hazard. Unsafe items will be removed from your child and placed in your child's backpack for you to pick up at the end of the day. Staff is not responsible for lost or broken jewelry items.

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 & CELEBRATIONS

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. We welcome families to share their family traditions with the staff and children at our Early Learning Centers.

BIRTHDAYS

As we promote healthy eating and value the importance of proper nutrition, and in an effort to respect the eating preferences of others, we ask that you refrain from bringing in any food items from home to be shared with the children for birthday celebrations. You are welcome to bring in goody bags to go home or may choose to donate a special toy or book to the classroom in honor of your child’s special day! As we do not believe in excluding children, we ask that you do not distribute birthday party invitations at school unless you are inviting your child’s entire class to avoid hurt feelings.

PHOTOGRAPHS

I allow my child to be videotaped or photographed for promotional materials and other published or presented materials, including social media sites, and in projects related to the program. These images are to be used solely by YWCA Hartford Region for documentation and promotion and will not be used for other commercial purposes. I understand that no monetary compensation will be paid for the photos. I also understand I will be notified prior if the photos or videos are to be shown and/or used by companies or organizations outside of the YWCA Hartford Region, Inc. (For example, if a funder asks for images from programs to illustrate the organizations they support.)

HEALTHY EATING AND NUTRITION

Infant Bottles

Participating CACFP programs will provide infants with a bottle at breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack. Any additional bottles necessary must be pre-made and supplied by the parent. Non participating CACFP centers require that all food and beverages be brought in from home. All bottles must be labeled with the child’s full name and date. Staff does not prepare bottles from powdered formula nor are they allowed to thaw frozen breast milk. All bottles must have a cap. All bottles will be disposed of after one hour of being removed from the refrigerator or heated. No bottles will be saved for a later feeding. All bottles must be removed from the Center nightly. Any bottles left overnight will be dumped and the empty bottles returned to the child’s cubby.

Breast Feeding

The YWCA supports breast feeding mothers. In order to ensure that we are providing support and facilitating the proper health guidelines the following guidelines are recommended:

- The bottles will be stored at home at the following temperatures and for the following durations:
  - Refrigerator at 39 degrees: 5 days
  - Freezer at 5 degrees: 2 weeks
  - Freezer compartment with separate doors at 0 degrees: 3-6 months
  - Chest or upright deep freezer at -4 degrees for 6-12 months

The following guidelines are required:

- All bottles should be labeled with the infant’s full name, date and time the milk was expressed.
- The bottle will be placed in the refrigerator immediately
- Staff will gently shake the milk to mix, in order to ensure the special infection-fighting and nutritional components of the milk are not compromised.
- Centers will provide a comfortable place for mothers to breastfeed.
- Staff will work to coordinate feedings with parents.

Revised December 2021
29
All breastmilk bottles will be discarded after one hour whether the child has finished the breast milk or not.

Sippy Cups
All Sippy cups brought to the Center will be treated like bottles in that a child may drink from a cup at only one period during the day. The milk or juice in a Sippy cup will be discarded after one hour. A used sippy cup will be rinsed and placed back in the child’s bag to be returned home that evening. If your child will use more than one Sippy cup during a day, please bring in more than one cup. All cups must be labeled with the child’s first and last name and the current day’s date.

NO BOTTLES OR SIPPY CUPS WILL BE STORED OVERNIGHT.

Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks
As participants in the federal CACFP food program all our children are offered a nutritious breakfast at 9 AM and an afternoon snack. Please ensure your child arrives to school no later than 9:00 am so he/she may participate in the classroom's family style breakfast! We ask that you DO NOT bring your child’s breakfast to school. The YWCA requires family style eating so that all children participate together. Please be sure to provide your child with a nutritious breakfast if they arrive at the center first thing in the morning so they are not uncomfortably hungry before breakfast is served each morning.

Our Hartford and East Hartford centers provide a free hot lunch program that adheres to the federal Child and Adult Care Program (CACFP). Both our Elmwood and Manchester centers may elect to provide the option to purchase a hot lunch. Please speak to your center Site Manager for specific information and serving times.

Bringing Lunch from Home:
As required by the State Department of Public Health, Parents must provide a labeled lunch bag lunch for their children containing an ice pack to keep refrigerated items cold and/or a thermos to store warm foods. MICROWAVE OVENS ARE NOT USED TO HEAT LUNCHES. Unfortunately, we are required to dispose of any lunches brought into the center that are not properly insulated. Should this be the case, you be charged a $5.00 fee to provide your child with a substitute lunch.

Although we are not designated peanut free centers, we do ask that parents refrain from providing lunches that contain peanut products. If a child in our program is identified with a life threatening peanut or tree nut allergy, we will inform the parents to ensure that the center is 100% free of that allergen.

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.
- Staff and parents cut food into pieces no larger than ¼ inch square of infants and ½ inch square for toddler/twos, according to each child’s chewing and swallowing capability
- Certain foods cause allergic reactions. Please try all foods at home twice before sending them in for your child.
- Due to the limited amount of space in our refrigerator, all lunches must be in an insulated lunch bag with a cold pack inside.
• If you prefer your child have a hot lunch, you may send lunch in a thermos – heat the food at home in the morning and ensure that you have purchased a HOT thermos to keep the food warm until lunch time.
• Please make sure that your child’s lunch and all its contents are labeled with his/her name. Because of food allergies, we ask that children not share foods brought from home with each other and that no peanut butter be brought to the Center.
• Bottles or food containers must be covered.
• Glass bottles or containers of any kind are not permitted – this includes infant food in jars. Transfer food from glass jars to small plastic containers.

**GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS/TODDLERS/PRESCHOOL MEALS**

Please provide only 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.

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<th>Recommended Lunch Nutritional Components</th>
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<td>Vegetable or Fruit</td>
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<td>Bread or pasta</td>
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<td>Protein:</td>
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<td>Beans or peas</td>
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<td>Yogurt</td>
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**HEALTHY EATING INITIATIVE**

School readiness is linked to later academic success, yet many children do not reach kindergarten ready to learn. Recognizing the link between children’s eating habits and early childhood development is important. Supporting opportunities for children to have regular healthy meals is necessary to ensure brighter futures for our community.

**ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY & PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

YWCA Early Learning Centers require the parents of enrolled children, to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of our goals is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of the YWCA, but is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enter our centers. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on our center property thereafter.

**Parents are prohibited from:**

• No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on the center property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people 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 non-offensive 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 center will not assume the risk of a second chance. PARENTS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.

- While YWCA Early Learning Centers do not support corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the child care facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse or strike their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavioral issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

- Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent’s child. If a parent should witness another parent’s child behaving in an inappropriate manner, or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate to speak to the Site Manager about it.

- It is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child’s inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or to the Site Manager’s attention. At that point, the teacher and/or the Site Manager will address the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the Site Manager are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center.

YWCA Early Learning Programs uphold an environment of respect for all children, staff, parents, guardians and visitors to the program. We understand that sometimes challenges may come up that cause anger or frustration to surface. However, we have a **ZERO TOLERANCE** policy in place for the use or display of inappropriate behavior in front of children, parents, or staff within our program.

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of the YWCA Early Learning Centers or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

**FAMILY CONCERN/ COMPLAINT POLICY**

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

- Bring your concern directly to the center and speak openly with the Site Manager.
- Once you have addressed your concern with the Site Manager and you feel your concerns have not been resolved, you may contact the Director of Early Learning Programs at (860) 525-1163 at ext. 103. Please state the nature of your complaint and provide a phone number where you can be reached.
- If you still feel that your concern has not been adequately addressed, contact the Chief Program Officer in writing at 135 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105
- A complaint procedure for the Department of Public Health is posted at each site.
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 center offers information about such collaborations. Cultural and linguistic considerations are part of our collaborative efforts.

BEGINNING A NEW PROGRAM
When a child begins care in a new program, it can sometimes be difficult for the child and the parents to adjust. Most children will experience some level of separation anxiety –especially if it is their first time in childcare. Here are some things you can do to make the transition smoother for everyone.

We welcome you both to our program and look forward to having you as part of our YWCA Early Learning Center's family!