



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

TOMORROW'S FUTURE TODAY

MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA
PRESCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK



CONTACTS

Executive Director of Child Care Services:

Cathy Flynn
101 Amesbury Street, 4th Floor
Lawrence, MA 01840
978-725-6681

Senior Director of Child Care Services:

Mary Ellen King
129 Haverhill Street
Methuen, MA 01844
978-683-5266

Andover/North Andover YMCA

165 Haverhill Street
Andover, MA 01810
978.685.3541

Director: Katie Martin

Lawrence YMCA

40 Lawrence Street
Lawrence, MA 01841
978.686.6191

Director: Jackie Caraballo

Methuen YMCA

129 Haverhill Street
Methuen, MA 01844
978.683.5266

Director: Mary Ellen King
Asst. Director: Frances Hernandez

HOURS

Andover/North Andover YMCA

Monday – Friday
7:00AM to 6:00PM
(2.9 to 5 years of age)

Lawrence YMCA

Monday – Friday
7:30AM to 6:00PM
(2.9 to 5 years of age)

Methuen YMCA

Monday – Friday
7:00AM to 6:00PM
(15 months to kindergarten)



Dear Family,

Welcome to the Merrimack Valley YMCA Early Childhood and Education Program. We are delighted that you have chosen our program. We are committed to providing a safe and supportive experience for your child with plenty of opportunities for growth in spirit, mind, and body.

As your child spends a significant amount of quality time in our program, an amazing impact in your child's development will occur. In all settings, attitudes are formed, ideas of self worth are developed, relationships with peers and adults are experienced, and positive values are promoted.

Our program is designed to provide each child with a variety of positive, healthy, and engaging activities throughout each week. We have fun learning centers which all promote development and educational growth in the areas of literacy, art, physical activity, nutrition, and all work towards preparing your child for Kindergarten.

The teachers are trained and experienced in working with preschool children. Many of our educators have degrees in education, human services and/or early education and care. The YMCA provides its staff with ongoing training throughout the year. All of our educators meet the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) requirements and are trained in CPR, First Aid and AED Essentials.

You will notice that our registration packet includes a space for your child's personal information. Many parents are hesitant about sharing the personal aspects of their child's behavior or past experience. Some parents fear that the information may be misused while others are concerned about their child being "labeled", singled out, or treated differently. We appreciate these concerns and can assure you that the information will only be used to aid the staff in working with your child. Please take a moment to talk to your child about these questions. This handbook is designed to assist you in better understanding the philosophy, policies, and procedures of our program. We encourage you to review this booklet with your child and retain it for future reference. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to talk to us. We welcome your comments, questions, and feedback regarding our program.

Thank you for choosing us to meet your child care needs. You have chosen a quality program for your child that focuses on safety as a number one priority. As a team, we can better assure your child a successful experience in our program.

Welcome to our YMCA family!

Sincerely,

Cathy Flynn
Executive Director of Child Care Services



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Merrimack Valley YMCA is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. The YMCA strives to build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities. We strive to provide care in a safe and supportive environment that fosters the physical, emotional, and social growth of children, and supports and strengthens families.

STAFF ORGANIZATION OR THE MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA

- Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care
- Board of Directors
- Interim President/CEO: Gary Morelli
- Branch Board of Managers
- COO: Frank Kenneally
- Executive Director of Child Care Services: Cathy Flynn
- Director of Child Care Services: Mary Ellen King
- Lead Teachers
- Teachers
- Assistant Teachers

The Merrimack Valley YMCA Preschool and Kindergarten program was established to serve children from 15 months to 7 years of age. The purpose of the program is to provide a safe, supportive environment that fosters the physical, social, cognitive, and emotional growth of each child. Our licensed program meets the standards of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. All three preschool programs are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).



OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children are active learners who grow and develop skills when fostered in the appropriate environment. Our toddler, preschool and kindergarten curriculum addresses the interest and abilities of the individual students. We take the individual learning styles of each child and the stages of development into consideration when planning the curriculum.

Our program strives to meet the cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs of each child. We offer an exciting, nurturing, stimulating and support environment for preschool children. Children are encouraged to participate in other daily activities that foster their fine and gross motor skills through hands-on group activities. We encourage children to learn and explore at their own pace.

An important aspect of a preschool child's life is to gain confidence and self-reliance. We encourage the development of these skills by incorporating them into our daily curriculum. We provide opportunities for independent, small group, and large group activities to incorporate sharing and cooperation skills.

Our goal is to help your child develop into his/her fullest potential and provide them with a positive preschool experience. We feel that with our exemplary curriculum, classroom environments and highly qualified staff, we can provide a quality preschool experience for your child that will adequately prepare them for their future educational experiences.

HEALTH CARE POLICY

We are concerned about the health and safety of your child. If your child is not feeling well in the morning, please have your child remain at home. If your child complains of not feeling well during the day, we will call you. The teacher will make a decision with you as to whether or not you will need to pick up your child. Any child who is sick will be placed in an area away from the other children until the parent arrives. We will see it that your child has adequate play materials (i.e., book, puzzle, etc), ample rest, appropriate food and fluids if the child so desires.

Your child will need to be picked up immediately if: he/she has a fever of 101 or higher; he/she vomits; he/she has two or more bouts of diarrhea; any communicable disease is identified (i.e.: conjunctivitis, chicken pox, unidentified rashes, head lice, etc).

In any of these instances, your child cannot return to the program until they have been fever free for 24 hours, haven't vomited in over 24 hours, and haven't experienced any diarrhea in 24 hours. If a communicable disease had been diagnosed, a doctor's note must accompany the child upon return to the program and they must have been on medication for at least 24 hours before they can return. If a communicable disease was not diagnosed, a doctor's note clearing the child for return to the program must accompany him on the day of re-entry.

In the event of an emergency, the child's parents will be notified first and if they are unable to be reached, the emergency contact people listed in your child's file will be contacted next. If no one can be reached, the family physician will be contacted. In case of an extreme life threatening emergency, we will contact the Lawrence Fire Department (911) for transportation to the nearest medical facility. The child care Director or designee will accompany the child with the child's complete file. The staff must be aware of any allergies that your child may have. A posting will be made on the allergy list in the classroom and will be covered by a piece of paper for family privacy.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION POLICY

The preschool program policy is that NO medication will be administered without written parental authorization. All prescription medication will be administered only with the written order of a physician which should include the label on the medication. A Doctor's note should accompany this prescription medication. We ask that if at all possible, you administer any medications before dropping your child off in the morning and/or after pick up time. We will administer non-prescription medication (i.e.: Tylenol or medicated topical ointments) only with a signed authorization form from the child's physician on the YMCA medical authorization form. A written record of administration of medication will be kept and will include the following information: name of the child, time and date of each medication, dosage and name of staff administering the medication.

ALL medication will be kept in its original container with the child's name, name of medication and the directions for its administration and storage, or it **WILL NOT** be administered. All medication will be stored under proper conditions. Staff will make every attempt to contact the parent prior to dispensing any medication. **First doses** of any medication **must** be given by a parent.

MASSACHUSETTS STATE LICENSING AGENCY

Our child care program is licensed to operate by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. The regional office responsible for our YMCA programs is: Department of Early Education and Care, 360 Merrimack Street, Building 9, 3rd Floor, Lawrence, MA 01843. The telephone number is 978-681-9684. Our licensor is: Christine Lowe. Parents may contact the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) for information regarding the Merrimack Valley YMCA regulatory compliance history.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN SERVED

The Merrimack Valley YMCA Preschool programs welcome a diverse group of children both culturally and ethnically. The YMCA is committed to serving all families of varying backgrounds, learning rates and learning styles. Children aging from 15 months to 7 years of age will be served in our early education and care program.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Merrimack Valley YMCA will admit children to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to all of the children and families of the YMCA. The YMCA does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, marital status, disability, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin or sexual orientation. Children do *not* need to be toilet trained to be eligible to participate in our toddler, preschool and/or kindergarten program.

TOOTHBRUSHING POLICY

Oral health is an important part of a child's development. YMCA educators will encourage children in our care to brush their teeth and assist them in doing so. Children will not be forced to brush their teeth. When children are in the program for more than 4 hours or whenever they consume a meal in child care, they will be given the opportunity to brush their teeth. Toothbrushes are labeled with the child's name and date and are stored in sanitary Plexiglas holders that clearly separate the individual toothbrushes. Toothbrushes and toothpaste is provided by the YMCA. If you wish for your child to use his/her own toothbrush, please make sure to label it and hand it directly to the classroom teacher.

EMERGENCY FIRST AID POLICY

If an injury should occur while your child is at preschool, there is a procedure followed by all staff. A First Aid certified staff member administers the appropriate first aid. The director and/or lead teacher shall immediately be made aware of the situation. If the situation warrants immediate medical attention, an ambulance will be called and the child will be transported to the nearest hospital. The child will be accompanied and supervised by a staff person with the child's complete file. The parent will be notified; emergency contact persons will be called only when all efforts to reach the child's parent have been unsuccessful. A written accident report is completed for all injuries and copies will be made for the child's file for the parent. Parent needs to sign the report after reviewing it. First Aid kits are to be kept in each room and carried with each classroom where they go (i.e.: walks, playground, etc.). Supplies will include, but are not limited to: band aids, ice packs, triangular bandages, gauze pads, medical tape, scissors, wash and dry wipes, thermometers and disposable gloves. It is the responsibility of the child care director to keep all first aid kits fully supplied. Location of first aid kits are labeled in each classroom and kept out of reach of children.

INFECTION CONTROL/ILLNESS PREVENTION

The Merrimack Valley YMCA preschool programs will adhere to the following policies for dealing with ill children: Mildly ill children will be given a comfortable place to rest. Parent will be notified that their child is not feeling well. Parents will be called immediately to pick up their child if the child is experiencing vomiting, diarrhea, fever, excessive coughing, sore throat, earache, or unidentified rash. These children should not return to the program until all the symptoms have cleared.

A child may return to preschool under the following conditions, but only with a **physician's release**:

- (1) Impetigo -contagious rashes or other parasitic disease but only after it is fully cleared up;
- (2) Contagious diseases – after the period of contagion is cleared;
 - Chicken pox – after all the spots have crested

- Measles – 5 days after rash begins
- Mumps – 9 days after onset of swelling
- Lice and Scabies – after treatment is completed

A child may return to preschool under the following conditions **without a physician's release:**

- (1) Fever – 24 hours fever free without fever reducing medication
- (2) Diarrhea – when solid stools have returned

Children with Head lice will need to be picked up immediately and may return to the program under the following conditions:

- (1) If only eggs are found in the child's hair, the child may return the next day provided the parent completed the necessary treatment;
- (2) If lice and eggs were found in the child's hair, they may not return to the preschool until they submit a note from the doctor or health department stating they are no longer contagious.

PLAN FOR INFECTION CONTROL MONITORING

Staff and children will wash their hands with liquid soap and running water using friction. Paper towels are kept next to the sinks. Staff and children wash their hands at the minimum times as follows: before handling food and eating; after using the bathroom; after coming in contact with bodily fluids and discharge; and after cleaning. All staff wears disposable gloves when handling any body fluids such as blood, vomit, urine, mucus, etc. Staff shall carefully disinfect any area that is exposed to these fluids. The clean-up materials shall be sealed in a plastic bag and be thrown in a covered trash receptacle. Staff will then follow hand-washing procedures.

PLAN FOR WASHING AND DISINFECTING SPECIFIED

A solution of ¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon water (1:10 ratio, the universal standard for blood), prepared daily by the staff will be used to clean surfaces and equipment. The solutions will be placed in spray bottles and stored away from the children in closets. The following items will be sprayed and disinfected daily: tables, toilets, toilet seats, sinks, faucets, drinking fountains, containers, water tables, water play equipment. We also wash clothes, towels and mop used for cleaning. Tables will be disinfected after each use. Toys that have been put in children's mouths and thermometers will be washed with soap and water and disinfected after each use.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Each child's face and hands shall be washed as needed using disposable paper towels. Each child must have available extra clean, dry indoor and outdoor clothing to change into if they are wet or soiled. For soiled clothing with fecal matter, the stool shall be emptied into the toilet. The soiled clothing

will be placed in a plastic bag, labeled with the child's name and returned to the parent at the end of the day.



CLOTHING

Children at the YMCA are active and involved. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing that is seasonally appropriate and practical. Washable play clothes are preferred. All clothing should be easy to put on and remove to encourage self-help skills. Please label each article of clothing. This should include all outerwear and boots. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. On your child's first day, please bring a complete set of clothes labeled with his/her first and last name and put into a shoebox and also label the box. If your child needs assistance in changing his/her clothes due to an accident or some other incident, a teacher will assist him/her. Soiled clothes are sealed in plastic bags and placed out of reach until departure time. We ask that you check your child's extra clothes inventory periodically. We will send you reminders if your extra clothes supply is low.

QUIET TIME ACTIVITIES

The YMCA will offer an extended period of sleep, rest or quiet activities for children in care longer than four hours. Children who choose not to sleep or awaken early will be offered quiet activities for the remainder of the sleep or quiet activity period. The activities offered may include computer time, working with classroom Leapsters, books and books on tape. Tabletop activities such as play dough, memory games, cutting projects, puzzles and coloring are also alternate choices for children at this time. We believe children can productively use quiet time by resting their bodies without actually sleeping. These quiet activities will support children's growth and development as well as their need for rest and relaxation and will help prevent children from seeing rest time as "punishment."

PROGRAM PETS

Some of our classrooms have small pets such as fish, turtles, etc. The animals are here to help teach children about caring for pets and to welcome them as a part of our classroom community. Children may watch teachers feed the pets but are not involved in any way of cleaning their cages, feeding or holding the pets. Children enjoy writing about their classroom pet friends in their journals and drawing pictures of them in the classroom art labs. We also share many books about pets with our children and their families.

TOILETING POLICY

For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the YMCA takes the following important measures:

1. YMCA staff use only commercially available pull ups/diapers (provided by parent) unless the child has a medical reason that does not permit their use.
2. If children require cloth diapers, the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit.
3. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing and avoiding handling) and sent home that day with families to be washed.
4. Staff checks children's diapers to be changed every two hours when children are awake and when they awake from their naps.
5. Diapers are changed whenever wet or soiled.
6. Staff will change children's diapers/soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not anywhere else in the building. Disposable gloves must be worn at all times when changing children.
7. The changing areas are located in the bathrooms.
8. At all times, teachers have a hand on the child when child is being changed on an elevated surface.

9. Staff post and follow changing procedures in the changing area (in accordance with our cleaning and sanitation policies).
10. Surfaces used for changing on and which materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding.
11. Diaper containers have a lid that opens and closes tightly by using a hands free devise (Step can).
12. Containers are kept closed and are not accessible to children.
13. Any staff that helps to prepare food does not change diapers until their food preparation duties are completed for the day.
14. All staff must follow YMCA hand washing procedures at all times.

REGISTRATION

In order to simplify the registration process, the following is our “How to Register” list:

- Pick up a Child Care application at your branch of choice: Andover, Methuen or Lawrence. The YMCA can also mail the registration packet to you.
- Ask for a tour of the program and facility

Fill out all forms completely. (You can do this at the time you pick up the forms or you can take them with you and bring them fully completed at another time). When you have completed all portions of the application, please return it with the following items:

- * Two weeks in advance tuition payment.
- * A copy of parent/guardian photo ID
- * A current photo of the child.
- * A copy of the child’s birth certificate.
- * A copy of the child’s Social Security Card.
- * Lead Poison screening
- * Physical report from a doctor stating that the child has been immunized in accordance with the department of Health recommended schedule against: Diphtheria, Varicella (chicken pox), Tetanus, Hepatitis B, Pertussis (whooping cough), HIB, Measles, Mumps & Rubella (MMR) and Poliomyelitis.



Please note your child cannot start the program until the YMCA has all the required information on file and the required tuition and registration fee. We will send you a registration confirmation in the mail and notify you of any missing information. Children are accepted on a first come first serve basis. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call us.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The YMCA preschool programs have an open door policy. Parents are allowed and encouraged to visit the center at any time. We encourage parent participation on fieldtrips and other school events.

Parents are welcomed to voice their policy and program ideas, though it is not recommended during drop in visits. Any issues, concerns, or suggestions should be brought to the attention of the director. The director will respond to all concerns and suggestions and if necessary will put them in writing as well. If differences arise that cannot be handled in this matter, we will use a variety of techniques such as committee appeals, special conferences, or individual meetings to resolve the grievance.

Teachers complete progress reports four times a year through our Creative Curriculum Assessments. Children with disabilities will be evaluated every three (3) months. Teachers will be available for conferences at the parent's request. We do recommend at least one scheduled conference during the year to discuss the growth and development of your child.

TUITION

Tuition is based on the number of days a child is scheduled to attend. Parents are responsible for payment of every day the child is **scheduled** to attend, whether or not they attend. Payments are due weekly or biweekly or you may pay on a monthly basis if this schedule best meets your family's need. Payments must be paid in advance of the actual child care service.

Tuition should be made payable to the Merrimack Valley YMCA. Please make payments at the front desk and retain a receipt for the payment made. Checks, money orders, credit cards and cash are all accepted. Failure to make payments at your scheduled payment time will result in the dismissal of your child from the program. Parents are responsible for maintaining childcare receipts for tax purposes. When a bank returns a check to us, they charge a fee. This fee will be passed on to the parents. If two checks are returned, we will require that all future payments be made with a money order or bank check. Rates for the school year are listed on the parent agreement that **parents must read and sign** in order to register their child(ren).

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Tuition is based on covering the operating costs of the program. Our annual campaign helps to keep tuition reasonable while allowing us to provide quality programming. Through the YMCA Financial Assistance program we offer reduced rates to individuals and families who cannot afford the full price of tuition. Eligibility is based on income level, family size, and the **availability of funds**. Please see the bookkeeper for details.

WITHDRAWAL

After the first day of school begins, parents must submit a written two (2) week notice to the bookkeeper by the first of the month for the following month to withdraw a child or to drop down to a minimum of two days per week. You are responsible for payment during these weeks regardless of your child's attendance. Reductions or discounts for program fees cannot be given. Financial issues can be discussed with the bookkeeper.

Program fees will only be refunded in full if the YMCA cancels a program. Refunds will not be given for any other reason.

ABSENCES

Please call the YMCA to let the director know if your child will be absent. Parents are responsible for payment even if the child is absent. Parents must also pay even for planned vacations. We do not give discounts for vacations. For parents receiving voucher assistance through the state, if your child is absent for more than thirty (30) days in a 6 month period (from January to June and July to December), your voucher can and will be terminated. If your child is ill and is out of the program due to this illness, you must bring a doctor's note. If you are going on a planned vacation, please request a vacation form from the program director. We must keep written request on file.

LATE PICKUPS

A parent or other responsible adult failing to pick up a child by 6 p.m. will result in an additional charge. The current charge is \$1.00 for every minute that you are late. This fee is payable at the time of pickup. This late fee money goes back into the program for new supplies and materials as well as for staff time consumed in staying past the 6 p.m. closing time.

TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURE

Parents are responsible for transporting their child to and from the YMCA program. An adult must accompany the child **into** the classroom. Please be sure that you are acknowledged by your child's teacher and that you sign your child in and out on the sign in/out log. Children will only be released to an adult over 18 years of age. We must have **written authorization** from a parent to release a child to anyone not listed on the transportation release form. Please understand that **we will ask for identification from anyone that we are not familiar with, even if we have written authorization.** This policy is to ensure the safety of your child. All family members must carefully take their child by the hand when walking them to the parking lot to be transported home by a family car, taxi, bicycle riding or walking. If a child in our program takes private bus transportation set up by the parent, the child care director needs to be informed of time of pick up and drop off, the phone number of the transportation company and a signed contract must be on file between the family and the transportation company as well as a detailed plan that states the parents needs to be responsible for calling transportation company if their child will be absent. If the vehicle becomes disabled, the transportation company needs to contact the parent and the parent in turn will notify the YMCA. Any accidents or violations that involve a transportation company must be reported to the parent and the YMCA. All buses need to have a seat belt cutter and a phone for necessary communication.

CHILDREN'S RECORDS REQUIRED

All children **must** have the appropriate forms submitted at the time of registration. We must also have a physical report from the child's doctor that has taken place within 6 months prior to enrollment and must never be more than one (1) year old. Physical must be renewed every year and must display evidence of all up to date immunizations and a lead test within the last year.

The medical documentation must be given to the bookkeeper within two weeks of your child's start date. In addition, the preschool program handbook must be read and the statement signed indicating understanding of the policies and adherence to them. This form can be found within the registration packet. A child's parent shall have the right to add information, comment

and data or any other relevant materials to the child's record. Information contained in a child's record will be privileged and confidential. Parents will be notified if their child's file has been subpoenaed. A child's parent will have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. Such request shall be made in accordance with the following procedure: if such parent is of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable material in the child's record, he shall have the right to



have a conference with the licensee to make his/her objections known. The licensee shall, within one (1) week after the conference, render such in favor of the parent; he shall immediately take steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

Parents have access to their child's file for no more than two (2) days after the written request is submitted. A permanent written log will be kept with the child's record indicating to whom and when information contained was released. The licensee will not charge a fee for copies of any information contained in your child's file. There is no charge for any reasonable amount of copies of a child's file.

UNAUTHORIZED ACTIVITIES

Any activities that are not directly related to child care, such as fundraising, publicity events, media interviews and photographs must have written parental authorization. It is a possibility, at time, that a student or staff member might be observing or doing research on the program participants with consent of the preschool director. Your child will not be part of this without your written consent. No interactions shall take place between child and observer, no physical harm to the child shall be incurred, and the child(ren) will not be identified.

TRANSITION POLICY

Any transition time for a young child can be a frightening and confusing experience. We work closely with parents, children and staff to help with smooth changes throughout a student's day. If a child transitions from preschool to kindergarten or from kindergarten to the school age program, we start the process gradually by involving family members inviting them to visit new classrooms and teachers. We help the child transition slowly by "visiting" at various times throughout the day over a two week period. Classroom teachers will also visit new classroom with the transitioning student. Educators in each classroom will communicate about child's successes, challenges, likes and dislikes with permission from the parent. We will also ask for written permission from the parent to contact former or new program to share positive, pertinent information with all involved parties.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

When a behavior management situation arises, our highly trained and educated staff will handle the situation in a consistent manner based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of the child. Our goal is to maximize growth and development in a positive manner through setting reasonable and positive expectations, by planning activities and arranging the environment to channel energy for constructive purposes. Once a behavior is observed, our staff will try to redirect the behavior into a more positive action, and provide the child with the opportunity to verbalize their feelings. Expectations of the child will be made clear and focus will be on the behavior and not the child themselves. The teacher will attempt to discuss the problem with the child and offer choices in order to correct the behavior. If the situation has not been corrected, the child may be asked to leave the group or activity for a time away of reflection. This time will be no longer than one minute per year of life. After this time the teacher will again try to redirect the child into more appropriate ways to communicate their needs. Choices are offered to encourage decision making and self-control through understanding. If a child has persistent behavior issues the teacher will keep a behavioral log for documentation purposes. Parents are kept informed of any issues or problems that persist or behaviors that endanger the safety of the other children or staff in the program. The director and staff will work together on a plan for helping the child handle any behavior issues and work towards a positive resolution.

Corporal punishment, including spanking, will NOT be used. Children will not be denied food or force fed as a form of punishment. No child shall be subject to cruel or severe punishments, humiliation, or verbal or any type of physical abuse. No child will be punished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet. Our goal is to correct the problem and reinforce positive behavior. Children will assist in making rules whenever possible.

REFERRAL SERVICES

Through the Merrimack Valley YMCA's connections with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC), we have information regarding social, mental, health, educational and medical services, including but not limited to dental checkups, hearing and vision screenings for families. Inquiries about the referral services should be made through the preschool director. If the staff has a concern about a child, they will first notify the director. The behaviors will be observed, recorded, and reviewed before a referral is recommended. A parent meeting will be set up to discuss the program's concerns and referral. The program shall offer any assistance to all parents making the referral and shall have written consent before any referral is made. The program shall maintain a written record of any referral, including the conferences with parents and the results.

Telephone Numbers for Social Services

• DCF	978-557-2500
• Fuel Assistance	978-681-4950
• Lead Information	978-681-4995
• WIC Program	978-681-4960
• Child Care Circuit	978-686-4288
• Coordinated Family and Community Engagement	978-681-4996
• District Court	978-687-7184
• Department of Early Education and Care	978-740-3060
• Transitional Assistance	978-725-7100
• DA Victim Witness Program	978-683-4300
• Child Abuse	978-682-2688
• Head Start	978-681-4920
• Social Services	978-681-4985
• Welfare	800-322-1448
• Mental Health Center	978-683-3128
• Holy Family Doctor Referral Line	978-687-4000
• Lawrence General Hospital	978-683-4000
• Mass Eye & Ear	978-794-3439
• Mass Rehab	978-685-1731
• MSPCC	978-682-9222
• Lawrence School Dept.	978-975-5905
• Special Ed	978-975-5990
• Methuen School Department	978-722-6014
• Andover School Department	978-623-8530
• North Andover School Department	978-794-1503
• Boxford School Department	978-887-2856



REQUIREMENTS FOR REFERRALS

The YMCA will provide the parent with a written statement that includes the reason for recommending a referral for additional services, the contact person for the Department of Early Education and Care, Chapter 766 and Early Intervention programs, a brief summary of the program observation related to the referral, as well as any efforts the program may have made to accommodate the child's needs. The YMCA will offer assistance to the child's parents in making the referral. The YMCA will have written parent consent before any referral is made.

ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All Preschool Program staff members are mandated reporters under the Massachusetts State Law. Any staff member who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected is obligated to report the information immediately to the preschool director or other designee. The person receiving the initial report will be responsible for assessing the data collected and the condition of the child. The parents will then be notified verbally and a written 51A report will be filed with the Department of Children and Families Protective Services Unit as required by law. If the alleged perpetrator is a member of the staff, the staff will be removed from providing care to children pending an investigation and the Department of Early Education and Care will also be notified. Reinstatement of the staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of DCF, EEC, and the YMCA along with any other investigative agency. It is also the policy of the YMCA that staff is not permitted to baby-sit, transport, or be involved with children who are program participants outside of the program.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Staff is responsible for ensuring that all children:

- Have a safe and reliable environment free of hazards
- Have use of all the equipment and space on an equal basis
- Have equipment that is in safe and functioning condition
- Are disciplined in a manner that is fair, equal and respectful of them
- Are given the opportunity to express their emotions in an appropriate manner
- Are allowed to express their creativity and uniqueness
- Have an environment that offers them a variety of choices
- Are taught by people who care about them, enjoy being with them, and who are concerned about their growth and education

CHILDREN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Children are responsible for the following:

- Respecting the rules that are established for them
- Not willfully damaging any equipment or property in the building or anyone else's property
- Sharing equipment and facilities with all children in the program

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

It is the YMCA policy to admit children with disabilities to our program provided that the staff and facility can meet the needs of the child. With parental consent, the program director will request an IEP if one is in place and information from the local education agency, Early Intervention, and the child's health/service provider. Parents must put in writing their requests to change/modify their child's participation in the program, the size and staff/child ratio of the group to which their child is assigned and the need for any physical equipment, material or aids that the child may need. If the accommodations requested by the parents cause undue burden, a written notification will be sent to the parent within 30 days of receipt of request including the reasons for the decision. The parent may contact the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) for determination of compliance. A copy of the notification will be kept in the child's file.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Chapter 28 Section 10 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) the legal responsibilities of promulgating rules and regulations governing the operation of day care centers and preschools. In accordance with this law, DEEC published the requirements now in effect on March 31, 1977. The licensee must comply with these regulations in order to ensure a minimum level of care for the children serviced by the preschool.

The licensee (preschool) is required to inform all parents of the rights of parents as stated in the regulations at the same time of admission of their child to the center. These rights are as follows:

7.04(4) PARENT VISITS The Licensee shall permit unannounced visits by the parents to the center and their child's room while their child is present.

7.04(5) PARENT INPUT The licensee shall have a procedure for allowing parental input in the development of center policy and programs. The licensee shall provide an explanation to the parent(s) when a parent makes a suggestion as to the program or policy of the center and the licensee does not accept the suggestions. If the parent requests a written response, the licensee shall respond in writing to the parent.

7.04(6) REPORTS TO PARENTS The licensee shall, annually but at least six months after child enrollment, prepare a written progress report of the participation of each child in the center's records. The licensee shall provide a copy of each report to the parent(s) or meet with them at least annually to discuss their child's activities and participation in the center. In addition: (a) for infants and children with disabilities, the licensee shall complete a written progress report on the child's development every three (3) months and provide it to the parents; and (b) The licensee shall bring special problems or significant developments particularly as they regard infants, to the parents' attention as soon as they arise.

7.04(3) PARENT CONFERENCES The licensee shall make the staff available for individual conferences with parents at parental request.

7.04(7) NOTIFICATION OF INJURY The staff shall inform parents immediately of any injury which requires emergency care beyond minor first aid and shall inform parents in writing of any first aid that was administered to their child within 24 hours of the incident.

7.04(12) RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION: UNUSUAL TREATMENT The center shall not conduct research, experimentation or unusual treatment involving children without written and informed consent of the affected child's parent or guardian for each occurrence. In programs where observations of children (by other than parents of the children in the center) are common, a general parental consent may be given in writing. Observations shall mean that there is no interaction between the child and the observers and no identification of the individual child. In no case shall the staff allow a child to be harmed during research, experimental or unusual treatment. Research and experimentation shall not mean program evaluation of data collection for purposes of documenting services of the program which do not identify individual children.



ORIENTATION

An individualized program orientation for all parents is held during the intake process. An orientation is required before the child may start in the program. It is very important that all

parents attend this informal session to ensure that all program policies are understood and that any questions can be properly addressed. Children are also encouraged to visit the program before their first day of enrollment to ensure for a smooth transition and comfort with the educators, classroom environment and fellow students.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Encourage your child to store his/her belongings in their cubbies. Please label all of your child's belongings. Each classroom has a lost and found area. We are not responsible for misplaced items or items that are left behind. Items left for a prolonged period of time will be donated to a needy organization.

WHAT TO BRING

In the event of an accident, we ask that parents please provide an extra set of clothes for their child. Please label all of your child's belongings with his/her first and last name. Please dress your child in comfortable clothing (loose pants, top, and sneakers) as the students participate in messy activities and many outdoor activities. Please bring a bathing suit, towel and flip flops as they will participate in our weekly swim time. Please bring a small pillow and blanket for quiet/rest time.

WHAT NOT TO BRING

Please do not send your child to school with toys or other valuables (i.e.: expensive jewelry, etc). These items could interfere with your child's play and we provide plenty of materials in our classroom to engage all children. The teachers cannot be responsible for remembering where your child placed personal items or for another child taking them. Items from home can cause problems for your child and the other children. Please keep them at home or in your car.

If your child has a special item that he/she would like to share with the class, please speak with the teacher about arranging a show and tell opportunity.

LUNCH/SNACKS

The Lawrence and Methuen branches of the Merrimack Valley YMCA provide a nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack each day for the children. *However, we do not serve lunch in the Andover preschool program. We only serve breakfast and snack. ALL of our facilities are nut free.* Menus are sent home each month with the children. Remind parents that if their child does not like the food on the menu, they can pack their child a lunch from home. Candy, soda, or junk foods are not allowed. We can heat up their child's food if necessary. Recommend that they use ice packs in lunches that contain food that may spoil. Also remind them to advise you if their child has a food allergy. This should be done in writing on the first day of participation.

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (HEPA)

First Lady Michelle Obama and the Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA) raised the call. The Y answered it. As part of our focus on developing healthy habits in kids, families, and our communities, we have committed to adopting standards for healthy eating and physical Activity (HEPA) in our child care programs. We are committed to making our programs healthy and fit but we need parent's help to do it. As part of our commitment we will do the following:

1. **Family Engagement/Participation:** Provide open houses/family nights at least three times per year that focus on healthy habits including sharing of healthy recipes and physical activity ideas.
2. **Physical Activity:** Provide children with at least 30 minutes of physical activity per day for programs that run in the afternoon and 60 minutes a day for all day programs. The time will be spent in a mixture of moderate and vigorous activity with at least 20 minutes three times a week dedicated to vigorous activities. This play will take place outdoors whenever possible. Please dress your child accordingly.

3. **Digital Devices/Screen Time:** The use of television and movies is prohibited in our programs. Additionally, we will limit digital device time, such as the use of computers and tablets, solely for the use of homework and/or programs that engage children in physical activity (such as Wii Fit) and it will not exceed one hour limit.
4. **Food/Nutrition:** We will serve fruits and/or vegetables at all meals and snacks. We will also serve all meals family style, meaning that each child will serve themselves with limited help from adults. We will not serve nor allow fried or foods with transfat in our programs. Please refrain from bringing fried foods into our program. Water will be accessible to children at all times and will be present and at the table during all meals. Sugar sweetened beverages are not allowed in our program. This includes holidays and parties.

NEWS AND INFORMATION

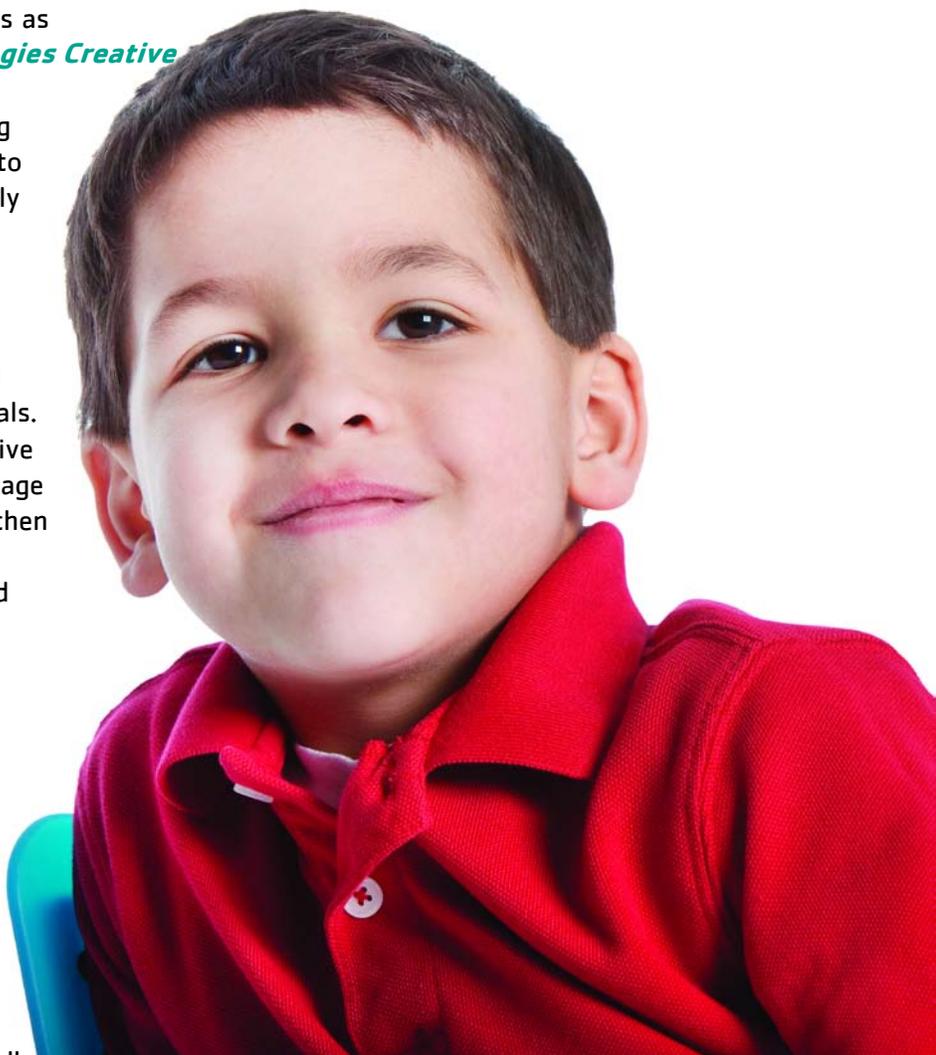
The preschool director provides a monthly newsletter updating any closure and upcoming events. Outside the classrooms there is a bulletin board which is updated frequently with notices and parent information. Please check the bulletin board daily for changes and new information. All parents will receive a curriculum informing them of activities their child will be participating in for the week. Also a list of daily activities will be posted outside of your child's classroom.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum in our preschool and kindergarten program is designed to focus on all areas of development. We use the Massachusetts Standards and Guidelines as well as *Success for All* and *Teaching Strategies Creative Curriculum* for our preschool and kindergarten students. We believe in having learning materials readily available for children to explore at their own pace. Our teachers typically design the curriculum around a theme and then design developmentally appropriate activities that encompass the theme. Our classroom environment is set up into various learning centers, each allowing your child to explore and create with developmentally appropriate materials. We nurture cognitive growth through manipulative such as puzzles, table games, and various language experiences. We seek to encourage and strengthen social relationships with peers and adults. We expose the children to science through sand and water play, cooking and exploratory materials. Children are allowed to experience art through painting, coloring and design by using other creative mediums. Our program fosters the development of gross motor skills through outdoor play and indoor gym activities.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The staff at our preschool program is caring and sensitive individuals who enjoy being with children. We are dedicated to promoting each child's safety and wellbeing. Realizing that a well



qualified staff is key to the success of our program, we take great care in hiring professional caregivers who are trained in the field of child care and early childhood education and who have had prior experience working with small children. We strive to provide a working environment which challenges and promotes the professional growth of our staff. We also encourage our staff to participate in workshops, conferences and college course work.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND FIELDTRIPS

Special guests and field trips may be scheduled throughout the year. The field trips that we schedule are based on the interest of the children and may be incorporated into the theme of the curriculum. Some field trips that we may take are to the Children's Museum, local library, and the post office as well as local apple orchards. Parent chaperones are strongly encouraged and appreciated.

Parents who have a unique interest, talent or skill are invited to share their knowledge in the classroom. If you would like to help out in the classroom please speak to your child's teacher.

If the event your child is injured or falls ill on a field trip, the director will first attempt to notify you and then move on to emergency contacts listed in the child's file. Minor injuries will be tended to by a teacher certified in first aid with supplies from the YMCA first aid kits. An accident report will be filled out stating how the injury occurred and how it was treated. In life threatening emergencies arise, 911 will be called and your child will be transported to the nearest medical facility accompanied by the director or a designee. This person will bring along your child's complete file.

CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

1. Fire, Natural Disaster, or Situation (i.e.: chemical spill, bomb threat)

Evacuation plans are posted near all exits. Please ask your program director where the meeting place is located. The last staff person to leave the building takes the attendance book, sign out sheet, and emergency book with them. In inclement weather, we may bring the children to a designated indoor facility nearby. If evacuation is to be for an extended period of time, parents will be called and asked to pick up their child. YMCA front desk staff will know where the children have been taken. A staff person would remain near the preschool to direct parents to their children. If parents cannot be reached, then all emergency contacts will be tried.

2. Power Outage

In the event of a power outage, our first step is to call the electric company to find out what the problem is and how long they anticipate the outage to be. If it is for 2 hours or less, we will continue to operate. If the power outage were to be longer than 2 hours, we would call parents and ask them to pick up their children. If heat is lost, we would have children wear their coats for warmth. If the telephone service is lost, there is a cellular phone available. We also have a calling card that can be used on an outside phone. Fire alarms are battery backup. Emergency lights are good for at least eight hours. We would be able to serve non-perishable snacks without a problem.

3. Loss of Heat

If heat loss is for a short period of time (2 hours or less) we will use the gross motor space to keep children active. We would be sure they wore coats and other outdoor gear if necessary. If the heat loss is for an extended period of time, parents will be called to pick up their children.

4. Loss of Water

If water loss were for a short period of time, we would go to a nearby establishment such as a Dunkin Donuts or another establishment such as this for use of toilets and hand washing. If the water loss were for an extended period of time, parents would be called to pick up their children.

5. General

In the event that a hurricane or blizzard is predicted, we would close the child care for the day. If the blizzard conditions develop during the day, we would call parents and arrange for early closing. Closures are called into WCCM radio station (AM 800). If an emergency situation could extend into a second day, parents would be advised to listen to the radio station or all the YMCA for further information. Additionally, information will be posted on our website at www.mvymca.org and through social media such as Facebook. Be sure to like us on Facebook to receive notifications.

6. Code Comet

A report that a child is missing is a serious situation. An emergency plan must involve quick action to locate the child without causing panic. When it is determined that a child is missing, staff and volunteers will follow the procedure listed below:

1. Do preliminary search: check the area where the child was last seen, call the child by his/her name, check behind doors, check closets and elevators.
2. Gather information about the child; their name, sex, hair color, height and what they were wearing.
3. Report the missing child to the front desk **immediately**. The front desk will then stop anyone from leaving the building. The front desk will alert everyone by intercom that we have a "code comet."
4. When the "Code Comet" sounds, the first person available at the front desk will do an outside grounds check.
5. All other available staff will be handed a zone checklist. When you have checked your zone, report back to the front desk.
6. If child is not located within 15 minute, the police department is called, and then the parent/guardian will be notified.
7. All police, fire department and other reporters should be referred to upper management.
8. File a follow up incident report

If Code Comet is called during child care hours, follow the steps above and also:

1. Gather your group into your room and take attendance.
2. Check your classroom to ensure the missing child is not there.
3. Keep your group in your rooms until the code Comet is over. (Staff person in charge will make an announcement).
4. Keep the classroom doors closed and hallways empty.
5. All parents and members will not be allowed to enter or leave the building while "code comet" is in effect.
6. If you can, assist with the search. Make sure your group is in ratio.
7. Report any information you may have to the child care directors and/or upper management.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the interest of working families, the Merrimack Valley YMCA preschool programs will be open most snow days. Parents are advised that the program may have a delayed opening. In cases of extreme weather, parents should confirm the program opening time with the director. You can also check our website at www.mvymca.org for announcements as well as Facebook. Be sure to like us on Facebook and get our notifications. In the event of early dismissal, the director will call the parents to pick up their children. There are no makeup days for cancellations. No credit or refunds are given for snow days, holidays, vacation or no school days.

SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION PROCEDURE

Aggressive or inappropriate behavior that continually endangers the safety of the children and/or staff or interferes with the group's enjoyment of activities will not be tolerated.

We reserve the right to dismiss a child from the child care program if he/she continually refuses the guidance of staff to correct inappropriate behavior, excessive inappropriate parent behavior, or chronic non-payment of fees/tuition. In cases of serious misbehavior, an accident report will be completed by a staff member and shared with the child care director and parent to discuss child's behavior. In cases of serious injury to staff, child, or facility, we may need to suspend the child and to help the family with a referral. We work closely with Family Services, Inc., Early Intervention and MSPCC who observe children in our setting and meet with parents and staff to develop strategies to help with the aggressive behavior. Counseling, play groups and referrals may also be suggested. A conference will be held with the parent and the child care director to discuss the circumstances of when to allow the child to return to the program.

It is the policy of the YMCA Preschool program that a child may be suspended from the program for a period of time of one to three days after three documented serious incidents. (An example of this could be a behavior such as violently attacking a teacher or child with a piece of equipment or excessive aggressive behavior). All incidents are recorded in the behavior log and a copy of the incident report is put into the child's file. We will work closely to help the child adjust to his/her classroom and any changes or phases they may be going through at home. The child care director will assist the parent in finding a more suitable setting for the child if requested by the parent or deemed necessary by the director.

Other possible reasons for termination or suspension include: chronic tardiness at pick up time, overdue fees/tuition, and chronic absenteeism. When a child is terminated from the program, the staff shall prepare the child for termination in a manner consistent with his/her ability to understand. Our goal is to help all students feel safe and comfortable in our school setting and provide referral services for both child and family if necessary to best meet the child's emotional, social and academic needs.



Acknowledgement of Receipt and Understanding of the Merrimack Valley YMCA Preschool Child Care Handbook

I have received and understand the following policies and procedures:

- Transportation Policy
- Late Pick up
- Transition Policy
- Non-Discrimination Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Tooth brushing
- Emergency First Aid Policy
- Medication Administration Policy
- Behavioral Management Procedures
- Termination and Suspension Policy
- Bullying Policy
- Children's Right and Responsibility
- Parental Rights
- Progress Report
- Snack and Lunch Policy
- Waiver of Liability

Parent Signature

Date

Parent name (printed)



Merrimack Valley YMCA

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