

GATEWAY PARENT HANDBOOK FOR SUMMER CHILD CARE 2025



**YMCA of Greater Westfield
67 Court Street
Westfield, MA 01085
(413) 568-8631 fax (413) 572-3995
www.westfieldymca.org**

Thank You for Choosing Gateway Summer Program

Thank you for choosing the YMCA of Greater Westfield to meet your childcare needs. We understand the importance of a quality school-age childcare program and have worked very hard to develop a program you can be proud of. Please feel free to contact Michelle Anamisis, Youth Development Director with any questions at 413-568-8631 ext. 306 or Elizabeth LaPlante 413-568-8631 ext.310.

Mission

The mission of the YMCA of Greater Westfield is to provide members and participants from through out the Greater Westfield Area with a variety of quality programs, services, and opportunities to improve their quality of life spiritually, mentally, socially, and physically without regard to age, sex, race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, or physical or mental ability.

YMCA School-Age Child Care Goals

To provide families and working parents a safe, structured, supervised, and fun environment for the children of before and after school to prevent immature decision making and self-destructive behavior when going home to an empty house.

- 1.) To support and strengthen the family unit, focusing on:
 - Improving communication among family members
 - Providing safe and fun programs
 - Helping families improve their economic stability
- 2.) To help children develop to their fullest potential focusing on:
 - Building self-esteem
 - Improving socialization skills
 - Developing the whole child-physically, emotionally, and academically
 - Providing adequate food and rest
- 3.) To deliver the program in a positive environment of safety, support, and care, focusing on:
 - Helping children feel safe and happy
 - Appreciating cultural diversity
 - Operating the program in accordance to YMCA principles and philosophy

School-Age Child Care Organizational Chart

Youth Development Director

Child Care Manager

Site Coordinator

Group Leaders

Program

Our program is developed for school-age children. Children are separated into age appropriate groups, with activities reflecting the different levels of development.

If at any time you have any questions, concerns or suggestions you are encouraged to share them with the staff. The YMCA has an open-door policy that allows you to contact the Site Coordinator, Child Care Manager or the Youth Development Director at any time. Your input is always welcome.

The YMCA strives to meet the physical, emotional, and educational needs of your child. Safety is our main concern and it is our goal to raise self-esteem and improve socialization skills.

Our program includes a large variety of activities and is designed to provide a fun and enjoyable environment for children in a year-round child-care setting.

Enrollment

Enrollment is open to all children ages 3-Pre-K & grades 1-6. The number of slots is limited, and we use a waiting list when necessary. We do not discriminate age, sex, race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, and toileting status, physical or mental ability. Before your child can attend program, we must have on file:

- Completed Registration Packet
- Current Physical and Immunization record for Preschool age children
- Payment for the first week of program & \$25.00 deposit
(or a payment schedule approved by Youth Development Director)

Payment

All fees are to be paid on a weekly basis. All payments must be received in full, the Friday before each week attended. All payments must be made at the reception desk either by mail or in person. No payments can be accepted through the sites. We are currently having credit card and bank drafts. Please see form attached to registration packets for more information. **If your payments are more than two weeks past due, you run the risk of losing your space in the program.** If your child is suspended from our program for financial reasons, you may be

allowed to re-enroll when the account is made current. If space is not available, you will be added to our waiting list at that time. Individual payment plans can be set up through the Youth Development Director or School Age Director if extenuating circumstances exist.

Registration and Weekly Fees

Summer Program:
\$200/Week (5 days)

Other Requirements:

*Payments are made on a weekly basis, in advance of care

. The weekly payment also includes daily snacks that follow USDA guidelines and daily program supplies.

Parents purchase a space or slot in our child care program. For each week your child is enrolled in our program you are required to pay the weekly fee whether your child is sick or absent. We can't deduct days missed from your fee. When you enroll you are reserving the time, space, staff, transportation, etc., for your child whether or not they attend the program.

This must be established at the time of registration or with a two-week advance written notification during the year.

Financial Assistance

The YMCA turns no one away due to inability to pay. Various forms of financial assistance are available. These include:

- Seven Hills Voucher slots
- YMCA Partners with Youth scholarships
- Shurtleff Grant

Please contact the Youth Development Director for more information on eligibility or to apply for assistance.

Tax Credit

Some child care expenses are tax deductible. Contact your accountant or the IRS for specific guidelines. Verification letters of child care payments are available upon request by January 31st.

Department of Early Education and Care

All Y's Kids Sites are licensed by the, the MA Department of Early Education and Care child care licensing agency. The program adheres to strict regulations governing staff, child ratios, program activities, health and safety issues, and staff selection and training. The Department of Early Education and Care address is:

Department of Early Education and Care

1441 Main St

Springfield, MA. 01103

413-788-8401

Staff

All Y's Kids staff members are Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) qualified. Staff members are chosen on the basis of skill and ability, experience, and character. Each staff person is required to become certified in First Aid and CPR and keep current certifications throughout their employment. Staff will also keep current Medication and Nutrition certifications. They will take the online trainings provided by Department of Early Education and Care (as long as they are available). Staff will be monitored by Michelle Anamisis, Youth Development Director. When the trainings are off the website, they will be done by a registered nurse. Staff evaluations are done bi-monthly by the Site Coordinator or Youth Development Director and will be placed in staff files. All notes taken during observation hours will be placed in the staff files, the staff will meet with their supervisor to go over the evaluation, set goals for the next two months, and their annual review will be based on the observations.

Volunteers

All volunteers must go through an application and interview process like staff. Each volunteer is required to fill out a YMCA volunteer packet which includes an EEC background record check, DCF background, and Sori's as well as attend required and state mandated trainings. All volunteers will be under the supervision of an EEC qualified educator at all times this includes parent volunteers as well.

Cori Check Policy

CORI checks are done on all on staff and volunteers that come in contact with children our program. All staff have Cori's done on them every year. The Cori's have a triple check system and are done by the Department of Early Education and Care and Department of Children and Families and Sori's. Once they are cleared all staff must be fingerprinted. The Youth Development Director and CEO have Cori's done on them yearly and are reviewed by the licensing agency.

Reporting Abuse or Neglect

All center staff are mandated reporters. They are required by law to report suspected abuse and neglect to either Department of Social Services or the licensee's program administrator. The licensee must have written policies and procedures for reporting and must provide the written policy to you upon enrollment.

Child Guidance

It is our desire to work with both you and your child to make Y's Kids an enjoyable and positive experience. When discipline problems occur, we deal with children individually (separating the action from the child), making sure the child understands why a certain behavior was inappropriate. We redirect the behavior into a positive action and explain consequences should the inappropriate behavior reoccur.

It is our philosophy that each child is a unique individual, and responds differently to situations, behavior management, and motivation. For this reason, we employ a number of behavior management techniques that involve positive reinforcement, and teach our four Character Core Values; Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.

1. In case of a minor behavior problem, the staff member deals with the situation using one of the following actions: verbal warning, written apology, behavior modification (i.e. sticker books, award system), or children are accountable for their action (i.e. cleaning up a mess). If the staff person feels the situation is not settled, the child will be taken to the Site Coordinator. The Site Coordinator will then decide the appropriate steps to be taken.
2. If necessary the parent will be informed of the behavior. A conference will then determine the next course of action.
3. Whenever physical violence, direct, complete, or prolonged defiance, or extraordinarily inappropriate behavior is displayed, the child may be suspended from the program from 1-3 days.
4. If inappropriate behavior continues, after suspension, and safety is an issue, and/or other children are affected negatively, the parent may be asked to find another caregiver.
5. The use of time out is prohibited and prohibited to confine children to high chairs, playpens, or any other equipment as a form of punishment.

No child shall be subjected to abuse, neglect, severe or corporal punishment including: any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body; punishment which subjects a child to verbal abuse, ridicule or humiliation; denial of food, rest, or bathroom facilities.

The licensee must describe in writing the program's procedures for avoiding the suspension or termination of a child from the program due to challenging behavior. The procedures to avoid suspension and termination must include:

1. Providing an opportunity to meet with parents to discuss options other than suspension or termination;
2. Offering referrals to parents for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services;
3. Pursuing options for supportive services to the program, including consultation and educator training;
4. Developing a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program.

Consent to Release

In each child's information packet there is consent to release section. **Children will only be released to persons on this form.** The staff will question those with whom they are not familiar, and verify their authorization. If there is a restraining order regarding your child please provide us with a copy.

Medication

All of our staff is trained on the Five Rights of Medication through EEC's website. If your child is on medication that needs to be administered during program hours:

- *We must receive a completed and signed consent form (the program will supply forms and it is 1 form per medication).
 - *Medication must be in a prescription container with correct dosage and your doctor's name on it or the program can not receive or administer the medication.
 - *Medication must be given directly from the parent to staff and children can not hold medication with them.
 - *When your child/children leave the program the parents or guardians must take the medication with.
 - *The program is not allowed to mail back or flush any type of medication down the toilet or sink.
 - *Medication that is left will be brought to the Assistant Youth Development Director or Youth Development Director and the Westfield Board of Health will be called on how to properly dispose of medication.
 - *If your child has a chronic illness an individual health care plan must be written by the doctor on steps to take for the care of your child/children and parents must train the staff that will be working with the child.
- This includes prescription medication as well as non-prescription medication.
- *With the physicians' written permission parents can train staff on the child's individual health care plan.

Hour of Operation

*Summer: 7:00AM-6:00PM

Days of Operation

Programs are conducted Monday through Friday during the entire year. The only days there are not programs are the days the YMCA is closed (New Years Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day).

Meals

Parents must provide a lunch daily for the child. Please pack ice packs in their lunches and we don't heat up food for lunch.

Snacks

The YMCA on a daily basis if in program provides snacks that meet USDA guidelines for three or more hours. See your Site Coordinator or the parent information board for menu information.

Contingency Plan

All staff are required to take attendance multiple times day: upon children entering the program, both when children are boarding a bus and exiting a bus and again at snack time. Staff are required to do face checks and head counts every 5 minutes. Staff are required to bring groups of children in pairs, with one staff leading the group and another following the group. In case of a missing child, the staff would leave the children with their co-

counselor, immediately notify supervisors of the situation. If a child was missing at the YMCA or school site a code blue would be called, requiring all staff to meet at designated location, blocking all doors and entrance ways.

Parents or emergency contacts would be notified immediately by YMCA personnel. The Westfield Police Department would be notified immediately as well, the 911 call would come from the front desk. In case of a fire, loss of heat, natural disaster or severe weather, all children will be evacuated to City Hall (57 Court Street, Westfield MA). The Child or School Age Site Director and or the Youth Development Director will be responsible for taking all first aid/medicine and emergency contact information, and checking throughout the building for any remaining staff/children. Staff (group leaders/site coordinators) will be responsible for taking attendance when exiting the YMCA and upon entering City Hall. Evacuation routes are posted in all areas that the Y's Kids use throughout the day. They practice using the evacuation routes monthly at the Main Y as well as all of our school sites. When they practice their monthly drills, the date, time and number of staff/children are logged in the site's fire drill log. They use the safest and fastest route but typically children on the first floor of the main Y, exit through back mansion door and head straight to the fenced in playground. Children that are on the second floor follow the red arrows down the staircase and exit the same way. Children with special needs will be with their 1x1 aid and follow groups out using the same evacuation procedure.

Transition Plan

The Y's Gateway summer program begins on July 7 and goes all the way through August 8. When large groups of children are in the program they are separated by age and gender except for Preschool. For Preschool we will have 2 groups. 3's and early 4's and then older 4's and 5's. For School Age we have 6 different classifications: 5-6 girls, 5-6 boys, 7-8 girls, 7-8 boys, 9-10 boys, 9-10 girls, seniors. When a child is about to move up, we have the child spend part of their day in the new group, getting to know children & staff. When they are ready to transition we change all attendance rosters, sign in sheets and communicate with parent's changes that will be occurring and who their new group leaders are going to be.

Absences

Whenever your child is going to be absent please inform the Site Coordinator by a call or text at 413-654-3726. If you know in advance please send a written note. If you have no advance notifications of an absence please call the YMCA reception desk and leave a message for the Site Coordinator. Excessive absence could affect financial assistance.

Sign In/Out

Whenever you pick up/drop off your child you must enter the site to sign your child in/out. This procedure helps assure the well being of your child and is required by our regulations. Please check for any information each day as you sign your child in/out.

Active Intruder Emergency Plan for Pre-Schools/ School Age Program's

An active intruder emergency involves one or more persons, using a firearm, engaging in a random or systematic shooting spree. The vast majority of shootings in this country are over in a matter of minutes, involve persons known to one another, and are confined to a particular area.

Traditional response to this type of incident has been to shelter in place and wait for the police to arrive.

Consideration should be given to these fenced areas being gated and easily opened by staff to exit. Whether in an Active Shooter Emergency or Fire, the ability to move large numbers of staff and children away from the premise should be paramount. Once away from the building, the issue becomes one of keeping the children together and moving them to a safe haven. This location should be planned out and drilled into the children in much the same way we evacuate for fire drills.

An additional area of address would be rooms with no egress or babies/ toddlers. Staff should be trained to deal with the situation individually in each room and instructed on doing much more than locking the door. Items in the room should be utilized and prepared for barricading doors and windows to provide as much safety as possible.

Examples of this may include large cabinets being equipped with lockable wheels to move in front of doors and windows. Doors equipped with interior bolts for securing the door at the top and bottom can also provide an additional layer of security. Prepositioning of items in a room will enhance the ability to barricade should it become necessary.

Rooms will be mapped out to select the most secure position away from doors and windows in which to move children should a threat present itself. Staff should prepare themselves for active counter measures in these rooms and be able to act quickly should a breach occur into the room. This may mean moving the children to the most secure location in the room and then positioning themselves by the entry.

A staff member yelling "Stranger Danger" would be the indication to the children to begin to do this while attempting to get away. This is a simple and easy to understand concept for young children and is a proactive technique should an actual confrontation with an Active Shooter take place.

Staff will be trained in swarming techniques and counter measures in a separate ALICE class apart from the children.

- Information is a two-way street, if you have information share it with the police dispatch or the office
- 1) **Counter-** This is the use of simple, proactive techniques should you be confronted by the Active Shooter.
 - Anything can be a distraction device
 - Throws things at the shooters head to disrupt their aim
 - Give children the command to act (disruption tactics) or move
 - Create as much noise as possible
 - Attack in a group (swarm) if possible
 - Grab the shooters limbs and head and take them to the ground and hold them there
 - Fight dirty-bite, kick, scratch, gouge eyes, etc.
 - Run around the room and create chaos
 - If you have control of the shooter call 911 and tell the police where you are and listen to their commands when officers arrive on scene.
 - Commit to your actions, this is the last resort.

- 2) Evacuate- Remove yourself and the children from the danger zone as quickly as possible.
- Decide if you can safely evacuate
 - Assist children in moving to secure rally points away from the building
 - Run in a zigzag pattern as fast as you can if alone
 - Do not stop running until you are far away from the area
 - Bring something to throw with you in case you would encounter the Active Shooter
 - Consider the distance to the ground if you go out a window. 3 floors up is considered the survivable drop zone.
 - Break out windows and attempt to quickly clear glass from the frame
 - Consider using belts, clothing or other items as an improvised rope to shorten the distance you would fall
 - Hang by your hands from the window ledge to shorten your drop
 - Attempt to drop into shrubs, mulch or grass to lessen the chance of injury
 - Do not attempt to drive from the area
 - Once at the rally point move children to most secure position possible and account for all the children in your care

Parent Conferences

If there is a problem, concern, or occurrence/event/incident (anything we feel you should be made aware of) you will be called or notified at drop off/pick up time. Depending on the severity, a future conference time may be arranged. If there is any issue that you would like to address please contact your Site Coordinator, Child Care Manager and the Youth Development Director. We are always willing to discuss any aspect of the program with you. Behavior management techniques learned in trainings (sticker charts, positive reinforcements, referrals to behavior specialists such as Carson Center) will be implemented in hopes of correcting the negative behavior. If behavior management techniques do not work and the safety of other children or themselves is compromised then the program will start using 1-5 day suspensions depending upon severity. If problems persist, the program will have no other option then to terminate. It is our missions to avoid termination and suspension, and only use it after all other areas have been exhausted.

Once during the school year and once during the summer, the site coordinators will fill out a progress report to document the child's progress in the program. Parents will have an opportunity to meet with the Youth Development Director, School Age Director and Site coordinator to discuss the progress report. Any major concerns or events will be documented and brought to the parents' attention immediately.

Grievances

If at any time you have a problem and have not received a satisfactory solution from your child's Site Coordinator, or Child Care manager, Elizabeth LaPlante, 413-568-8631 ext.310.You may also contact the Youth Development Director, Michelle Anamisis 568-8631 ext. 306, or. If you are not completely satisfied you are welcome to discuss your concerns with Executive Director of the YMCA of Greater Westfield, Andrea Allard ext. 301.

Late Pick Up Policy

The summer program ends at 6:00PM. On occasions when a parent must be late, the YMCA has established a firm policy:

1. Parents must call the Y to let us know what time they expect to arrive or to inform us of other arrangements that have been made.
2. Parent will be assessed a \$5.00 late fee for every 5 minutes after 6:00PM.
If late pick up occurs repeatedly, a conference will be set up between the parent and the School Age Director and or the Youth Development Director to determine whether the family will remain eligible for YMCA services.
3. In the event that the YMCA does not receive a phone call from the parent, the following steps will be implemented:
 - A. Parent will be charged a \$10.00 late fee for every 5 minutes after 6:00PM.
 - B. YMCA staff member will contact parent for instructions.
 - C. YMCA staff will call emergency contacts to arrange pick up.
 - D. If off site and pick up is not made by 6:30PM, the child will be transported to the YMCA by the Site Coordinator and placed in care of the YMCA Director on duty.
 - E. If by 9:00PM no contact has been made to either parent or emergency contacts, a call will be placed to DSS to report an abandoned child. YMCA staff will then follow instructions of DSS.
 - F. Parent will be informed upon arrival as to where the child may be picked up.

Referral Policy

The YMCA's SACC staff will refer parents to appropriate social, mental health and medical services if the staff feels that such additional services would benefit the child.

When a group leader or site coordinator has a concern either social or medical about a child:

- The staff person will inform the director of their concern.
- The staff person and the director or another qualified staff in the center will observe the child and record the behaviors for at least six , one half day sessions before making a referral.
- The staff person and director will meet the parents with documented concerns and observations and any efforts the center may have made to accommodate the child's needs.
- The director shall give to parents a current list of referral services including a contact person for Chapter 766 and early intervention programs and will assist the parents in making a referral. The program will have written parental consent before the referral is made.
- The parents will be informed of the right to appeal under Chapter 766.
- The program will follow up the referral with parental permission. If it is determined that the child does not need services at the time, observations and documentation will continue and be reviewed after three months.
- The Child Care Manager and the Youth Development Director will keep a written record of any referrals, including the parent conference and results.