



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



YMCA of Greater Westfield

Preschool Parent Handbook

2026–2027 School Year



LEARN • GROW • THRIVE

YMCA of GREATER WESTFIELD
"A Westfield family tradition for over 120 years"
67 Court Street, Westfield, MA 01085
(413) 568-8631 fax (413) 572-3995
westfieldymca.org

Welcome

We are delighted to have your family join us for the 68th year of the Westfield YMCA Preschool. This handbook provides important information about our program, policies, and procedures.

Leadership

The YMCA of Greater Westfield is proud to offer an experienced and caring staff, all qualified by the **Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)**. Our teachers are selected based on skill, experience, and personal warmth.

All staff members complete:

- Criminal background checks (CORI)
- First Aid and CPR training
- Child Abuse Prevention training

Above all, our teachers share a love for working with children.

The Westfield YMCA Preschool program is licensed by the **Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)**. For questions or concerns, you may contact:

Department of Early Education and Care
95 Liberty Street, 3rd Floor
Springfield, MA 01103
Phone: 413-788-8401

Inclement Weather Policy

- **School Closures:** If Westfield public schools close due to stormy weather, preschool will also be closed.
- **Announcements:** Closings will be announced on **WHYN 560 AM, 93.1 FM, WWLP Channel 22, and One Call Now.**
- **Two-Hour Delays:** If public schools delay opening by two hours and cancel AM kindergarten, preschool will operate at the regular time.
- **Mid-Day Closures:** If public schools close mid-day due to worsening weather, preschool will also close. Announcements will be made via local radio, TV, and One Call Now.

- **Other Closures:** If public schools close for reasons other than weather, preschool will remain in session unless otherwise notified.
 - **Parent Responsibility:** During inclement weather, parents have the final decision on whether their child attends school.
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Absence

If your child will be absent from preschool, please notify the YMCA **Reception Desk by 8:30 AM** whenever possible and provide the reason for the absence.

Reporting absences helps us:

- Monitor serious illnesses
- Prevent the spread of infectious illnesses to other children and families

Intake Procedure for Children in Preschool

Age Requirements:

- Children must be **3 years old by September 1** to enroll in the 3-year-old group.
- Children must be **4 years old by September 1** to enroll in the 4-year-old group.
- Children must be **5 years old by September 1** to enroll in the 5-year-old group.

Age Exceptions:

- Exceptions may be made if, after a visit with the child and family, the **Preschool Director** and family agree that placement in a different age group is appropriate.
 - **Children under 2 years, 9 months** of age are not eligible for enrollment.
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Enrollment and Class Placement:

- Once enrolled, children remain in the same class for the entire school year (September–June).
 - Families must **register each year** to secure placement.
 - Families may choose the class based on the child's age at the time of registration.
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Orientation:

- Each summer, the Preschool Director will provide **orientation information** to families.
- Orientation includes:
 - Visits to the school and classrooms
 - Meeting teachers and teacher assistants
 - Introduction to classmates
 - Tours of the outside play area, gym, and swimming pool
- Families will receive:
 - Overview of curriculum, snacks, free play, outdoor play, field trips, and swimming

- A copy of the **Family Handbook**
 - All required **Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)** information
 - Details of all **fees and tuition**
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Children with Disabilities:

- The Preschool will make every effort to **accommodate children with disabilities**, including:
 - Modifications to participation in school activities
 - Adjustments to group size
 - Appropriate staff-to-child ratios
- If accommodations would cause an **undue burden**, the family will be notified **in writing within 30 days**.
- **Toileting needs** are not considered an undue burden.
- Factors considered in determining undue burden include:
 1. Nature and cost of accommodations
 2. Availability of funding or services from other sources
 3. Financial resources of the center
 4. Number of staff employed by the center
 5. Overall impact on the center

Financial Policies

The following financial policies ensure that quality preschool services remain consistently available. Tuition fees are determined based on the cost of providing high-quality programs, including materials, supplies, equipment, and a well-qualified, educated staff. All tuition fees are used exclusively for the operation of the school and the purchase of equipment.

Refunds and Withdrawal:

- Due to the school's ongoing financial obligations, **refunds cannot be issued for absences.**
- Registration is for the **full school year**, and families are responsible for providing **two weeks' notice** if they intend to withdraw a child after the school year has begun.

Tuition Payment:

- Tuition is **due on Friday for the week to come**
 - If payments are **two weeks in arrears**, families may be asked to temporarily withdraw their child until payment arrangements are made or the balance is paid in full.
 - Tuition checks should be made payable to the **YMCA** and may be submitted:
 - At the main reception desk
 - By mail to **67 Court Street, Westfield, MA**
 - Please write your child's name on the notation line of your check.
 - **Returned Checks:**
 - A \$25 service charge will be applied for checks returned due to insufficient funds.
 - Returned checks are re-deposited **once**.
 - If a second check is returned, all payments must be made in **cash for that bill and for all future fees for one year.**
 - Preschool tuition may also be paid using a **credit card**, debit card, checking or savings account
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Fees and Payment Schedule

Registration Fee:

- A **\$25 registration fee** is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is **non-refundable**, even if registration is canceled.

Program	Days	Ages	Times	Weekly Fees
2 Day AM	Tuesday/Thursday	2.9–3 yrs	9:00 AM– 12:00 PM	\$45
2 Day Full Day	Tuesday/Thursday	2.9–3 yrs	9:00 AM–3:00 PM	\$90
3 Day AM	Monday/Wednesday/Friday	3–5 yrs	9:00 AM– 12:00 PM	\$65
3 Day Full Day	Monday/Wednesday/Friday	3–5 yrs	9:00 AM–3:00 PM	\$130
5 Day AM	Monday–Friday	4–5 yrs	9:00 AM– 12:00 PM	\$90
5 Day Full Day	Monday–Friday	2.9–3.11 & 4–5 yrs	9:00 AM–3:00 PM	\$170
Pre-K	Monday–Friday	5 yrs	9:00 AM–3:00 PM	\$170
Before & After School	Monday–Friday	2.9–5 yrs	7:00 AM–9:00 AM	2 Day: \$22 / 3 Day: \$28 / 5 Day: \$40

Financial assistance is available through the YMCA

Westfield YMCA Preschool

Statement of Purpose

The **Westfield YMCA Preschool** provides children with meaningful experiences through which they learn and grow **through play**. Our program emphasizes security, support, and consistent guidance from patient and caring teachers. Children have access to age-appropriate equipment and materials that encourage **creativity, exploration, and problem-solving**.

Through daily activities, children are encouraged to **share, take turns, and respect the rights of others**, fostering a sense of community and social responsibility. Our program aims to help children develop a **confident sense of self-worth** and a **lifelong love of learning**, laying the foundation for future academic success.

Goals of the Westfield YMCA Preschool

Our program encourages children to:

1. Grow in independence
2. Develop self-confidence
3. Develop self-discipline
4. Increase the ability to listen and follow instructions
5. Learn to relate positively to other children and adults
6. Explore non-sexist human roles
7. Develop large and small motor skills
8. Understand and control aspects of the physical world
9. Expand vocabulary and language skills
10. Learn to give and share
11. Develop positive feelings about the world and its people
12. Develop positive feelings about school

The **YMCA Preschool** serves all girls and boys ages **2 years, 9 months through 5 years**, offering **2-, 3-, or 5-day half-day or full-day programs**. Our curriculum is **developmentally appropriate**, designed to meet the unique needs of each child.

General Information

Clothing:

- Children should wear clothing that allows **freedom of movement**, is **practical**, and **easily washable** for active play.
- Clothing should be easy for children to manage independently when dressing and undressing.
- Recommended attire includes **pull-over shirts with pants or jeans** for both boys and girls.

Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are required for safety. General Information

Clothing:

- Children should wear clothing that allows **freedom of movement**, is **practical**, and **easily washable** for active play.
- Clothing should be easy for children to manage independently when dressing and undressing.
- Recommended attire includes **pull-over shirts with slacks or jeans** for both boys and girls.
- **Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes** are required for safety.
- **Prohibited footwear:** flip-flops, Crocs, open-toed shoes, and shoes with heels.

Extra Clothing:

- The preschool provides a supply of extra clothing in case of accidents. Please **wash and return** any borrowed items promptly.

Backpacks and Bags:

- Each child should bring a **bag or backpack** daily to carry artwork and important papers home.
- When swimming begins, a bag is needed for a **bathing suit and towel**.

Lost and Found:

- Items lost or forgotten at school can be retrieved from the **lost and found box** in the school hallway.

Child Guidance

The **Westfield YMCA Preschool** emphasizes **positive reinforcement** rather than focusing on negative behavior. Staff use child guidance techniques such as:

- Setting **reasonable and positive expectations**
- Offering **choices**
- Encouraging children to **verbalize their feelings**

Children are guided to develop **self-control through understanding**. When appropriate, they may participate in **establishing rules** using charts, songs, stories, and dramatic play.

Time-Out Policy:

- In specific situations, a **time-out** may be necessary.
- Time-out is used to address behavior, **not the child personally**, and lasts **no longer than 5 minutes**.
- The child sits apart from the group, under **teacher supervision**, and returns to the group when ready.
- Time-out is **never used for belittling or humiliation**.

Persistent or Harmful Behavior:

- If a child's behavior continues to be disruptive or poses a risk to themselves or others, staff will consult with the family and director, and **referral action may be taken**.

Prohibited Practices:

At no time does the Westfield YMCA Preschool allow:

1. Spanking or other forms of corporal punishment
 2. Cruel or severe punishment, including humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment
 3. Deprivation of meals or snacks
 4. Force-feeding
 5. Discipline for toileting accidents or using unusual/excessive practices for toileting
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Termination of a Child from Preschool

The **Westfield YMCA Preschool** makes every effort to accommodate all children in the program. However, a child may be **terminated** if, after discussion between the classroom teacher, director, and family, a successful solution to a concern cannot be reached.

Termination Process:

1. The **classroom teacher** will observe the child and document concerns for a period of **three weeks**.
2. The **director and teacher** will meet with the child's family to discuss potential accommodations or solutions.
3. New accommodations will be implemented for an additional **three-week period**, followed by a review with the family, teacher, and director.
4. If termination is deemed necessary, the Preschool will meet with the family and provide **written documentation** of the reasons for termination.

The Preschool will also **refer the family to other services or centers** that may better meet the child's needs.

Suspension of a Child from Preschool

A child may be **suspended** from preschool under the following circumstances:

Tuition Payments:

- Tuition is due on the **Friday, for the week to come**
- The director will work with families who are behind in payments by offering:
 - Alternative payment plans
 - Financial assistance or scholarships (if eligible)
- If tuition is **more than one months overdue**, the child may be suspended until payments are brought current.

Immunization Records:

- A child may be suspended if a **current immunization record** is not received by the **end of the third week** of school.
- The child may return once the immunization record is submitted.

Transition Support:

- When a child leaves the program for any reason, teachers and staff will help the child **understand the transition** in a manner appropriate to their age and development.

HEALTH

- Upon entry to preschool, families must provide a **medical history and physical examination form** completed by the child's physician.
- Medical forms must be **kept current**, requiring an updated **physical exam once a year**, on or near the child's birth date.
- A **developmental history** will also be required for each child.

Recommended Immunizations (by Age 2)

- **DPT:** 4 doses
- **Polio:** 3 doses
- **MMR:** 1 dose
- **Hib:** 4 doses
- **Hepatitis B:** 3 doses
- **Varicella:** 1 dose, or physician-certified history of chickenpox
- **Lead Screening**

By Age 3:

- Ensure completion of **all age 2 vaccines**
- **Annual Influenza vaccine** recommended during flu season

By Age 4:

- **DPT:** 5th dose (booster)
- **Polio:** 4th dose (booster)
- **MMR:** 2nd dose
- **Varicella:** 2nd dose if not previously given

By Age 5:

- Ensure all **previous vaccines are up to date**
- **Hepatitis A:** 2-dose series if not previously administered
- **Annual Influenza vaccine** recommended

Parents should provide documentation from their physician for all vaccines. The preschool maintains these records and updates them as needed.

Children must receive the above immunizations **unless exempted for medical or religious reasons**.

Illness and First Aid

- **Teachers** will provide minimum first aid for accidents.
- Families will be **referred for further treatment** as needed.
- In emergencies, the child's **family and physician** will be notified.
- If immediate family cannot be reached, the **emergency contact** listed on the child's history form will be called.
- Children requiring urgent care will be transported by **ambulance to Noble Hospital**, unless parents specify alternate arrangements.

ALLERGIES

- Any **allergies to foods, chemicals, or other substances** must be listed in the "Allergies" section of the child's information form, including **reactions and treatment plans**.
- Allergy information will be included on a **master list** and posted in:
 - Director's office
 - Classrooms
 - Snack room
- All staff will be **informed of children's allergies**.
- Due to peanut allergies in previous years, the preschool will **not serve peanuts or peanut butter** for snack.

MANAGEMENT OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Illness at Home or School

1. Families are expected to **keep children at home** when they are ill.
 2. If a child becomes ill at school:
 - The child will be **isolated in the director's office**.
 - The family will be **notified immediately**.
 - Parents or family members will be asked to **pick up the child** if symptoms include diarrhea, vomiting, rash, or fever.
 3. While waiting for pickup:
 - The child will be made **comfortable on a vinyl mat**.
 - A **qualified staff member or the director** will remain with the child.
 4. A child may **return to school** once evaluated by a physician and deemed to **pose no health risk** to themselves or others.
 5. Parents will be **notified of communicable diseases** at the center via the parent bulletin board or a letter.
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INFECTION CONTROL

Handwashing

- Staff and children will **wash hands with liquid soap and running water**, using friction, and dry hands with **disposable paper towels**.
- Handwashing occurs:
 1. Upon arrival
 2. Before eating or handling food
 3. After toileting
 4. After contact with body fluids or discharge
 5. After handling center animals or equipment
 6. After cleaning

7. After assisting children with toileting or nose wiping

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Equipment, items, and surfaces will be cleaned with **soap, water, and disinfectant** on the following schedule:

After each use:

- Mops used for cleaning body fluids
- Thermometers

At least daily:

- Toilets and toilet seats
- Sinks and faucets
- Drinking fountains
- Water tables and equipment
- Play tables
- Mops used for cleaning
- Smooth-surfaced floors

At least monthly:

- Washable fabric toys
- Dress-up clothes
- All cleaning supplies and disinfectants are **stored securely out of children's reach**.

Universal Precautions

1. Staff will use **disposable gloves** for cleanup of blood or body fluids.
2. The affected area will be **disinfected**.
3. Used gloves will be disposed of in a **lined container**.
4. Staff will **wash hands thoroughly** with soap and water after cleanup.
5. Clothing soiled with vomit, blood, feces, or urine will be **sealed in a labeled plastic bag** and returned to the family at the end of the day.

Staff Training

- Staff will be **trained in infection control procedures** at the beginning of the school year.
- Training will be **reviewed or retrained** mid-year.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

General Guidelines

- **Prescription and non-prescription medication** may only be administered with:
 1. **Written parental authorization**, and
 2. **A written order from a physician** (for prescription medication, this may include the label on the medication).
- Families will be **notified by telephone** before any prescription or non-prescription medication is administered.
- Authorization is valid for **one year**.

Non-Prescription Medication

- Non-prescription medication requires a **physician's statement** specifying dosage and criteria for administration.
- Families must provide **written authorization** allowing the center to administer the medication according to the physician's instructions.
- Topical non-prescription medications (e.g., sunscreen, petroleum jelly, ointments) may be administered with **written family permission**, listing the specific product and criteria for use.

Administration and Storage

- **Medication must be administered according to the directions** on the original container unless a physician provides written instructions otherwise.
- All medication must be **labeled in its original container** with:
 - Child's name
 - Name of the medication
 - Directions for administration and dosage
- A **written record** will be maintained for all medications administered, including:
 1. Child's name
 2. Time and date of administration
 3. Dosage given

4. Name of staff member administering the medication

- All medications will be **stored safely**, under proper conditions for sanitation, preservation, and security.
- **Unused medication** will be returned to the family when no longer needed.

Parent Responsibilities

- Complete and sign a **consent form** for each medication.
- Provide medication in its **original prescription container** with correct dosage and physician information.
- Deliver medication **directly to staff**; children may not hold medication.
- Retrieve any **remaining medication** when the child leaves the program.
- The program **cannot mail back or flush** medication. Any leftover medication will be given to the **Youth Development Director or Assistant Director**, who will coordinate proper disposal with the **Westfield Board of Health**.

Chronic Illness

- If a child has a **chronic illness**, a physician must provide a **written care plan**, including steps for ongoing management.
- Parents must **train staff** on the care plan for their child.
- This applies to **both prescription and non-prescription medications**.

CRITERIA FOR EXCLUDING AN ILL OR INFECTED CHILD

Preschool Year 2026–2027

Children will be excluded from preschool according to the following guidelines to protect the health of all children and staff:

Condition	Exclusion Criteria
Chickenpox	Excluded for five days after onset of rash or until all lesions have dried and crusted, whichever is later.
Diarrhea	Excluded for 48 hours if the child has more than the normal number of stools, increased stool water, or decreased form. Stools not controlled by toilet use.
Fever	Excluded until the child has had a normal temperature for 24 hours without medication.
Head Lice	Excluded for 24 hours after treatment has begun.
Hepatitis A Virus Infection	Excluded for 1 week after onset of illness and jaundice (if present) has disappeared, or until immune serum globulin has been administered to exposed children/staff as directed by the health department.
Impetigo	Excluded for 24 hours after treatment has begun.
Measles	Excluded for 4 days after the rash appears.
Mouth Sores	Excluded if the child cannot control saliva, unless a physician or local health department states the child is noninfectious.
Mumps	Excluded for 9 days after onset of gland swelling.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Excluded until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic therapy have been completed.
Pinworm Infection	Excluded for 24 hours after treatment has begun.
Purulent Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	Excluded for 48 hours after treatment begins. Symptoms include pink/red conjunctiva, white/yellow discharge, matted eyelids, and eye pain or redness of surrounding skin.
Rash	Excluded with fever or behavior change until a physician determines the illness is not communicable.
Ringworm Infection	Excluded until treatment has begun .
Rubella	Excluded for 7 days after rash appears.
Scabies	Excluded until after treatment has been completed .
Strep Throat	Excluded for 48 hours after treatment begins and the child has had a normal temperature for 24 hours.
Tuberculosis	Excluded until a physician or local health department confirms the child is noninfectious .
Vomiting	Excluded for 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting.

CHILDREN'S SPECIFIC HEALTH CARE NEEDS

- **Developmental History:** Parents or guardians are required to complete a **Developmental History** upon entry to preschool. This includes questions regarding language use, social relationships, sleep habits, toileting habits, physical disabilities, allergies, medications, and serious illnesses.
 - **Teacher Review:** Teachers are required to review each child's history and make **pertinent notes** for their class records.
 - **Allergy Awareness:** A list of children's allergies is **posted in each classroom and in the hall** for staff reference.
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INJURY PREVENTION

- **Monitoring:** The director and teachers will **monitor the preschool and playground daily** and remove or repair any hazards.
 - **Safety of Materials:** All toxic substances, medications, sharp objects, matches, and other hazardous materials are **secured and out of children's reach**.
 - **Injury Reporting:**
 - All injuries are recorded in a **central injury log**, which is reviewed weekly to ensure the environment remains safe.
 - Parents or guardians are informed **on the same day** of any injury or illness, including how it occurred and the first aid administered.
 - A **written Injury/Illness Report** is provided within 48 hours, completed and signed by the staff witness. Parents/guardians sign a copy, which is placed in the child's file.
 - **Medical Attention:** If a child requires **medical attention**, the Director completes a report and submits it to the **Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)** within **three business days**, along with First Aid documentation from staff and any hospital reports, if applicable.
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PARKING REQUIREMENTS

For the safety of children, parents/guardians must follow these guidelines when bringing children to and from preschool:

1. Park in the **rear parking lot** with the car engine off.
2. **Escort your child** up and down the stairs.
3. Bring your child **directly into the classroom**.
4. Do **not allow children to run** in the parking lot.
5. Do **not leave children unattended** in the car or parking lot.
6. Ensure a staff member is **aware of your arrival and departure**.

7. Do **not park in handicapped spaces** unless applicable.

- Children will **not be released** to anyone other than their parent or guardian without written permission.
- For carpool arrangements, notify the teacher **in writing**.
- Any changes in scheduled transportation must be communicated **in writing** to the school.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR INJURIES AT PRESCHOOL

In the event of an injury, **provide immediate first aid** and, if necessary, isolate the child from the group.

Procedures

1. Injury in the Classroom or Preschool Area:

- The classroom teacher will administer first aid.
- A teacher assistant or another staff member will remain with the rest of the class.

2. Injury on the Playground or Other Indoor Facility:

- One teacher will administer first aid.
- The remaining teacher and assistant will supervise the rest of the class.
- A **first aid kit** will accompany all classes in these areas.

3. Notification and Assistance:

- The director or person in charge will be notified if additional assistance is needed.
- The director will:
 - Contact **ambulance services** if required.
 - Notify the **reception desk**.
 - Contact the child's **family**. If the family cannot be reached at home, calls will be made to business numbers and then to emergency contacts listed on the child's history form.
- If the director is unavailable, the person in charge assumes these responsibilities.

4. Supervision:

- All other children will be kept **out of the immediate area and engaged in activities**.

5. Minor Injuries:

- Families may be advised to take the child home, to a doctor, or to a hospital, depending on the situation.
6. **Communication with Families:**
- All injuries, minor or major, will be reported to families **the same day**. First aid measures taken will be explained.
7. **Documentation:**
- All injuries must be recorded in an **accident report**, dated, signed by the parent/guardian, and placed in the child's folder.
 - Families will receive a copy of the report.
 - Injuries must also be recorded in the **central injury log** located in the director's office.
8. **Reporting to EEC:**
- Any injury requiring medical attention by a physician or emergency treatment must be reported to the **Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)**.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES ON FIELD TRIPS

1. A **first aid kit** and **children's files** will accompany all field trips.
2. In case of injury, the teacher will administer **immediate first aid** and isolate the child if necessary.
3. The **director will be notified** if not present with the group.
4. Families will be contacted using the same procedure as at the preschool.
5. If a child must be transported to a hospital, their **child file will accompany them**.
6. For field trips outside Westfield, in the event of a serious emergency:
 - The child will be transported by **ambulance to the nearest hospital**.
 - The classroom teacher will **accompany the child**.
 - Remaining staff and chaperones will **supervise the rest of the group**.

SEPARATION AND ADJUSTMENT

Every child is a unique individual, and reactions to separation will vary. Some children, particularly those who have attended school before, may adjust easily, while others may need more time to feel comfortable. Your presence at school may provide reassurance during the initial adjustment period. Hesitation, fear, anxiety, or temporary regressive behaviors (such as irritability or bedwetting) are normal and will usually diminish with patience, understanding, and support.

If your child continues to need your presence after the first days of school, we encourage a **gradual separation**—staying for a short period at the start of each session and leaving before the session ends. A positive early separation experience helps children develop confidence in new situations and lays the foundation for a healthy attitude toward school in the future.

BEGINNING THE DAY

- **Arrival:** Bring your child into the classroom each day and ensure the teacher is aware of your arrival. A calm, confident demeanor helps your child feel secure.
 - **Reluctance to Attend:** At times, children may express that they do not want to go to preschool. This may be due to minor incidents or simply testing boundaries. Unless there is genuine anxiety, the best approach is to calmly continue the morning routine and inform the teacher or director of any difficulties. Helpful suggestions will be provided as needed.
 - **Toys from Home:** Children should **not bring personal toys** to school, as equipment and toys at school are shared. Books, records, or items for the nature table are welcome. A small security item or blanket may be comforting during the first days but should be kept in the cubby after initial sessions.
 - **Prohibited Items:** Guns and other violent toys are **not allowed**. The preschool promotes nonviolent play and discourages gunplay.
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ENDING THE DAY

- **Pick-Up:** Please be prompt when picking up your child. If you will be late, call the preschool office to inform us of your expected arrival time. Children may feel anxious if they are not collected on time.
- **Greeting Your Child:** Show genuine enthusiasm when you see your child. After several hours away, children appreciate knowing you missed them.

- **Conversation Tips:** Instead of asking, “What did you do today?” try questions such as:
 - “Did you have a good time today?”
 - “Tell me something you liked doing today.”These open-ended questions encourage conversation without pressure.
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SHARING TIME WITH YOUR CHILD

- **Listening and Talking:** Engage in conversations and listen carefully to your child. This supports language development and helps you understand their thoughts and feelings.
- **Reading Together:** Regular reading and library visits foster a love of books and language.
- **Exploring Together:** Take walks or trips beyond your neighborhood and discuss observations with your child.
- **Responsibility at Home:** Assign simple chores to help your child develop a sense of responsibility and importance.
- **Bedtime Routine:** Make bedtime a comforting and relaxing time by reading quietly and talking about the day’s events.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are welcome to make **unannounced visits** to the Westfield YMCA Preschool while their child is present.

Parents are encouraged to **provide input** on the development of programs and policies. Input may be shared through **Parent Surveys** or by bringing suggestions directly to the preschool teachers or director.

If a parent recommends a policy or program change that the preschool **cannot adopt**, the parent may request a **written response** explaining the decision.

PARENT CONFERENCES AND REPORTS

- The preschool staff is **available for conferences** with parents to discuss a child's progress or any concerns.
- Parents will receive **written progress reports** at least **every six months**, or **every three months** for children with disabilities.
- Any **special concerns or significant developments** regarding a child will be communicated to parents **as soon as they arise**.
- A child's **school record is available to parents at all times**

VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENT INTERNS

Volunteers, including student teachers and interns, are selected based on their ability to **meet the needs of children** and will receive **appropriate orientation, training, supervision, and ongoing staff development**.

Background and Screening

- Any volunteer, student teacher, or intern who has **unmonitored contact with children** must have a background free of conduct that could **adversely affect the safety and well-being of children**.
- The licensee will maintain documentation of **compliance with 102 CMR 7 CORI** and will conduct **two reference checks** for each individual.
- **Parent volunteers** whose children are enrolled in the program and who do **not count toward the required staff-to-child ratio** are exempt from CORI requirements.

Supervision and Responsibilities

- The licensee will provide a **written description of any arrangements** with schools or professional training programs. This includes:
 - Student responsibilities
 - Supervision provided by the school or training program
 - Oversight provided by the Westfield YMCA Preschool

Current Partnerships

- The preschool currently hosts interns from:
 - **Westfield State University**
 - **Bay Path College**
 - **Holyoke Community College**

FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL VISITORS

During the school year, children will participate in **field trips** to local places such as the pumpkin patch and other educational or recreational sites. **Special visitors** may include police officers, mail carriers, farm animals, pets, and parents with unique talents or hobbies.

Special occasions, including **birthdays and holidays**, will be celebrated at school. If you wish to provide a birthday treat or a holiday snack, please **discuss your plans in advance** with your child's teacher.

FAMILY PARTICIPATION

We **encourage family involvement** in our program. Families have contributed in many ways, such as:

- Sharing musical talents (piano, guitar, singing)
- Leading art or cooking projects
- Bringing pets to school

Families are encouraged to **share ideas and participate**, as collaboration between home and school enhances children's learning and development.

Ways Families Can Participate

- **Individual Conferences:** Families may meet with the director or teachers to discuss concerns at home, share positive feedback, or receive updates on their child's progress. Major changes in a child's life, such as a move, death in the family, divorce, or hospitalization, should be communicated to staff. Conferences are scheduled **once a year**, with progress reports provided **twice a year**, and additional meetings can be arranged as needed.
- **Volunteer Opportunities:** Families are welcome to help with **class projects, holiday activities, or special events**. Extra hands are always appreciated, and participation often provides a memorable experience for both children and adults.
- **Field Trip Chaperones:** Families may be asked to **chaperone field trips**. Suggestions for new field trip destinations are always welcome.
- **Swim Program Support:** Families assist by helping children in the locker room and acting as **spotters in the pool**. Each family is assigned to one class on a **rotation schedule**, approximately once every 5–6 weeks. A **Family/Child Swim Time** occurs during the last class of each group at the end of the school year. A meeting will be scheduled before swim classes begin to explain procedures.

- **School Visits:** Families are welcome to visit school at any time. Please avoid judging your child's behavior based on a single day's observation.
-

FAMILY EDUCATION AND WORKSHOPS

Through **Westfield Community Partnerships for Children**, educational workshops will be offered throughout the year. Workshops include videos, guest speakers, and group discussions on topics relevant to today's families. Families are encouraged to **suggest topics** to their child's teacher or the director.

FAMILY EVENTS

Throughout the year, the school will host **family-oriented events**, including holiday celebrations, family swim sessions, and picnics. These events are designed to **support the entire family** and provide enjoyable activities for families to share together.

SNACKS

- Snacks will include **one item from two basic food groups**.
Examples:
 - Water and a fruit or vegetable
 - Ritz crackers from the bread group
 - Children will receive an **adequate amount and variety of food** and will be allowed to eat at a **reasonable and leisurely pace**.
 - **No child will be denied a snack** except for a written medical directive.
 - Children **will not be forced or coerced** to eat but will be **encouraged** to participate at snack time.
 - Snacks reflecting the **ethnic backgrounds of children** enrolled in the program will be offered regularly.
-

TOILETING

- No child will be **punished, verbally abused, or humiliated** for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
 - Children will be **supervised** while using the bathroom by a teacher, aide, or director.
 - Hands must be washed with **soap and running water** after toileting, and **individual towels** will be used to dry hands.
 - Clothing soiled with feces, urine, vomit, or blood will be **bagged in plastic, stored separately**, and returned to families.
 - A **change of clothing** will be available for each child. Clothing may be brought from home or provided by the center. Center-owned clothing must be **laundered after use** and returned within five days.
-

HAND WASHING

Children

Children will wash their hands with **liquid soap and running water**, then dry with a **paper towel**. Children will be **supervised** during hand washing. Hand washing is required:

- Upon arrival
- Before snacks, meals, or handling food
- After toileting or nose wiping
- After handling center animals

After washing, children will return to their table for snack.

Staff

Staff will wash their hands with **liquid soap and running water for at least 10 seconds** and dry with a disposable towel. To prevent recontamination, faucets should be turned off using a towel. Hand washing is required:

- Upon arrival
- Before preparing or serving food
- After assisting children with toileting or nose wiping
- After handling pets or animals
- After contact with potentially infectious materials, including bodily fluids

PREVENTION OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Under **Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119**, all administrators, teachers, aides, and assistants at child care centers are **mandated reporters**. This means they are legally required to report any **suspected abuse or neglect** of a child to the **Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS)**.

In addition, the child care program administrator or designee must notify the **Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)** immediately after filing a 51A report or upon learning that a 51A report has been filed alleging abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of the center.

Reporting Guidelines

- **No Proof Required:** Reporters are not required to have proof that abuse or neglect occurred. Reporting is based on “**reasonable cause to believe**” abuse or neglect may be happening. Reasonable cause means that, after considering the facts, most professionals with similar training and experience would suspect abuse.
- **When to Report:** A mandated reporter must file a report if there is reasonable cause to believe a child:
 1. Is suffering from physical or emotional injury due to abuse, including sexual abuse
 2. Is experiencing neglect, including malnutrition
 3. Was born physically dependent on an addictive drug

If you are unsure whether a situation warrants reporting, you should **contact DSS** and speak with a trained social worker.

Internal Procedures

1. **Immediate Notification:** Staff who suspect abuse must immediately inform their supervisor, who will contact the **YMCA Executive Director** or a designated administrator.
2. **Confirmation and Parent Notification:** The staff person receiving the report will verify the facts and the child’s condition **the same day**. A decision will be made regarding how and when the parent or guardian will be notified. Incidents must be reported as soon as they are observed; waiting for proof may place the child at serious risk.
3. **Staff or Volunteer Allegations:** If the suspected abuse involves a YMCA staff member or volunteer, the individual will be **suspended immediately** from all child supervision duties. Reassignment to administrative duties may be

considered. Reinstatement will occur only after allegations are fully cleared to the satisfaction of the YMCA Director and the investigating agency.

4. **Cooperation with Investigations:** The Westfield YMCA Preschool will fully cooperate with all investigations, including:
 - Identifying parents of children currently or previously enrolled
 - Providing consent for the Department of Early Education and Care to access records and disclose necessary information
 - Supporting the Department in any actions required to protect children
5. **Serious Incidents:** The **Youth Development Director** must notify the Department of Early Education and Care immediately in the event of a **death or serious injury/illness** requiring hospitalization or emergency medical treatment while a child is in the program.



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome:

Definition

Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) is the unexpected, sudden death of a child under age 1 in which an autopsy does not show an explainable cause of death.

Alternative Names

Crib death; SIDS

Causes, incidence, and risk factors

SIDS rates have dropped dramatically since 1992, when parents were first told to put babies to sleep on their backs or sides to reduce the likelihood of SIDS. Unfortunately, SIDS remains a significant cause of death in infants under one year old. Thousands of babies die of SIDS in the United States each year.

The cause of SIDS is unknown, although there are several theories. Many doctors and researchers now believe that SIDS is not a single condition that is always caused by the same medical problems, but infant death caused by several different factors.

These factors may include problems with sleep arousal or an inability to sense a build-up of carbon dioxide in the blood. Almost all SIDS deaths occur without any warning or symptoms when the infant is thought to be sleeping.

SIDS is most likely to occur between 2 and 4 months of age, and 90% occur by 6 months of age. It occurs more often in winter months, with the peak in January. There is also a greater rate of SIDS among Native and African Americans.

The following have been linked to an increased risk of SIDS:

- Babies who sleep on their stomachs
- Babies who are around cigarette smoke while in the womb or after being born
- Babies who sleep in the same bed as their parents
- Babies who have soft bedding in the crib
- Multiple birth babies (being a twin, triplet, etc.)
- Premature babies
- Babies who have a brother or sister who had SIDS

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**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

- Mothers who smoke or use illegal drugs
- Teen mothers
- Short time period between pregnancies
- Late or no prenatal care
- Situations of poverty

SIDS affects boys more often than girls. While studies show that babies with the above risk factors are more likely to be affected, the impact or importance of each factor is not well-defined or understood.

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Prevention

Revised American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) guidelines, released in October 2005, recommend the following:

Always put a baby to sleep on its back. (This includes naps.) **DO NOT** put a baby to sleep on its stomach. Side sleeping is unstable and should also be avoided. Allowing the baby to roll around on its tummy while awake can prevent a flat spot (due to sleeping in one position) from forming on the back of the head.

Only put babies to sleep in a crib. **NEVER** allow the baby to sleep in bed with other children or adults, and do **NOT** put them to sleep on surfaces other than cribs, like a sofa.

Let babies sleep in the same room (**NOT** the same bed) as parents. If possible, babies cribs should be placed in the parents' bedroom to allow for night-time feeding.

Avoid soft bedding materials. Babies should be placed on a firm, tight-fitting crib mattress with no comforter. Use a light sheet to cover the baby. Do not use pillows, comforters, or quilts.

Make sure the room temperature is not too hot. The room temperature should be comfortable for a lightly-clothed adult. A baby should not be hot to the touch.

Offer the baby a pacifier when going to sleep. Pacifiers at naptime and bedtime can reduce the risk of SIDS. Doctors think that a pacifier might allow the airway to open more, or prevent the baby from falling into a deep sleep. A baby that wakes up more easily may automatically move out of a dangerous position. If the baby is breastfeeding, it is best to wait until 1 month before offering a pacifier, so that it doesn't interfere with breastfeeding. Do not force a baby to use a pacifier.

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Do not use breathing monitors or products marketed as ways to reduce SIDS. In the past, home apnea (breathing) monitors were recommended for families with a history of the condition. But research found that they had no effect, and the use of home monitors has largely stopped.

Other recommendations from SIDS experts:

- Keep your baby in a smoke-free environment.
- Breastfeed your baby, if possible -- breastfeeding reduces some upper respiratory infections that may influence the development of SIDS.
- NEVER give honey to a child less than 1 year old -- honey in very young children may cause infant botulism, which may be associated with SIDS.

Until the nature of the disease is fully understood, complete prevention will not be a reality.

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REFERRAL POLICY

The **Westfield YMCA Preschool** is committed to supporting the social, emotional, and medical well-being of each child. When center staff determine that additional services may benefit a child, the preschool will assist families in connecting with appropriate social, mental health, or medical resources.

Procedures for Referral

1. **Identification of Concern:**
When a teacher identifies a social, emotional, or medical concern regarding a child, the staff member will inform the Preschool Director.
2. **Observation and Documentation:**
The teacher and the Director—or another qualified staff member—will observe the child and document behaviors for a minimum of **six and a half days** before initiating a referral.
3. **Family Meeting:**
The teacher and Director will meet with the child’s family to review documented observations, expressed concerns, and any accommodations the center has made to support the child.
4. **Referral Assistance:**
The Director will provide the family with an up-to-date list of referral resources, including contacts for **Chapter 766** and **Early Intervention Programs**, and assist the family in making a referral. **Written family consent is required** before any referral is made.
5. **Family Rights:**
Families will be informed of their right to appeal under **Chapter 766**.
6. **Follow-Up:**
With family permission, the school will follow up on the referral. If services are not immediately needed, ongoing observations and documentation will continue and be reviewed **every three months**.
7. **Record-Keeping:**
The Preschool Director will maintain written records of all referrals, including family conferences and outcomes.

REFERRAL RESOURCES

- **Westfield Public Schools** provides assessments in the following areas:
 - Educational and psychological evaluation

- Speech and language assessment
- Social/emotional development
- Motor development
- Visual and hearing screenings
- Physical and occupational therapy

Note: These screenings are brief. If a child is not a Westfield resident, the preschool will contact the school department in the child's home town to help the family access services.

- **Dental Services:**

Families needing dental care support may contact **Dental Resources of Western Massachusetts** at **1-800-342-8747**