



# YOUTH PROGRAMS HANDBOOK



**YMCA of Greater Michiana  
State of Indiana Handbook**

Updated January 2026



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# WELCOME TO THE YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA!

Dear Parents,

We are committed to providing your child with safe, enriching experiences that incorporate the YMCA core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Courage, and Inclusion.

The YMCA is a fun place for your child to meet friends and learn new skills. Furthermore, at our Y you can also expect that your child will benefit by learning lifelong skills and building a stronger character. When your child joins the Y, they will participate in a plethora of activities that teach our character values while being encouraged and recognized for demonstrating these values throughout their experience. Y character counts!

At the Y, it's vital that children are engaged in activities in which they are continuously learning and provided experiences that build self-esteem. Our Programs help children learn by hands on experiences, dramatic play and are physically active.

We know that the quality of your child's experience hinges on the excellence of our staff members. Because our staff team means so much to each of our members, we focus on selecting, retaining and training the best leaders. Our staff members are engaging, energetic, fun and excited to spend time teaching your child.

**You have made a great investment in your child's future!**

Maycie Wise  
Youth Development Director  
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**Downtown South Bend YMCA**

111 W. Jefferson Blvd., South Bend, IN 46601

(574) 245-7677 • [ymcagm.org](http://ymcagm.org)

**YMCA O'Brien Center**

321 E. Walter St., South Bend, IN 46614

(574) 299-3482 • [ymcagm.org](http://ymcagm.org)

# MISSION & PHILOSOPHY

This handbook provides valuable information about your participants activities, the Program's philosophy, policies, and general information about our program. You may refer any questions regarding this handbook to the Youth Development Director.

## YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

We put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

## PHILOSOPHY

YMCA programs foster each child's cognitive, social-emotional and physical development through opportunities and experiences which focus on achievement, relationships and belonging. It is our belief that each participant is a unique individual with his or her own rate of development. Our goal is to introduce the participant to as many positive experiences as possible that will assist in the development of individuality in each participant and encourage an awareness of themselves and others.

Through the Y'programs, participants will join in fun and educational activities that help them with:

- **ACHIEVEMENT** – Learn and master skills that help them realize their passion, talents and potential.
- **RELATIONSHIP** – Build friendships with new friends and staff adding to their well-being.
- **BELONGING** – Help them feel like they belong so they feel safe, welcome and free to express their individuality.

We are partners in your child's development. We aim to provide opportunities to strengthen the family unit and give the family and the YMCA the opportunity to work, play, learn and thrive together.

Finally, the YMCA collaborates with other organizations which are committed to serving the needs of all children and families. It's through these collaborations, a strong youth development focus and intentional program assessment that the Y delivers consistent quality programs.

## ENROLLMENT PROCESS AND EXPECTATIONS

We strive to keep all participants safe and provide the best experience will in our care. All information and forms must be completed and on file before any child can attend.

### Paperwork Needed:

- Youth Registration Form (Admission Agreement/Child Profile)
- Health and Immunization Records (updated yearly)
- Medication Forms (if applicable)

All forms and Child Profile updates/changes are the responsibility of the parents/guardians. The Child Profile can be updated any time by logging into your account at [ymcagm.org](http://ymcagm.org). All health and medication forms can be dropped off to any YMCA branch or emailed to [mwise@ymcagm.org](mailto:mwise@ymcagm.org)

## SPECIAL NEEDS

If a child has special needs, please contact the Y so that we can set up a time to talk before the child begins attending our program. We welcome all children at the Y, however, we do not have the capacity to provide one-on-one staffing support and attention. This meeting is designed to exchange information to make sure we can accommodate your child's needs within our staffing capabilities. We want to see that the family's needs and expectations are met. We encourage open dialogue about what works, and what doesn't, for your child.

## DROP OFF & PICK UP

Parents/Guardians will be required to sign their children in/out. Participants must be signed out by an adult (18 years or older), unless the legal guardian. For the safety of your child, participants will not be released to anyone whose name is not on the Child Profile. Any changes will require a new form on file. A photo I.D. will be required when picking up your child from programs.

Once a participant is picked up from Y-Club, they may not return to Y-Club that day.

## OFFSITE PROGRAMMING

We understand emergencies can come up. If there are any changes regarding the pick-up person or if you anticipate a late pick-up, please contact the YMCA O'Brien Center at 574-299-3482 or the Downtown South Bend YMCA at 574-245-7677. Our Member Services team will then get in touch with your child's site lead.

### What if I am late picking up my child?

We understand unavoidable situation may arise. If you find that you are going to be late, please call the YMCA O'Brien Center or Downtown South Bend YMCA immediately to let us know so neither staff nor your child will worry.

After waiting for 5 minutes, staff will begin calling the child's emergency contact list for those allowed to pick up the child. If staff has waited an additional 30 minutes and you have made no contact, proper authorities will be called.

Repeated late pick-ups may result in removal from the program.

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Participants should have their name on all belongings. Please do not send participants with anything that could be lost or taken, including electronics and toys. All belongings are the responsibility of the participants and should be kept in a tote bag or backpack. We will not be responsible for lost or missing valuables brought to programs.

## SCREEN-FREE

Our programs are a screen free and cell phone free zone. Cell phones, video games, tablets, etc., become disruptive to the programs life and detract from the experience. If a cell phone or any electronics come to the program it will be collected and placed in the supervisor's possession until pick up. Please contact the YMCA O'Brien Center or Downtown South Bend YMCA in cases of an emergency and you need to reach your child. We are not responsible for lost or stolen items.

## FOOD SERVICE POLICY

Our YMCA will be following the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards and will provide healthy options during our snack and meal time. Water will be available at all times while in our care. Children are allowed to have anything that is left from their lunch or that they brought as a special snack\*. If you would like to bring in a special treat for a birthday or celebration, please speak with the site coordinator or director for more details.

Please check program communication as not all programs offer meals.

**\*All programs are a NUT-FREE environment. We will not allow children who bring in a snack that has peanuts or a snack that has been processed in a nut environment.**

## FIELD TRIPS

All field trips will be communicated before the trip, please look for weekly handouts with dates and times. We are not responsible if your child is late and our bus has left. Please do not send money; participants will not be allowed to purchase items on field trips.

# STAYING HEALTHY IS VITAL TO SUCCESS

Keeping the children healthy is important and we ask for your cooperation in accomplishing this.

## HEALTH IMMUNIZATIONS

All children are required to have a physician signed form and immunization records in their Center files before their first day of attendance. Records must be updated yearly. Children will be unable to attend child care programs with our these records.

If a parent/guardians choose not to have child(ren) immunized, an immunization waiver must be completed and on file before the child's first day. Immunization waivers must be updated yearly.

## IF YOUR CHILD WELL ENOUGH TO COME TO CARE?

When parents/guardians are debating whether it is okay to attend, remember that the most contagious time is just prior to the emergence of full-blown symptoms. Parents may want to keep children home for a day to ensure illness is not contagious.

It is important that children who have been ill not come to the Center if they are still sick. A low resistance jeopardizes children's health. If children are not ready to fully participate in program activities, it may be a good idea to keep them home.

## MEDICAL MATTERS

### Children\* should stay home if they:

1. Are feverish or have has a fever in the last 24 hours
2. Have a hacking cough or sore throat
3. Have vomited or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours
4. Have pink eye or symptoms which might be pink eye
5. Have been on antibiotics for any contagious infections less than 24 hours
6. Are too "out of sorts" to participate in class activities

\*These standards apply for staff and volunteers as well

### Medicines

Prescription medication must be in the original container with the original label and current date attached.

If you wish for us to administer prescription or over-the-counter medicine, we must have the appropriate forms on file. These orders are valid for one full year.

Medications must be signed in by the parent and the staff will complete the form upon administering the medication after a safety check is performed. We must have a signed parent's note if a child should be kept indoors.

Medication that needs to stay with your child or be carried by your child requires a doctor note on file. Example: Inhalers & EpiPens.

**\*Any prescribed or over the counter medication requires a Permission /Instruction form,signed by a physician, on file**

**\*Any medications not claimed after 2 weeks of programs end date will be disregarded.**

Condition for Exclusion	Condition for Returning
Axillary or ear temperature 100 degrees or greater	Fever free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication)
Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness (such as unusual lethargy, uncontrollable coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs)	Until medical evaluation allows inclusion (doctor's written approval for return)
Abnormally loose, uncontrolled diarrhea, that is—increased number of stools, increased stool water, and/or decreased form that is not contained by a diaper	Diarrhea free for 24 hours
Vomiting	Vomit free for 24 hours and able to eat solid foods or until health care provider determines the illness to be noncommunicable, and the child is not in danger of dehydration
Red or blue in the face, or making high-pitched croupy or whooping sounds after coughing	Until health care provider or health official determines the condition is noninfectious
Unusual spots or rash with fever or behavior change	Until health care provider determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease
Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge)	Until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
Untreated scabies, head lice, or other infestation	After treatment and free of infestation, such as lice or nits
Known contagious diseases while still in the communicable stages	Until health care provider determines the condition is noncommunicable

# HAND WASHING

Children are to wash their hands upon entering a classroom, before and after meals, after toileting, before and after the use of sand, water or play-doh, and after wiping a nose, touching mouth, etc.

## THE STOP DISEASE METHOD OF WASHING HANDS:

1. Turn on water and wet hands
2. Soap for at least 20 seconds outside the stream of water (scrub backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails)
3. Rinse
4. Towel dry (or place hands under electric hands-free dryer)
5. Turn off faucet with paper towel (if faucet is not hands-free)

## HOW TO PROPERLY WASH HANDS



### STEP 1

Wet hands



### STEP 2

Dispense soap



### STEP 3

Lather hands  
for 20 seconds



### STEP 4

Rinse hands



### STEP 5

Towel dry



### STEP 6

Turn water off with  
paper towel

## ACCIDENT, INJURY, INCIDENT, AND ILLNESS REPORT

Any time there is an accident involving your child, whether it be a behavioral incident or physical incident, all occurrences will be documented. These documents are confidential, and are not to be discussed with other families. Our job is to protect all parties involved. When the center observes changes in a child's health, a child experiences accidents, injuries or incidents, or is too ill to remain in the group, parents will be notified via written report or phone call based on circumstance.

If it is a major incident, such as: head injury, broken bone, sever lacerations—parents will be notified immediately. If it is a minor incident, such as: stretch, bruise, bump—parents will receive a report upon pickup at the end of the day.

## STAFF TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS

All our staff are required to attend training. Our comprehensive training and development program includes CPR/ First Aid, behavior management, conflict resolution, planning age-appropriate activities, and risk management. In addition to learning all the policies and procedures of the YMCA programs, they learn how important it is how to do head counts, how to check children in and out, how the drop off and pick up operates. They explore techniques of how to better interact with children, build others self esteem and confidence, and become experts in sports, games, and activities.

Volunteers are required to go through screening and a background check. Please contact the Youth Development Director for opportunities.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

We recognize that access and affordability to child care can be challenging. Please see your options below for financial assistance. Applications are available online or at member service.

- Child Care Assistance is available to help you to access our licensed programs through financial assistance for those who qualify. Learn more on their website [mybrightpoint.org](http://mybrightpoint.org).
- The Y offers financial assistance to those who qualify. Please fill out our financial assistance application and email Natalie Cooper, Member Administrator, at [ncooper@ymcagm.org](mailto:ncooper@ymcagm.org).
- In order to qualify for a scholarship from the YMCA, you must first apply to FSSA Child Care Assistance.

We will make sure every child has an opportunity to envision a positive future and take an active role in strengthening the community.

## ADMISSION AND WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Admission to the YMCA of Greater Michiana Program will be made available to children enrolled. Being a State Licensed Facility, we are limited to allowing a certain number of enrollees. Parents/Guardians will need to fill out all required forms for the child to be enrolled.

Parents wishing to remove their child from the program may do so at any time. On rare occasions, the program director may determine that a child be withdrawn from the program due to behavior concerns or other problems that are disruptive to the program.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DEVELOPMENT & DISCIPLINE

We want your child to enjoy the activities planned, and benefit from his/her experience. Staff will work with them to help them understand the rules and give clear definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

### Behavior Management Guidelines

It is the Y's goal to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all youth program participants. Children who attend the program are expected to follow the behavior guidelines based on the Y's four core values and to interact appropriately in a group setting.

### Behavior Guidelines

- We will care for ourselves and for those around us.
- Honesty will be the basis for all relationships and interactions.
- People are responsible for their actions, choices, and words.
- Respect will be given to all, including, but not limited to staff, participants, members and volunteers.

### We respect each other and the environment.

When a participant does not follow the behavior guidelines, we will take the following actions:

- The staff will document the situation. This written documentation will include what the behavior problem is, what provoked the problem, and the corrective action is taken.
- Staff will redirect the participant to more appropriate behavior. The participant will be reminded of the behavior guidelines and programs rules, and a discussion will take place.
- If the behavior persists, a parent or caregiver will be notified of the problem.
- If the problem persists, the staff will schedule a conference that includes the parent or caregiver, child, staff, and program director. The program director will have all documentation and the notes from the previous conferences for review. If subsequent conferences have to be scheduled, a counselor may also be present.
- If a child's behavior at any time threatens the immediate safety of that child, other children, or staff, the parent or caregiver may be notified and expected to pick up the child immediately.

- If a problem persists and a child continues to disrupt the program, the Y reserves the right to suspend the child from the program. Expulsion from the program will be considered in extreme situations.

**The following behaviors are not acceptable and may result in the immediate suspension of a participant for the remainder of the current day and the next day:**

- Endangering the health and safety of children or staff, members, and volunteers
- Physically hurting other children or staff, members, and volunteers.
- Stealing or damaging Y or personal property
- Leaving the program without permission
- Continually disrupting the program
- Refusing to follow the behavior guidelines or programs rules
- Using profanity, vulgarity, or obscenity frequently
- Acting in an obscene manner

If any of these behaviors persist, a participant may be suspended a second time before expulsion. Immediate expulsion may occur if a child is in possession of or using tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, firecrackers, firearms, or explosives.

## **SAFETY DRILLS**

Our programs are required to practice safety drills several times a year for fire evacuation, tornado safety, and any other threats that may occur. If our program is evacuated due to an emergency, staff will notify you or another adult on your child emergency contact form.

## **DUE DATES/BALANCES**

- All program payments are due two Fridays before the first day of care.
- Children will not be allowed to attend programs without advance payment.
- If there is an unpaid balance , no communication, and/or no payment plan in place, the child may be unenrolled from the program.

## **DEPOSIT AND CANCELLATION AGREEMENT**

- For all camps, there is a \$50 non-refundable deposit (per week) due at the time of registration. The deposit goes toward the weekly fee. All remaining balances are drafted two Friday's before the first day of care. Deposits can not be transferred to other weeks.
- A week notice is required to receive a full refund (excluding deposit). Email [mwise@ymcagm.org](mailto:mwise@ymcagm.org) or call any of our YMCA locations to submit your notice
- Less than a weeks notice, 50% system credit will be issued (excluding deposit).
- Notices given on or after the first day of programming, no refund will be issued.

## **YMCA PROGRAM CLOSING**

During inclement weather or state emergencies, the YMCA will not operate programs. Fees will not be refunded or prorated.

Centers will be closed on the following holidays:

- New Years Day
- Easter Sunday
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Independence Day
- Christmas Day
- Thanksgiving Day

Centers hours of operation will be adjusted on the following holidays:

- New Years Eve
- Christmas Eve

Y-Club sites will follow the appropriate school calendar.

## CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

All staff are mandated by law to report any suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, child sexual abuse or sexual exploitation immediately. Indiana law (IC 31-33-5-1) requires anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report it to the authorities.

## DRUG FREE AND SMOKE FREE ZONE

Our grounds are drug free and smoke free zones. Cigarettes must be properly discarded prior to entering the parking lot and building. This includes chewing tobacco and any vape devices. Help us stay a drug free and smoke free zone by informing anyone that will be escorting your child to and from the program of our policy.

## Y TIES

We will be using our Y TIES Program to develop our children's social responsibility. This program allows the opportunity for students and staff to make living the Y character values tangible and collective. Children will be able to make individual pledges or goals, demonstrate their pledge, recognize their efforts and success, and reflect on their pledges and goals.

### Expectations

- Follow directions
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself

### Positive Reinforcement

- Praise
- Special privileges
- Group rewards
- Y Bucks

### Consequences

- Warning
- Activity restriction
- Cool down/behavior documented
- Parent notification
- Immediate call to parents for pick-up
- Suspension

\*\*In severe incidences, the site director will determine appropriate consequences. **We do not condone use of corporal punishment, making fun of, threatening or yelling at children, using profanity, or leaving student unsupervised. Fighting, hazing of peers and disrespect toward staff will not be tolerated.\*\***

### Youth Development

We believe the values and skills learned early on are vital building blocks for life. Because of the Y, more young people in neighborhoods around the nation are taking a greater interest in learning and making smarter life choices. At the Y, students and teens learn values and positive behaviors and can explore their unique talents and interests; helping them realize their potential. This makes for confident kids today and contributing and engaged adults tomorrow.

## CORE VALUES

**Caring** – Show a sincere concern for others

**Honesty** – Be truthful in what you say and do

**Respect** – Follow the golden rule

**Responsibility** – Be accountable for your promises and actions

**Courage** – Be brave towards your best self

**Inclusion** – Accept, welcome, and embrace all

## ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT

Our organization's top priority is keeping individuals safe. Any form of abuse or mistreatment of all individuals, children, employees, and volunteers is prohibited. Individuals shall not abuse or mistreat employees, volunteers, or other consumer in any way. Use of abusive language, obscene or profane language, including racial, religious or sexual references directed at other people will not be tolerated. It is important to treat others as you would like to be treated.

## REPORTING

Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that everyone, including you actively participates in the protection of all our individuals. In the event that someone observes any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other employees, volunteers, or others, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations. Remember, at our organization, the policies apply to everyone.

Our Code of Conduct and policies include:

- appropriate and inappropriate displays of physical affection.
- appropriate and inappropriate verbal communication.
- one-on-one interactions and outside contact between employees/volunteers and individuals
- electronic communication between employees/volunteers and individuals.
- gift giving and receiving between individuals and employees/volunteers.
- appropriate and inappropriate individual-to-individual interactions.
- The process for individuals to report concerns, complaints or grievances back to the organization.

### How to Report Abuse

You do not need proof that abuse is occurring to make a report, only reasonable suspicion. Reporting child sexual abuse is key in preventing and intervening in abuse. Call Children's Protective Services at (855) 444-3911 for Michigan and (800) 800-5556 for Indiana, or you can contact the YMCA of Greater Michiana by scanning the QR Code.

