



CHILD CARE NETWORK **PARENT** **HANDBOOK**



**BENTON HARBOR – ST. JOSEPH
YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA**

August 2026

WELCOME TO THE CHILD CARE NETWORK OF YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA

We are honored that you have chosen to partner with us in the healthy development of your child.



At the YMCA, we take this responsibility seriously and are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where children can learn, explore, and grow through developmentally appropriate experiences. Our programs are designed to support each child's social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development while fostering a sense of belonging and confidence.

We believe that strong partnerships with families are essential. Open communication and collaboration between our staff and families help ensure the best possible experience for every child.

This handbook is intended to serve as a helpful resource outlining our program structure, policies, and procedures. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's experience, we encourage you to connect with our knowledgeable and supportive child care team at any time.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that children grow and develop across all domains—emotional, social, physical, and cognitive—and that each area is equally important and interconnected.

We recognize that children learn best through meaningful interactions with caring adults, their peers, and their environment. Through these interactions, children build skills, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning. Our programs provide intentional opportunities for children to explore, discover, and develop through hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences.

Our curriculum is designed to support each child's individual growth by building on their strengths, expanding their skills, and encouraging curiosity and problem-solving. We strive to foster positive self-esteem, independence, and a strong sense of belonging in every child.

We value families as essential partners in a child's development. Parents and guardians are a child's first and most important teachers, and we are committed to working collaboratively with families. We encourage open communication and provide opportunities for family involvement while supporting families with information and resources related to child development.

We are dedicated to creating an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates each child's unique background, culture, language, and abilities.

YMCA MISSION + VISION

The YMCA of Greater Michiana is committed to supporting children and families in our community. Through our Child Care Network, we provide a nurturing environment where children feel safe, supported, and encouraged to learn, grow, build friendships, and prepare for future success.

Our work is guided by the YMCA's core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. These values are integrated into our daily interactions, curriculum, and program environment.

We are dedicated to strengthening our community through a focus on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Our programs are led by educated and well-trained staff who are committed to providing high-quality care and meaningful experiences for every child.

Our vision is to provide high-quality, accessible early education so that all children and families have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS AND EXPECTATIONS

Below you'll find helpful information to guide you through enrollment and payment.

Before Enrolling:

1. Reach out to Program Director
2. Tour the facility
3. Meet the staff
4. Review the Parent Handbook to ensure that the program is right for your family

Paperwork Needed:

- ☒ Registration For/Admission Agreement
- ☒ Child Information Record
- ☒ Birth Certificate
- ☒ Health Appraisal
- ☒ Immunization Record or Immunization Waiver
- ☒ Medication For (if applicable)
- ☒ Childcare Questionnaire Form



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE + 3RD PARTY CHILDCARE CONTRACTS

The Center is committed to ensuring that all families have access to high-quality child care, regardless of financial circumstances. Financial assistance is available to eligible families and is awarded based on need and the availability of funds.

Families are encouraged to first apply for assistance through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). To apply, please contact MDHHS at (231) 941-3900 or visit www.ymcagm.org/Childcare-Assistance for more information.

If a family does not qualify for MDHHS assistance, they may apply for YMCA financial assistance. A completed application, along with a copy of the MDHHS denial letter, is required for consideration.

Please note:

- Applications must be fully completed with all required documentation
- Processing may take up to three weeks
- Regular program fees will apply until assistance is approved
- Financial assistance is subject to the availability of funds

We are committed to working with families and encourage you to reach out if you have questions or need support during the application process.

BUILDING BLOCKS PRESCHOOL STAFF

Preschool Administrator: Kelly Freye, kfrey@ymcagm.org

Classrooms:

Angelfish

Katelynne Nunez, Lead Teacher
Britany Lowry, Co-Teacher

Butterflies

T/TH + 5 Day

Jessica Bridge, Lead Teacher

Linda Price, Co - Teacher

Butterflies

M/W/F + 5 Day

Jessica Bridge, Lead Teacher
Veronica Smuda, Co-Teacher
Hannah Ketchum, Care-Teacher

Sign Language

Coanne Hohman

WELCOME TO BUILDING BLOCKS!

Welcome to preschool! We are dedicated to providing a nurturing and stimulating environment where children can learn, grow, and have fun. Our team of experienced educators is committed to fostering a love of learning and encouraging children to explore the world around them. We look forward to partnering with you in your child's early education journey.

1. We are here to serve children ages 2 1/2–4 years.
2. We believe all children should have the opportunity to discover who they are, express themselves, and be nurtured. Building Blocks is a licensed preschool where growing and learning happen every day. Your child will develop skills to build character values and self-esteem, and improve Kindergarten readiness.
3. We base our educational and guidance decisions for children on our knowledge of child development. Our number one goal is to provide the kind of environment that encourages all children to become creative, independent, and responsible students who can make positive choices for themselves.
4. Students will gain confidence through play, exploration, and social interactions. Students will develop skills to successfully communicate with others and discover different ways to be creative and expressive about their feelings and thoughts. They will have the opportunity to interact with other students in group activities; stations and free play will help children grow socially and emotionally. They will also have the opportunity to develop fine and large motor skills everyday through active games and activities.

We are honored that you have chosen to partner with us in the healthy development of your child. We take this role seriously and commit to providing your child with opportunities to explore and learn through developmentally appropriate activities in a safe, nurturing environment.

**Please use this handbook as a resource regarding
YMCA Building Blocks Preschool policies and procedures.**

Building Blocks Preschool is licensed by the State of Michigan Department of Human Services Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing. Our licensing information is available at michigan.gov/michildcare.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Angelfish

The Angelfish Program is designed to help young children transition into a classroom environment while fostering independence, confidence, and early social skills. Through play-based learning and age-appropriate activities, children begin developing routines, following directions, interacting with peers, and exploring new concepts in a safe, nurturing setting. Our caring teachers encourage curiosity, creativity, and independence while helping children build the foundational skills they need for future preschool success. Child must be 30months by September 1st.

HOURS	Cost
Friday 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Member \$100/month Community \$115/month

Butterflies

The Butterflies Program is designed for children who are ready to build upon their independence while developing the foundational academic and social skills needed for preschool success. Through hands-on, play-based learning, children strengthen communication, cooperation, problem-solving, and early literacy and math skills in a fun, engaging classroom environment. Our experienced teachers create meaningful learning experiences that encourage curiosity, creativity, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning. Child must be 3 by September 1st.

Swim Lessons: Weekly 30-minute swim lessons are built into our curriculum! Students will learn important swimming and water safety skills with our caring and certified instructors.

2-Day Classroom:

Tuesday & Thursday
8:45 AM - 12:00 PM

Base Price
Member \$190/month Community \$250/month

Cost	Swim Fee Included
	Member \$255/month Community \$315/month

3-Day Classroom:

Monday, Wednesday & Friday
8:45 AM - 12:00 PM

Base Price
Member \$250/month Community \$310/month

Cost	Swim Fee Included
	Member \$315/month Community \$380/month

5-Day Classroom:

Monday - Friday
8:45 AM - 12:00 PM

Base Price
Member \$395/month Community \$450/month

Cost	Swim Fee Included
	Member \$460/month Community \$520/month

Extended Care

A continuation of your child’s day that includes learning activities as well as crafts and stories.

Butterflies Pre-Care – 7:30 AM–8:45 AM

2-Day

Member \$60/month
Community \$75/month

3-Day

Member \$75/month
Community \$90/month

5-Day

Member \$160/month
Community \$175/month

Butterflies Post-Care – 12:00 PM–2:30 PM

2-Day

Member \$120/month
Community \$135/month

3-Day

Member \$150/month
Community \$165/month

5-Day

Member \$275/month
Community \$290/month

Both Pre&Post Care

2-Day

Member \$170/month
Community \$200/month

3-Day

Member \$215/month
Community \$245/month

5-Day

Member \$425/month
Community \$455/month



CURRICULUM

The YMCA of Greater Michiana is committed to supporting children and families in our community. Through our Child Care Network, we provide a nurturing environment where children feel safe, supported, and encouraged to learn, grow, build friendships, and prepare for future success.

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We are dedicated to strengthening our community through a focus on youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Our programs are led by educated and well-trained staff who are committed to providing high-quality care and meaningful experiences for every child.

Our vision is to provide high-quality, accessible early education so that all children and families have the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

The YMCA of Greater Michiana Child Care Network is committed to supporting each child's growth and development through ongoing observation and assessment. Formal developmental assessments are conducted for all children twice per year to monitor progress and guide individualized learning.

Teaching staff assess children within the classroom environment through a variety of methods, including observations, anecdotal notes, work samples, and developmental portfolios. These intentional observations provide a comprehensive understanding of each child's strengths, interests, and areas for growth, as well as the needs of the classroom as a whole. This information is used to plan meaningful small group and large group learning experiences.

Families are an important part of this process. Staff will schedule conferences to share assessment results, discuss progress, and collaborate with families to support each child's individual development.

If concerns arise regarding a child's development, staff will communicate with families and may recommend additional screening or evaluation. With family consent, referrals may be made to appropriate community resources or early intervention services to provide additional support.

Developmental screening tools may be used to help identify potential delays early and support timely intervention. If you have concern regarding your child's physical development or educational development, we encourage you to submit a Build Up Michigan request. This program helps connect families with early intervention and support services. <https://buildupmi.org/get-connected/>

If you would like assistance navigating this process, please reach out to your child's teacher or our Childcare Director.

Child Portfolios:

The YMCA Child Care Network utilizes child portfolios as part of our assessment process. Portfolios are ongoing collections of information that document each child's developmental progress over time.

Portfolios may include:

- Child and family information
- Self-portraits and creative work samples
- Family questionnaires
- Observations and anecdotal notes
- Developmental progress summaries

Portfolios are used to guide instruction, support individualized learning, and share progress with families.

INCLUSION

We are committed to providing an inclusive environment where all children feel welcomed, supported, and valued. At the YMCA, we recognize that each child and family has unique strengths and needs, and we strive to support them in meaningful and individualized ways.

We offer a variety of services and resources to help ensure that all children and families feel safe, respected, and supported within our programs. This may include access to specialized materials and equipment, as well as collaboration with families to develop individualized plans that support each child's learning and development when appropriate.

Our dedicated team of educators works closely with families to build strong partnerships and provide a positive, supportive experience for every child.

BEING A KIND FRIEND AT DAYCARE

At THE YMCA, we learn how to be kind, helpful, and caring friends. Sometimes, even young children might make choices that hurt others' feelings, like saying "You can't play with us," taking a toy away, or leaving someone out. These actions can make others feel sad, and that's not what kind friends do.

At the YMCA, we work hard to make sure everyone feels welcome, safe, and included. Our classrooms are a place where:

- We invite others to play
- We share and take turns
- We use kind words and gentle hands
- We treat others the way we want to be treated

If a child is having a hard time being a kind friend, teachers will gently help them understand how their actions affect others and teach them better ways to solve problems and express their feelings.

HOW FAMILIES CAN HELP

Families play an important role in teaching kindness. You can help by:

- Talking with your child about being a good friend
- Encouraging sharing, turn-taking, and kind words at home
- Helping your child understand how others feel when they are left out or treated unkindly.

Together, we can build a classroom where everyone feels like they belong and where kindness is always the rule.



Support for Children with additional needs:

If your child has additional needs, an identified disability, or requires accommodations, we ask that families contact the Center prior to enrollment or attendance. This allows us to schedule a meeting to learn more about your child's strengths, needs, and any supports that may be helpful for their success in our program. During this meeting, we will work together to share information, review any existing plans or documentation, and determine how we can best support your child within our program. Our goal is to collaborate with families to create a positive and successful experience for every child.

While we strive to make reasonable accommodations and support all children, our program operates within established staffing ratios and may have limitations regarding the level of individualized support we can provide. We will communicate openly with families regarding available supports and work together to explore additional resources when needed.

We value ongoing communication and encourage families to share strategies, preferences, and updates so we can provide consistent and supportive care.

POTTY TRAINING

At the YMCA, we work in partnership with families to support children as they begin the potty training process. Successful potty training is a gradual journey that depends on the child's physical readiness, interest, and emotional comfort.

Is your child ready for potty training?

Children may be ready to begin potty training when they:

- ✓ Stay dry for extended periods (2+ hours)
- ✓ Show interest in the bathroom or wearing underwear
- ✓ Can communicate needs with simple words or gestures
- ✓ Can follow simple instructions
- ✓ Express discomfort with wet or soiled diapers
- ✓ Show signs of independence (pulling pants up/down, helping with tasks)



Our Approach

Staff will assist children with toileting needs in a manner that supports independence while maintaining health and safety practices in accordance with licensing requirements.

- We use positive reinforcement and lots of encouragement
- We will follow your home routine as closely as possible (timing, vocabulary, etc.) If needed, our team is happy to work with you to create a consistent routine that supports your child's success and works well for your family.
- We encourage families to send children in easy-to-remove clothing (no overalls or tricky snaps!)
- We ask that children in the training process wear pull-ups unless they are consistently using the toilet.
- Accidents are normal! We respond with kindness and understanding

Family Partnership

To ensure consistency and success:

- Please communicate regularly with your child's teacher about progress or changes
- Provide extra clothing, including socks and shoes
- Work with us on a mutual plan if your child is transitioning to underwear

Questions?

If you feel your child is ready for potty training. Let us know! Please reach out to your child's teacher. We are here to support you and your child every step of the way.

Our Preschool Program

DAILY LESSONS

Your child will participate in rotating centers that focus on small group learning for a more individualized learning environment. In these centers, your child will be working on alphabet activities, number skills, math, science, fine motor skills, and on their creative side with arts and crafts. We strive to make lessons open-ended and use a whole language approach to learning with developmentally appropriate practices.

CIRCLE TIME

This time is used for instruction and sharing. Activities include songs, show and tell, counting games, magnet board activities, calendar, musical instruments, story, and introduction to letters, numbers, and shapes.

STORY TIME

Storytime is an important time in our program, as we hope to instill the love of reading and learning in our students. We have themed books that will be read each month that go along with other activities for the month or week. We will encourage them as they develop the necessary skills to read, and hope that you will read to them as much as possible.

BOOK CLUBS

We subscribe to Scholastic Book Clubs which allows you to purchase quality children's books and ebooks at a relatively low cost. Our program receives bonus points for each dollar spent for book club selections. We then use those points to purchase new books and other needed materials for our program.

GYM / GROSS MOTOR TIME

Students will have the opportunity each day to use our active play area, right outside our classrooms, to participate in large motor skill activities.

LIBRARY DAY

Every week, your child will bring home a book in a bag with their name on it. Please send the book back in the bag.

SNACK TIME

In addition to providing an energy boost for your child, snack time is also an opportunity to refine social skills such as listening, sharing, and practicing manners. Each month your child's teacher will provide a snack schedule with assigned days for your child to bring the class snack.

HEALTHY U

Our Healthy U teachers come in once a month and will spend time teaching students about living healthy lifestyles and getting them active with fun large motor skills activities.

FIELD TRIPS

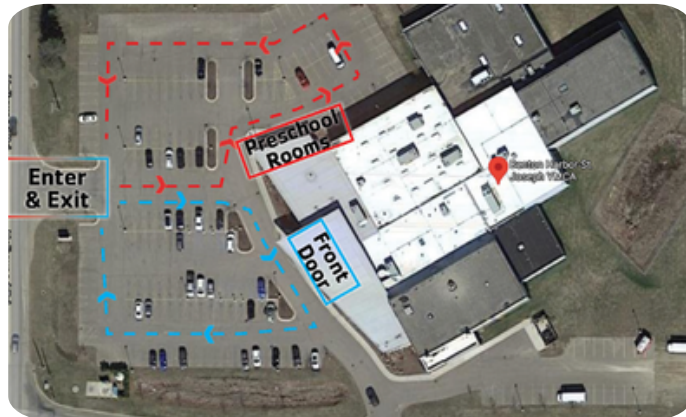
We hope to have either field trips or in-house visitations throughout the school year. Parent permission letters will go home and must be signed in order for your child to participate.

DROP-OFF TIME

BENTON HARBOR – ST. JOSEPH YMCA 8:40 AM – 8:50 AM

Upon arrival at the Center, the following guidelines will be followed:

- Drop off will be outside of the building, by the classroom.
- Parents are asked to form a line with parents and children staying in vehicles.
- A teacher will come to your care and then walk your child to their prospective classroom.
- If you arrive after 8:50 AM, you must check-in through the front entrance of the building
- The YMCA of Greater Michiana does NOT provide transportation.



PICK UP TIME

BENTON HARBOR – ST. JOSEPH YMCA 12:00 PM

- Pick up will be outside of the building, by the classroom.
- On the first day of school, parents will be given a card with their child's name on it.
- Parents are asked to drive up, hold up the card with their child's name on it, and our team will walk your child to your vehicle.
- No child will be allowed to leave with someone without that person being on their child information record form or have a note/contact from parent or guardian.

LATE PICK UP PROCEDURE

We respectfully ask that children be picked up no later than 5:30 PM. If a situation arises where you will be late, contact the Center as soon as possible. The Center will attempt reaching emergency contacts if you are late in excess of 5 minutes. A late fee of \$5 for the first 10 minutes and \$1 for each additional minute will be charged, per child, for late pickups. Late fees must be paid in full before the next day of attendance. If your child is not picked up 30 minutes after closing and no word has been received, the local police department or Child Protective Services will be notified.

APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

Please dress your child in comfortable, easy-wear play clothes that they can put on and fasten themselves. No pull-ups. Children must wear appropriate footwear to school. Unless your child can tie their own shoes, please provide Velcro shoes. No flip flops, please. Also, please label all of your child's belongings. An extra set of clothes is always recommended just in case of accidents.

ILLNESS / DELAYS

If your child will not be attending class due to illness, please contact Preschool Director Kelly Freye at (269) 428-9622 or your child's teacher. If we do not receive your call, we will contact you to inquire about the absence (see medical requirements for details). If you are going to be late in picking up your child, please contact the YMCA so we can let the teacher know. If this is a continued issue, your child will be released to Extended Care, with appropriate fees applied.

SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS

Building Blocks Preschool will close if either St. Joseph or Lakeshore Public Schools cancel due to weather. Your child's teacher will contact you and we will update our Building Blocks Facebook page. Please inform your child's teacher how you would like to be contacted. We will not make up snow days and there will be no price adjustments.

GRIEVANCES

Our program strives to provide a positive environment for all. However, at times, a concern may arise. If you have any questions or concerns you cannot resolve with the teacher directly, please bring the concerns to the attention of the Director, who will work through the concerns with you.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

At the YMCA, we believe outdoor play is an important part of every child's day — even in the colder months! Fresh air, movement, and sunshine help children stay healthy, active, and happy. The kids will go outside every day, weather permitting, as outdoor play supports physical health, social development, and overall well-being.

During the colder months, outdoor time may be shortened, but it will not be eliminated unless weather conditions are deemed unsafe. We follow the Michigan State Guidelines for weather-related outdoor play, which recommend:

- **Above 25°F** (including wind chill): Outdoor play is expected and encouraged.
- **10–25°F** (including wind chill): Outdoor time may be shortened based on conditions and staff discretion.
- **Below 10°F** (including wind chill): Outdoor play will be canceled for safety reasons.

Families are asked to send their children dressed appropriately for the weather each day. This includes:

- Warm coat
- Hat and gloves or mittens
- Snow pants and boots (during snowy or wet conditions)

If a child does not have appropriate outdoor clothing, staff will make every effort to provide loaner items or alternate arrangements as available.



PAYMENT INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Due Dates

- All program payments are drafted the 19th of each month.
- Children will not be allowed to attend program without payment. If a parent has an unpaid balance, the child may be disenrolled from the program.
- Payments are non-transferable and non-refundable (unless there are unforeseen circumstances and to be determined by administration staff ONLY).
- Tuition is owed even if a child does not attend due to illness or quarantine.

Payment Options

- Bank or credit card draft

Available Discounts

- There is a member discount for YMCA of Greater Michiana members.
- Financial assistance
- Weekly fees are NOT prorated on days the center is closed.

CLASSROOM INFORMATION

ANGELFISH

Fridays 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

Ages 2.5–3 – Teacher/Student ratio 1:5 No Swim

Goals: Social skills, independence in a classroom setting

Typical Day: Free play, circle time (songs, rhymes, finger play, books, shapes, colors), restroom/snack/puzzles, centers (fine motor art/craft activities and small group focused activities), group movement (gross motor, music and movement), prepare to go home with goodbye song, dismissal.

BUTTERFLIES

Tuesdays & Thursdays 8:45 AM–12:00 PM

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8:45 AM–12:00 PM

Monday–Friday 8:45 AM–12:00 PM

Ages 3–4 • Teacher/Student Ratio 1:10

Goals: Social skills, color and shape recognition, fine & large motor skills development

Typical Day: Free play, circle time (pledge, greeting, calendar, show and tell, story), movement break (large motor activity, yoga, etc), phonics (rhyming, letter introductions, and sounds through play), snack and story time, literary centers (writing, tracing their names, letters, shapes, etc), movement break, math centers, free choice.

SWIM TIME

SWIM LESSONS

These are an optional companion program to our preschool classes. Participants swim one day each week.

Lessons are given by YMCA swim instructors and follow the YMCA progressive swim programs. There is an additional fee for the lessons. If a child does not want to participate, they will accompany the teachers on the pool deck.

GAINING INDEPENDENCE

Swim time is an excellent opportunity for your child to practice fine motor skills as well as develop large motor muscles. We schedule adequate time before and after swimming in the locker rooms for dressing independently, with our help as needed. You can help your child feel independent by choosing easy-to-wear clothing with a minimum of buttons, buckles, belts, etc. Tights for girls are also challenging on damp skin. Please mark all swim attire, towels, and backpacks with your child's name. An extra bag is also suggested for wet clothes and towel. We assume no responsibility for lost articles.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

You are welcome to observe your child's progress in the pool from the lobby window, however, we discourage regular visits in the pool area. Your child will respond to instructors better and gain confidence more quickly if they feel totally independent of you in this area. We schedule "watch me swim" and "swim with me" days throughout the year for the parents to be more involved in the pool.

Swim Times:

2-day: Tuesdays, 10:00–10:30 AM

3-day: Wednesdays, 10:00–10:30 AM

5-day: Tuesdays & Wednesdays, 10:00–10:30 AM



DISCIPLINE POLICY

POSITIVE REDIRECTION

The YMCA Child Care Network provides a calm and consistent environment, in an effort to make children feel comfortable and safe, thus preventing behavioral issues. Our philosophy is to encourage and acknowledge positive behavior, minimizing the amount of behavioral occurrences.

We use Conscious Discipline with the children to provide a comprehensive approach to self-awareness and social emotional regulation. This method empowers them with self-awareness, developmental knowledge and skills to navigate through social situations successfully.

Policies and procedures of disciplinary methods used by the YMCA staff:

1. **Children will be assisted in understanding the consequences of their own behavior.** Whenever possible, they will be encouraged to utilize language and social skills to express their feelings, rather than through aggressive behavior.
2. **No form of ostracism will be allowed.**
3. **Children will be provided with the rationale for existing rules** and the specific reason for any disciplinary action taken. Rules will be posted, in positive language, so that children and adults can view them daily.
4. **Most disciplinary problems will be prevented through kind, consistent treatment and effective intervention.** Parents will be kept continually aware of their child's behavior in order to assure that the family and the YMCA program are working toward common behavioral goals.
5. **Generally, if an act of severe aggression or disruptive behavior occurs** outside of developmentally appropriate context, parents will be contacted via phone and expected to pick the child up in a reasonable time frame. Documentation of the behavioral SUCCESS incident will also be kept on file.
6. **DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practices) vary for each classroom and age group.** For example: It may be developmentally appropriate for a Toddler to bite as means to express frustration, whereas with a Preschool aged student, it would not. For more information regarding Developmentally Appropriate Practices please contact the Center Director.

Family Communication and Support

Families will be kept informed of their child's behavior, especially when patterns or concerns arise. We believe in working in partnership with families to support consistent expectations and positive outcomes for children.

If a child demonstrates behavior that is unsafe or significantly disruptive beyond what is developmentally appropriate, families may be contacted and asked to pick up their child within a reasonable timeframe. All incidents will be documented and maintained in the child's file.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AND PREVENTION POLICY

Our program is committed to preventing suspension and expulsion whenever possible. We implement proactive, developmentally appropriate behavior supports that focus on teaching skills rather than punishment.

When challenging behaviors occur, staff will:

- Document behaviors and strategies implemented
- Collaborate with families
- Adjust classroom supports and routines
- Consult with specialists when appropriate

If behaviors persist despite documented interventions and family collaborations, the program team will meet with the family to review strategies, consider additional supports, and determine next steps that prioritize the child's success and classroom safety.

Schedule modifications or alternative placements will only be considered after all reasonable interventions and supports have been implemented.

BEHAVIORS THAT REQUIRE IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

To maintain safety and ensure a calm, respectful classroom environment, the following behaviors may result in a child being temporarily removed from the classroom and/or sent home and, if necessary, picked up early:

- Physical Harm – Hitting, biting, scratching, kicking, or any behavior that causes injury to others or oneself
- Unsafe Movement – Running from staff, leaving the classroom or playground, climbing fences, or attempting to leave the building
- Aggressive Behavior – Throwing furniture or objects, destroying materials, or acting in a way that may cause harm
- Vulgar or inappropriate language

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DEVELOPMENT & DISCIPLINE

At THE YMCA, youth will be guided to lead productive, responsible and caring lives. Youth will learn the importance of giving back to community and will acquire the skills to become leaders in their community. 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 expectations and give clear definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Y Ties – Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, Caring

Childcare uses 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

Children are encouraged to:

- Follow Directions
- Keep hands, feet, and objects to yourself
- Use safe bodies and kind words with peers and staff
- Ask for help when they need support (if age appropriate)

Positive Reinforcement

- Praise
- Leadership Opportunities

Consequences

- Warning
- Activity restriction
- Parent notification



TRAUMA-INFORMED AND EQUITY-FOCUSED PRACTICES

Our program is committed to creating a safe, predictable, and nurturing environment that supports the social-emotional well-being of every child. We recognize that children and families may experience stress, trauma, or adverse life events that impact learning and behavior.

Staff implement trauma-informed practices that emphasize:

- Building strong, trusting relationships
- Maintaining consistent routines and clear expectations
- Teaching emotional regulation and problem-solving skills
- Responding to challenging behaviors with empathy and skill-building strategies

We prioritize prevention over exclusion and work collaboratively with families and specialists to implement individualized supports when needed.

SUSPENSION

If during the course of a day there is what the Center considers either a major infraction of rules (any form of physical or verbal abuse which places the child or others in danger) or a serious behavioral issue, parents will be notified immediately. The child will need to be picked up within 30 minutes. During suspensions, all fees apply as normal.

DISENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

The YMCA of Greater Michiana reserves the right to disenroll children. If a parent wishes to disenroll his or her child, a 30-day written notice is required. Parents are responsible for payment of two-week's tuition, regardless of proper notice being given. Reasons children may be disenrolled include: non-payment of fees, poor suitability of the program for the child, repeated unacceptable behaviors that may be harmful to the welfare of other students such as biting or aggressiveness; excessive absences or inappropriate behavior from the parent or family. Disenrollment is at the discretion of the Director.

Prohibited practices:

1. Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
2. Restricting a child's movement by binding or tying him or her.
3. Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
4. Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use.
5. Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
6. Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
7. Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar cubicle.
8. Non-severe and developmentally appropriate discipline or restraint may be used when reasonably necessary, based on a Child's development, to prevent a child from harming himself or herself or to prevent a child from harming other persons or Abusive or profane language Humiliation or isolation property, excluding those forms of punishment prohibited by sub rule (2) of this rule.



If a pattern of aggressive or inappropriate behavior emerges in a particular child, the teacher, in consultation with their supervisor, will schedule a conference with the parents to discern how the Center and the parent can best improve the situation and will create a Behavioral Intervention Plan.

STAFF RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN OUTSIDE OF PROGRAM

We understand that quality child care can be difficult to find, and families may be interested in having YMCA staff provide care outside of program hours. While the YMCA of Greater Michiana does not prohibit employees from offering child care services independently, these arrangements are separate from YMCA operations.

Prior to any outside services being provided, both the staff member and the family are required to sign a waiver acknowledging that YMCA employees are not acting in their YMCA role and are not affiliated with the YMCA during non-working hours.



INJURIES, ACCIDENTS, OR SAFETY ISSUES

Parents **MUST** inform the program staff of any health or safety needs of the child that the program may be required to address. If your child has had an injury or illness that may prevent activity, please call the center. If your child is injured while in our care, parents/guardians will be notified by either a note home, phone call, or through classroom messenger. If the injury is not serious, the staff will report the incident to the parents/ guardians when the child is picked up at the end of the day. In case of serious injury, parents/guardians will be notified immediately by phone.

Program staff are trained in First Aid and CPR and will secure medical and/or emergency treatment for your child in possible emergency situations.

MAJOR INJURIES include: a head injury, a broken bone, severe lacerations, or any other injury that requires a doctor's visit.

MINOR INJURIES include: scratches, bruises, and bumps

If an accident occurs resulting in the injury of a child, staff will complete an incident report. This report will include the name of the child, date of the incident, witnesses, and medical professionals consulted, if applicable. If other children are involved in the incident, they shall not be identified by name in the report. This report will be given to the director to be kept in the center files.

INCIDENTS

An incident includes the following: a child is lost or left unsupervised, alleged sexual contact between children or a child and a staff member or volunteer or physical discipline of a child by a staff member or volunteer.

In the event this occurs, the following will take place:

- Parents will be notified immediately by phone or personal contact
- If deemed appropriate the local authorities will be notified
- LARA agency will be notified using the appropriate reporting form BCAL 4605

STAFF STANDARDS



Certified in First Aid



Certified in CPR



Certified in Blood Borne Pathogens



Certified in Child Abuse Prevention



16+ hours of professional development required each year



Nationwide background check



ICHAT Michigan background check

Pest Management

As required by Michigan law and state child care licensing requirements, each YMCA of Greater Michiana child care program maintains an Integrated Pest Management Program. Families will receive written notification of this pesticide policy each September.

YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA NOTICE OF PESTICIDE USE

Pesticides are periodically applied to school district property or center as part of the pest management program. Please be advised that parents or guardians of children attending the school or day care center are entitled to receive the advance notice of a pesticide application, other than a bait or gel formulation, by first class United States mail postmarked at least 3 days before the pesticide application, if they so request. If you prefer to receive notification by first class mail, please obtain a form from your building director.

General notifications will include:

- A posting will be displayed at the entry point on the facility with at least a 48-hour notification.
- Hand delivered notification through the child's backpack.

Please understand that emergencies do arise and that pesticides may be applied without prior notice to parents or legal guardians. Parents or legal guardians that have requested prior notification, however, will be notified after pesticide application.

Application of pesticides will be performed only by certified or registered applicators where and when required. If a pesticide is applied in a building, students will not occupy the room for at least four hours. Forty-eight hours prior to the time of application notification will be posted near the building's primary point of entry and in a common area of the building. When a pesticide is applied to school district grounds, the application will not be made within 100 feet of occupied classrooms, and flags will be inserted in the ground to mark the application area.

This notice was given in compliance with Regulation 637, as amended by Public Act 131 of 1993.

PARENT NOTIFICATIONS

LICENSING REPORTS

The center keeps a licensing notebook containing a summary sheet, all licensing inspections and special investigations, and related corrective action plans for the last 5 years. The licensing notebook is available to parents/guardians during regular business hours. Reports from at least the past three years are available at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

SAFETY DRILLS

Our programs are required to practice safety drills several times a year for fire evacuation, tornado safety and lockdown drills in accordance with Michigan Child Care Licensing Rules. If our school is evacuated, staff will notify you or another adult on your child's emergency contact form.

DRUG FREE AND SMOKE FREE ZONE

Our facilities and grounds are drug-free and smoke-free zones. Please extinguish cigarettes and properly discard smoking products prior to entering the parking lot and building. This includes chewing tobacco and vapes. Help us stay a drug-free and smoke-free zone by informing anyone who will be escorting your child to and from school of our policy.

CELL PHONE USE

To maintain a calm, focused, and respectful learning environment for our children and staff, we kindly ask that you limit cell phone use while in the building. Conversations can be disruptive to classroom activities or children who may be resting. For this reason, we also ask that parents not enter the building or drop off their child while actively talking on the phone. This time is important for connecting with your child and for helping them transition smoothly into the day. If you need to take a call, please do so outside or in the front lobby next to the main doors. Thank you for helping us keep our center peaceful and distraction-free.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The YMCA of Greater Michiana does not discriminate based on age, sex, race, disability, color, religion, or national origin. No one will be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefit of, or be subject to discrimination during any program or activity or in employment.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

A comprehensive background check is required to be completed in the Michigan Childcare Background Check System (CCBC) on all licensee/licensee designees, program directors, childcare staff, and volunteer staff with unsupervised access to children. Supervised volunteers are required to have a public sex offender registry (PSOR) clearance with results located at the facility. All staff and volunteers are also required to sign abuse and neglect statements.

Any staff member or volunteer who is registered on either the Michigan State Police Public Sex Offender Registry or the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website is strictly prohibited from having contact with any child in care. This prohibition applies to all staff members and volunteers, including supervised volunteers, unsupervised volunteers, and parents volunteering in the program.

- **Unsupervised Volunteers** – Unsupervised volunteers shall provide appropriate care and supervision of children at all times and act in a manner that is conducive to the welfare of children.
- **Supervised Volunteers** – May assist within our program to support activities and classroom experiences. While these individuals are not required to complete a comprehensive background check, all supervised volunteers are screened through the National Sex Offender Registry prior to participating. Volunteers are never left alone with children and will always be under the direct supervision of YMCA staff.

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.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The process of connecting families to community resources involves assessing the family's needs, identifying appropriate resources, providing referrals to those resources, and following up with the family to ensure that their needs have been met. This process may vary depending on the specific community resources and the needs of the family, but in general, it involves a collaborative effort between our program and families to ensure that referrals are made in a respectful, helpful, and safe manner. Resource books are also available in the main Northside office and main entrance.

If you or your family needs extra resources or support, please contact Kristin McKay-Parrish OR Michelle Skalla at 269-683-1982.



berriencountyParentNET.org helps connect parents to the resources in Berrien County that are available to families – whether it be healthcare, schools, fun activities or parenting support. The development of this website has been made possible through a grant given to Berrien County to promote positive parenting through county wide implementation of Triple P (Positive Parenting Program).

Triple P is a program that supports parents by offering simple, practical parenting strategies for a wide range of parenting concerns. TRIPLE P (Positive Parenting Program) can help! Triple P is a program that suggests simple routines and small changes that can make a big difference for families. Every family is different. Yet parents all over the world face problems that are surprisingly similar. The issues you deal with in your home affect families everywhere.

Triple P Positive Parenting helps parents to:

- Create a stable and harmonious family environment
- Encourage behavior they like
- Build positive relationships with their children
- Deal positively, consistently and decisively with problem behavior

STAYING HEALTHY IS VITAL TO SUCCESS

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

HEALTH IMMUNIZATIONS

All students must have a copy of their updated immunization record in their center file before their first day of attendance. If a parent chooses not to have his/her child immunized, an immunization waiver may be obtained through the local health department. A well-child exam must be submitted within the first 30 days of school for continued enrollment. If a well-child exam is not on file by the required date, your child will be dis-enrolled and placed on a waitlist.

MEDICATION POLICY

Medication will be administered to students during the school day only under the following conditions:

- The medication must be in its original container
- The medication must be prescribed by a physician
- The label must include the student's name, date, prescribing doctor's name, dosage, medication name, and complete administration instructions.

A Medication Authorization Form must also be completed and signed by the parent/guardian. This form is available in the Center office and must be submitted before any medication can be administered.

Prescription medication must be in its original packaging, include current date and dosage instructions, and have the child's name clearly labeled on the medication.

A topical ointment form must be filled out for all creams, lotions, and sprays. This form can be picked up from the center director or the building office.

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)



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

IS YOUR CHILD WELL ENOUGH TO COME FOR CARE?

When parents 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.

If a child becomes seriously ill during the day, parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child within 30 minutes. The Center is not qualified to care for seriously ill children. Upon arrival, if a child seems too ill to be at the Center (determined by Center Director or person in charge), parents will be asked to take him or her home. If we disagree about the child's health, please understand that it is a judgment aimed only at trying to keep everyone healthy.

If there is an incidence of lice, chicken pox, or other highly contagious illnesses or infections, the Center will immediately post a notice for your information. Conversely, if your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness we ask that you inform our staff immediately.

A parent will be notified and the child sent home for these reasons:

- Fever over 100.4 degrees (ear) or 99.5 degrees (axillary)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (3 loose stools within an hour)

Child must be symptom free (without medication) for 24 hours to return.



IF CHILD IS NOT ATTENDING

The Center understands that occasionally children will stay home due to sickness, visiting relatives or other unforeseen events. For the safety of your child, we ask that you call the Center either the day before or by 9:00am the day of absence. Please note, you are still responsible for payment of days missed. After the child has missed two consecutive days at the Center, the Center Director or Lead Teacher will contact the parents to make sure the child is okay and planning to return.

A CHILD SHOULD STAY HOME IF EXPERIENCING:

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

*These standards apply for staff and volunteers as well



GUIDELINES FOR RETURNING TO CARE

CONDITION FOR EXCLUSION	CONDITION FOR RETURNING
Temperature greater than 100.4 degrees (ear) or 99.5 degrees (axillary)	Fever free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication)
Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness (such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled 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 the diaper	Diarrhea free for 24 hours
Vomiting	Vomit free for 24 hours and able to eat solid foods or until a 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 makes 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 and nits
Known contagious diseases while still in the communicable stages	Until health care provider determines the condition is noncommunicable

EXCEPTIONS MAY BE MADE AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHILDCARE ADMINISTRATION TEAM

2026 – 2027 CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER

- **Sept 1:** Sept. 1: Ice Cream Social/Meet the Teacher (Angelfish and T/TH Butterflies 4:30–5:30 PM | 3 day and 5-day Butterflies 6:00–7:00PM)
- **Sept 8:** T/TH and 5 day Butterflies first day of school
- **Sept. 9:** MWF Butterflies first day of school
- **Sept. 11:** Angelfish first day of school
- **Sept. 15:** T/TH Butterflies will begin swim lessons
- **Sept. 16:** MWF Butterflies will begin swim lessons

OCTOBER

- **Oct. 27: T/TH Butterflies:** OCT 27 HALLOWEEN PARTY AND WATCH ME SWIM
- **Oct. 28:** MWF/5 DAY HALLOWEEN PARTY AND WATCH ME SWIM
- **Oct. 30:** ANGELFISH HALLOWEEN PARTY
- **TBD** Firetruck and police car visiting preschool classes.
- **TBD** Picture Days

NOVEMBER

- **Nov. 25:** No School/Thanksgiving break begins.
- **Nov. 30:** School resumes

DECEMBER

- **Dec. 15:** T/TH and 5 day Christmas party and watch me swim
- **Dec. 16:** MWF Christmas party and watch me swim
- **Dec. 18:** Angelfish Christmas Party
- **Dec. 18:** last day of school for Christmas Break

JANUARY

- **Jan. 4:** Back to School
- **Jan. 18:** NO SCHOOL for MLK Day

FEBRUARY

- **Feb. 15:** NO SCHOOL – Presidents' Day

MARCH

- **March 1:** Parent teacher conferences begin in the afternoon. (Butterflies)
- **March 2:** no Butterflies class/parent teacher conferences
- **March 3:** no Butterflies class/parent teacher conferences
- **March 29– April 2:** NO SCHOOL for Spring Break.

APRIL

- **April 5:** Back to school

MAY

- **TBA** – Carnival
- **May 14:** Angelfish Graduation
- **May 18:** Butterfly Graduation



FAMILY HANDBOOK RECEIVED

I have received a copy of the BHSJ Youth Center Preschool Handbook and I am aware that the licensing notebook is available for review during regular business hours or access to the reports can be viewed at www.michigan.gov/childcare.

PARENT NOTIFICATION OF THE LSENSING NOTEBOOK

Childcare Organizations Act, 1973 Public Act 116

Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs

Child Care Licensing Bureau

☐

The center keeps a licensing notebook containing a summary sheet, all licensing inspections and special investigations, and related corrective action plans for the last 5 years. The licensing notebook is available to parents/guardians during regular business hours. Reports from at least the past three years are available at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

☐

The center does not keep a licensing notebook, but internet is available onsite. Reports from at least the last three years are available at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.w

I have read the above statement issued by The YMCA of Greater Michiana

CHILD(REN)'S NAME(S):	
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PARENTS NAME: _____

PARENTS SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

LARA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER/PROGRAM



OUR LOCATIONS

Benton Harbor – St. Joseph YMCA
3665 HOLLYWOOD ROAD
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085
269.428.9622

Niles – Buchanan YMCA
905 N. FRONT STREET
NILES, MI 49120
269.683.1552

YMCA O'Brien Center
321 E. WALTER STREET
SOUTH BEND, IN 46614
574.299.3482

YMCA Camp Eberhart
10481 Camp Eberhart Road
Three Rivers, MI 49093
269.244.5125

CHILD CARE NETWORK LOCATIONS

Northside Child Development Center
2020 N. Fifth Street
Niles, MI 49120
269.683.1982

Niles – Buchanan YMCA
905 N. FRONT STREET
NILES, MI 49120
269.683.1552