



CHILD CARE NETWORK **PARENT HANDBOOK**



**NORTHSIDE CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER
YMCA OF GREATER MICHIANA**

Updated August 2025

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.



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 Child Care Network policies and procedures.

This handbook provides important information about the program structure, policies and practices. Parents/Guardians who have questions or concerns regarding their child's participation or any other aspect of programs, are encouraged to visit our campus and talk to friendly, knowledgeable child development staff.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We believe that all children develop emotionally, intellectually, physically and socially. **All areas of development are equally important and affect one another.** Readiness begins now and our desire is to get children ready for each phase of their life.

We also believe that children develop as a result of their interactions with adults, other children and the materials around them. Based on these beliefs, we provide opportunities for children to develop in all domains through interactions individually, with the teacher, other children, and with materials.

Our curriculum is designed to enhance the development of children, to extend their skills and levels of understanding as well as foster **positive self-esteem and positive feelings.**

We encourage parent involvement in children's education. We believe that parents are intricate educators of their children and we strive to enhance parent knowledge about child development and the specific development of their child.

YMCA MISSION + VISION

Our Y is committed to supporting families and children in the Greater Michiana area; the Child Care Network provides a nurturing environment where children feel safe and supported while learning, growing, making friends and preparing for the world. Core values; caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, are implemented daily in everything we do. The Center is committed to youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We have educated, well-trained employees committed to our cause. In fact, if you have a love for children we would be honored to have you join our team!

Our vision is to provide high quality, affordable early education so all children and families can learn, grow and thrive.

CURRICULUM

The Center is committed to the development of individual children, families and communities. Children benefit most from care that keeps them actively engaged through play, physical, mental and emotional activities. There are five components of the Creative Curriculum framework:

1. How children develop and learn
2. The learning environment
3. What children learn
4. Caring and teaching
5. Partnering with families

The four areas of development are social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language. There are many choices in the classroom environment including blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music and movement, and cooking. Children will learn literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, the arts, and process skills.

SECOND STEP PROGRAM: The Second Step program is used to help children succeed in the classroom and throughout their lives. It helps children learn social-emotional skills such as responsible decision making, working together to solve problems, managing strong emotions and getting along with others.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Two assessments are conducted on all children bi-annually. This ongoing process documents and assesses children's knowledge, behaviors and plans for their learning.

Staff assess each child in their classroom environment by documenting observations, collecting samples of work, creating portfolios and taking anecdotal notes. Through intentional observations the teaching staff is able to have a comprehensive picture of the developmental needs of the individual child as well as the classroom as a whole, which will be the basis of planning for small and large group activities.

Staff will conduct conferences with families to discuss the child's progress and together create a plan based on the child's individual needs. If the teaching staff and/or the parents feel there is a need for further formal assessment or assistance based on our evaluation, the Center will provide additional resources or refer the family to the appropriate agency. All results of the assessments are kept confidential.

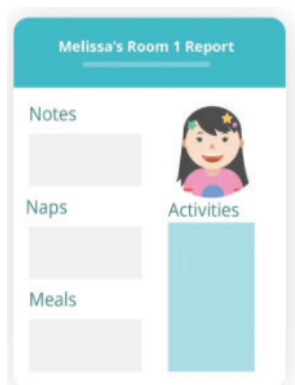
The YMCA Child Care Network incorporates child portfolios as part of our assessment policy. Portfolios are collections of information relating to each child's development progress in an educational setting. Portfolios include: child's biography, self-portrait, family questionnaires, domains, portfolio summaries and child observations.

SPECIAL NEEDS

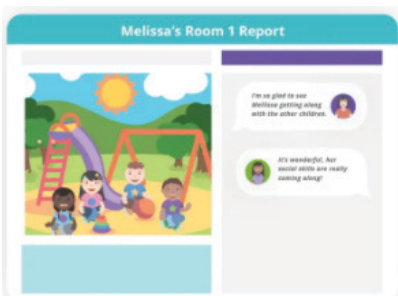
If a child has special needs, please contact the Center so that we can set up a time to talk before the child begins attending our program. We welcome all children at the Center, however, we do not have the capacity to provide one-on-one staffing support and attention. This meeting is designed to exchange 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.



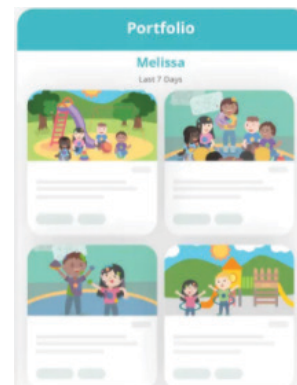
Lillio (formerly HiMama) is an all-in-one childcare mobile app that facilitates open communication with our families. It allows for sharing moments from our programs with parents, providing updates by email, in app, or by text, and giving parents a window into the amazing work our team does. Please reach out to your site director for help downloading or navigating the app.



Stay updated on your child's days with reports that includes activities, meals, naps, bathroom, mood, and more.



Teachers and parents stay connected throughout the day with photos, videos, notes, and more.



Follow your child's journey by tracking milestones and development.



**Download the
Lillio App**

ENROLLMENT PROCESS AND EXPECTATIONS

This information will help you understand the enrollment and payment processes.

Before Enrolling:

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

Paperwork Needed:

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



FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE + 3RD PARTY CHILD CARE CONTRACTS

The Center is firmly committed to access for all, regardless of family financial situations. The amount of financial assistance awarded each year is dependent on the amount of fundraising and donations received each year. We ask that families first apply to DHS at (231) 941-3900 or visit www.ymcagm.org/Childcare-Assistance If families do not qualify, a financial assistance application may be completed with a copy of the DHS denial letter.

Scholarship form must be fully completed with all information included. Allow a minimum of three weeks for processing. All fees apply as normal until the application has been reviewed and approved. All scholarships are subject to availability of funds.

VACATION POLICY

After 6 months of enrollment, families in good financial standing have an opportunity to utilize one complete week of vacation per calendar year. A vacation week allows children to be absent without payment. Vacation days do not roll over. If a child is absent and not utilizing vacation time, payment is due weekly.

To help us serve you best, verbal or written communication needs to be submitted to the Director at least 30 days prior to using your vacation week. In your communication, please specify that you're wanting to use your vacation week rather than just submitting dates your child will be absent. This will help our teachers as well as our billing office process your vacation week more efficiently.

PAYMENT INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Due Dates

- All program payments are due every Friday, before the week of attendance. Parents may pay weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.
- Children will not be allowed to attend program without advance 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

- Payment options are:
 - Credit card
 - Check
 - 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.



PROGRAM DETAILS

3-YEAR-OLD YOUNG EXPLORER'S CHILD CARE/PRESCHOOL

3-year-olds who join us for care in our YEAR ROUND Young Explorer's program will have the added benefit of following a tuition-based preschool program that provides students with enriching educational opportunities that strengthen creative, cognitive, social/emotional, fine and gross motor skills through hands-on activities using creative curriculum. Children must turn **3 by Dec. 1**. See attached copy of daily schedule.

HOURS

Monday-Friday
7:30 AM-5:00 PM

COST

Member \$270/week
Community \$339/week

3-YEAR-OLD MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL

Our program is rooted in the Montessori philosophy, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. This child-centered approach encourages independence, self-motivation, and joyful learning through carefully prepared environments and hands-on exploration. The Montessori method supports growth across all developmental areas—cognitive, social-emotional, and physical—while fostering respect, responsibility, and a deep sense of community. These principles are carried through each classroom, allowing your child to grow confidently as they progress through our program. Children must turn **3 by Dec. 1**. This program follows the school year calendar. Please see attached parent/student calendar. Students in this program will have the option to continue their Montessori experience in our 4-year-old GSRP Montessori classroom.

Monday-Friday

Half Day: 8:20 AM - 12:00 PM

Member \$100/week
Community \$112/week

Full Day: 8:20 AM - 3:20 PM

Member \$182/week
Community \$197/week

Full Day with Pre/Post Care: 7:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Member \$270/week
Community \$339/week

GREAT START READINESS PRESCHOOL

The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is a state-funded center-based preschool program serving eligible 4-year-olds. The goal of GSRP is to provide every preschooler with the best educational opportunities through our childcentered, hands-on curriculum set in a rich learning environment that is created through our families, community, and professional staff. Students must turn **4 by Sep. 1 or by Dec. 1** with age waiver.

GSRP MONDAY-THURSDAY

Half Day: 8:20 AM-12:00 PM
Full Day: 8:20 AM-3:20 PM

GSRP MONDAY-FRIDAY MONTESSORY GSRP MONDAY-FRIDAY

Full Day: 8:20-3:20 PM
Full Day: 8:20-3:20 PM

For GSRP questions, contact Michelle Skalla at mskalla@ymcagm.org



DROP-OFF TIME

Northside Child Development Center, 7:30–9:00 AM

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

- Children must be **signed-in by staff upon arrival.**
- **Children must be escorted by the parent/guardian into the Center.**
- **We ask that children arrive at the center no later than 9:00 AM** to ensure they fully benefit from the program, but also for staffing ratio purposes. We understand that occasional conflicts may occur (medical appointments, transportation difficulties, etc.). When these do occur, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to call the Center, or message/notify via the Lillio app before 9:00 AM to inform the staff of a child's late arrival or absence.
- Individual arrangements can be made with the Center Director for parents/guardians whose children cannot arrive at the Center by 9:00am on a regular basis.
- The YMCA of Greater Michiana does NOT provide transportation.

Note: Please do not allow your child to enter the Center while eating any food.

PICK UP TIME

Northside Child Development Center, 4:00–5:00 PM

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

- Parents/guardians picking up children will be **signed in & out via Lillio app by staff member.**
- Older siblings may pick up younger siblings, but they **must be at least 18 years of age.**
- Children will be released **only to those persons listed on the Child Information Record** as authorized to pick up by the parent/guardian. If you are picking your child up, please be prepared to show ID.
- If the parent/guardian wants to change the pick up person over the phone, **the new person must show proof of identification.** The parent/guardian **must sign a written permission** for the new person at the first available time.
- If a parent/guardian or person authorized to pick up a child is intoxicated or substance impaired when they come to the Center, staff will offer to call another person to transport them. If the person insists on leaving, they will be informed the police will be called about an intoxicated or substance impaired driver leaving our premises. Additionally, Child Protective Services will be called.
- If the pickup person does not have a proper car seat in their vehicle, staff are legally obligated to hold the child at the Center.
- The YMCA of Greater Michiana provides transportation only for GSRP 4-year-olds.

LATE PICK UP PROCEDURE

We respectfully ask that children be picked up no later than 5:00 PM. If a situation arises where you will be late, contact the Center Director 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.

CENTER CLOSURES

The Center will be closed on the following federal holidays: New Year's Break (December 31-January 2), Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Thanksgiving. Christmas Break will be December 22-26, and Black Friday will be a professional development day and the center will be closed. Tuition is not affected by holidays as it is charged on a weekly, not daily, basis.

Additionally, the Center will be closed Monday, September 2 (Labor Day). We will reopen on Tuesday, September 3.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The YMCA Child Care Network will be closed at the discretion of the CEO and communicated via Center staff. The Northside location will open at 8:00 AM when Niles Community Schools is closed for inclement weather (snow days)



DISCIPLINE POLICY

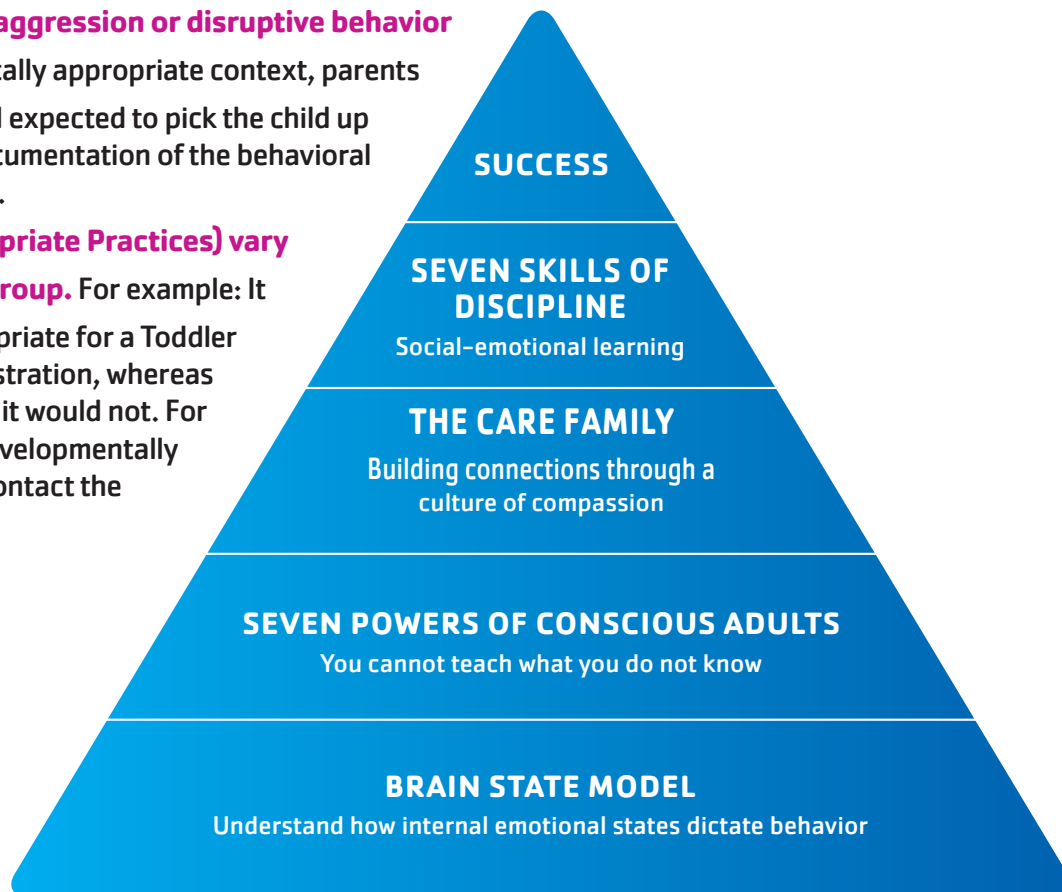
POSITIVE REDIRECTION

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. Below is the diagram of the Conscious Discipline model we use to help children be successful.

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 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.



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 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.

PROHIBITED



Physical
or verbal
punishment



Withdrawal
of food, rest
or bathroom



Abusive
or profane
language



Humiliation
or isolation

STAFF RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN OUTSIDE OF PROGRAM

We understand that good quality childcare is hard to find, and some parents may be interested in having staff members provide child care services outside of business hours. While we do not restrict our employees from providing outside services, each staff member and family is required to sign a waiver, **prior to outside services being rendered**, acknowledging YMCA employees are not affiliated with the YMCA outside of business 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 school.

If your child is injured while in our care, parents/guardians will be notified by either a note home or a phone call. If the injury is more than a minor issue, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately. If parents/guardians are not available, another adult listed on the child's emergency information form will be contacted.

Program staff are trained in First Aid and CPR and will secure medical and/or emergency surgical 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, bumps – parents will receive real-time updates on our app for any minor injury.

When the Center observes changes in a child's health, a child experiences accidents, major injuries or incidents, or is too ill to remain in the group, parents will be notified immediately via phone.

INCIDENTS

An incident includes, but is not limited to, the following: A child is lost or left unsupervised. Alleged sexual contact between children or a child and a staff member or volunteer. Physical discipline of a child by a staff member or volunteer. In the event this occurs

- 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

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 copy of their updated immunization records in their Center files before their first day of attendance. Infants and toddlers need updated records every year. Preschoolers need updated records every 2 years.

If any changes occur to the child's immunization records, an updated copy must be filed with the Center. Please submit a copy of these immunization records with all registration materials. Children will be unable to attend child care programs without these records.

If a parent chooses not to have his/her child immunized, an immunization waiver, obtained through the local health department, must be signed and kept in the child's file at the center yearly.

The Center will notify parents via email when a student's health appraisal and immunizations will expire and when a new copy must be on file. If an updated copy is not on file by the required date, your child will be disenrolled and placed back on the waitlist.

MEDICATION

ONLY prescription medicine will be administered to children, no over-the-counter medication is administered unless you can provide a doctor's note with permission and dosage amounts. All medication must be in the original container with a medical form completed and on file. Staff must document the date, time and dosage as well as sign their name on a medication administration form every time the medication is given.

A topical ointment form must be filled out for all creams, lotions, and sprays (diaper cream, sunscreen, bug repellent, lotion, etc.). This form can be picked up from the center director.

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 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 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 strep or other contagious infections less than 24 hours
6. Are too "out of sorts" to participate in class activities
7. 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

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

- We use positive reinforcement and lots of encouragement
- We will follow your home routine as closely as possible (timing, vocabulary, etc.)
- 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 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

To view a copy of the Child Care Licensing Rules and Statutes for Michigan please visit www.michigan.gov/lara/bureau-list/rules