



# Family Handbook

## **Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center**

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This Family Handbook is subject to periodic review and revision by the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center. Policies and/or procedures may be changed as circumstances demand. Updates/revisions to the handbook will be published and distributed to families.

These materials were funded in whole or in part under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP).

## About Us

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Thank you for choosing the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center, and welcome. We realize that finding the right early learning environment for your family is one of the most significant decisions you will ever make. We are honored that you have placed your trust in us.

We hope you will grow to love the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center and find a welcoming fit within its “family.” We also hope you will be with us for many years to come and that we will be able to grow with your family. This document is intended to serve as your guide to center policies, expectations, and protocols. If you have further questions, please contact our Program Director.

### OUR MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The YMCA of Metropolitan Lansing’s mission is to put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all. The Y is—and always will be—dedicated to building healthy, confident, connected, and secure children, adults, families, and communities. Our mission at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center is to provide a safe, nurturing, and age-appropriate environment that encourages individual growth.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center believes that each child is unique and has his/her own way of learning. Our program will provide a high-quality environment that will enrich the developmental needs of children through a variety of learning experiences. Our mission is to provide a safe, nurturing, and age-appropriate environment that encourages individual growth. Our vision is to provide high-quality, affordable early education so all children can learn, grow, and thrive.

### CHILD CARE LICENSING INFORMATION

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center is licensed by the Child Care Licensing Bureau of the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs.

| License Number | License Status | License Expiration Date |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| DC330018314    | Regular        | 4/18/27                 |

Our licensing notebook is located in the Program Director’s office and is available for anyone to review during regular business hours. The notebook contains all the licensing inspections, special investigation reports, and related corrective action plans. Licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports, and corrective action plans from at least the past three years are available on the department’s childcare licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).

### OUR COMMITMENT TO NONDISCRIMINATION

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center provides equal enrollment, employment, and service opportunities to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, marital status, membership in any labor organization, political affiliation, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law.

### ***USDA Nondiscrimination Statement***

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. email:

[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

We are an equal opportunity provider.

# Our Program

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## HOURS OF OPERATION

We are open for childcare from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Children should be dropped off by 9am each day unless discussed with the program director beforehand.

## LATE PICK-UP POLICY

We respectfully ask that children be picked up on time. If a situation arises where you will be late, contact the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center as soon as possible.

To encourage that children be picked up on time, and to allow staff to get home to their families, a late pick-up fee is charged when families arrive after 5:30 p.m.: \$10.00 for any of the first five minutes and \$5.00 for each subsequent five-minute period after 5:35 p.m. Late pick-up fees are added to the account and must be paid in the next payment cycle.

## HOLIDAYS AND STAFF IN-SERVICE

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center operates year-round. We are closed all major holidays as well as 5 days a year for staff training. Please see your child's classroom for the list of days we are closed for the year.

We will poll families prior to other major holidays and days adjacent to holidays, to determine whether we will close or combine classrooms on days not listed here.

***Tuition is due for each day a child is enrolled in Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center, whether enrolled on a full-time or part-time schedule. There is no tuition credit for sick days, holidays, scheduled and unexpected closings, or vacation days.***

## UNEXPECTED CLOSINGS

If **the Oak Park YMCA** is closed for inclement weather, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will be closed as well. Families will be notified by text and email as soon as practical in such a case.

We make every effort to keep our children and staff healthy and safe, so please be aware that Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center may also close for unforeseen circumstances, including (but not limited to):

- When we lose power, heat, or water for an extended period of time.
- When we are unable to maintain state teacher-to-student ratios.
- When the Health Department or licensing agency determines there is the threat of a contagious disease or illness.

If the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will be closed for any of these emergencies, the administrative team will make every effort to notify families in advance, via text, email, and social media.

## CHILD SAFETY

### *Sign-in / Sign-out Procedures*

Families must bring children to the appropriate classroom and notify a teacher that the child has arrived by signing the daily roster. Similarly, when the child and parent/guardian are departing at the end of the day, the families must notify staff on the roster. Families are required to sign each child in and out every day with the accurate time of drop-off or pick-up. Daily rosters are used to ensure all children are accounted for when the children move from the classroom to the playground or other areas in the facility; **these rosters are required by Michigan's childcare licensing agency.**

A child will be permitted to leave the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center only with those adults indicated on the Child Information Record. Members of the administrative staff review the picture identification of any individual other than the parent/guardian before releasing the child, and classroom staff may request picture identification as well. If your family has a unique custodial situation, we must have legal documentation on file. Please notify the Program Director of any changes or updates to custody agreements or other legal documentation.

After a child is signed out at the end of the day, they are the responsibility of the family and are no longer in the care of the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff members, even if they are in the building or on the premises.

It is important that families contact the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center if their child will not be in attendance or will be unusually late. As a courtesy to families, Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center may check in with families if their children are absent without notice, to assure that the child is safe.

### *Emergency Procedures*

Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff members are trained in emergency procedures when they are hired, and updated training is conducted for all staff each year. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center conducts practice drills for what to do in case of a missing child, active violence, or the need for a lockdown. In addition, fire and tornado drills are conducted on a regular basis to prepare children and teach them how to be safe in such a crisis. Each classroom is equipped with an emergency kit and a binder containing our site emergency plan. This plan is available to families upon request at any time.

If it is necessary to evacuate the building for a real emergency, families will be notified to come and pick up their children. The Program Director is the emergency response chief and is accountable to all families in these situations.

Our emergency response policy extends to circumstances where a child's parent/guardian appears to be too impaired to safely get the child home. In cases such as this, the staff member alerts the Program Director who will manage the situation either by contacting one of the adults designated on the emergency information form or alerting the police.

### ***Child Abuse and Neglect***

All staff members at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center are mandated by [Michigan law](#) to report any suspected child abuse and neglect. If an Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center employee suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, they are obligated to report their suspicions to Child Protective Services.

## **CLASSROOM STAFF**

### ***Teacher-Student Ratios***

Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center offers age-appropriate group sizes. Each classroom maintains teacher-student ratios according to the standards of state licensing requirements.

| Age Group                                        | State Licensing Ratios |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Infants and Toddlers (ages 6 weeks to 35 months) | 1:4                    |
| Jr. Preschool (ages 2.5 – 3)                     | 1:8                    |
| Preschool (ages 3 – 4)                           | 1:10                   |
| Pre-Kindergarten (ages 4 – 5)                    | 1:12                   |

### ***Classroom Staff***

All our staff members strive to:

- Provide a safe, healthy, nurturing, and challenging learning environment.
- Encourage discovery-learning and exploration of the world around us.
- Promote a positive sense of self-worth in children.
- Promote a sense of mastery, trust, and autonomy to the children.
- Advance children's physical, intellectual, and academic competence.
- Support children's social and emotional development.
- Establish positive and productive relationships with families.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center lead teachers are qualified personnel who meet the YMCA standards of holding a college degree or meet the necessary licensing qualifications. Assistant teachers are over the age of 18 and meet the necessary licensing requirements.

In addition, all staff are trained in child abuse prevention, infant/child CPR, basic first aid, bloodborne pathogens, playground safety, and safe sleep, and they complete at least 16 hours of continuing education each calendar year.

## **STAFF AND VOLUNTEER SCREENING POLICY**

All staff and volunteers are screened in the following manner prior to hire:

- Interview with Program Director, and/or a teacher or other administrator, to determine suitability for work with and around children at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.

- Professional reference checks (minimum of three) to confirm prospective employee is a responsible adult with the maturity and knowledge necessary to work with children at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.
- Completion of screening process:
  - Prospective staff members must be approved in the comprehensive Child Care Background Check system, which includes fingerprinting and a review of the public sex offender registry (PSOR).
  - Prospective volunteers, including volunteers who are families of a child in care, must pass a review of the PSOR.
    - NOTE: any individual registered on the PSOR is prohibited from having contact with any child in care.

Prior to having any unsupervised contact with children, all caregiving employees and volunteers receive a formal orientation, delivered by the Program Director, covering:

- Our philosophy, policies, and practices (including health and emergency practices);
- [Child Care Center Licensing Rules](#); and
- Facility and grounds tour.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS**

Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff work together collaboratively to plan, implement, and maintain a learning environment that supports the philosophy and goals of the program and that helps children manage their behavior and transitions. The staff choices reflect an understanding of children's developmental characteristics and individual needs and interests. The environment is safe, stimulating, predictable, and organized. Children's work is regularly displayed (at child eye level when possible) and used to revisit and extend their learning. A caring community of respect for the needs, abilities, and interests of each person (children, staff, and families) is of utmost priority. Teaching staff works to create and maintain a setting in which children of differing abilities, home and community contexts, and values are respected and integrated to form a cohesive community of learners. Teachers work to create, offer, and explore opportunities for children to participate in and respect.

Teachers individualize behavior management and learning plans and involve parents in decision-making on behalf of each child. One of the program's goals is to create an environment that is home-like, aesthetically pleasing, and orderly. Classroom arrangements include areas for small group, large group, and individual activities. Each classroom contains soft seating elements and an area where a child can go to be alone when needed or desired. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center believes that children need an orderly environment and careful placement of materials to develop responsibility and independence.

### ***Infant Program***

The program for infants is designed to provide a warm, predictable environment in which each child's uniqueness is respected. The program is structured to promote relationships of trust and

attachment between caregivers and babies, and to provide individualized care consistent with each child's home environment.

Each infant is assigned to a "primary caregiver." This provides continuity of one relationship and allows the teacher to form a special bond with the child and family. While all the teachers that care for the children work to form effective relationships with the children and families, having a "primary caregiver" provides the teacher and family the opportunity to create a special bond that results in strong communication.

There are opportunities each day for caregivers to interact alone with each baby, for babies to interact with each other, and for babies to have time alone to observe and process experiences without the interference of direct adult interaction (although they are always being supervised by sight and sound).

Daily experiences are individualized to stimulate and challenge each baby's physical, cognitive and socio-emotional development. Specific activities are planned for each child and integrated into the daily routine, in the following areas: large motor, fine motor, sensory and perceptual, cognitive, language, and social. Diapering, feeding, and dressing are used as opportunities to encourage development and interaction. Outdoor experiences provide outlets for curiosity and excitement.

Families are provided a daily note concerning their infant's day which includes:

- Activities that the child engaged in throughout the day, including which books and songs were used
- Number, time, and type of diaper changes
- Feeding and sleep schedules
- Overall disposition throughout the day

Families are requested to bring the following items for their infant (**please label everything with the child's first and last names**):

- The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center adheres to the nutrition requirements specified in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program, which means we provide iron-fortified formula for infant meals. If families prefer to provide breast milk or their own formula/baby food, families should bring bottles and "baby" food sufficient for the day. All food and bottles should be dated and labeled with the child's first and last name (initials are NOT acceptable).
- Diapers sufficient for the day (we recommend that at least a week's supply of diapers be left at the center), and diaper cream, if applicable.
- Appropriate outdoor protection and clothing, including a sun hat and sunscreen (infants over six months).
- At least three complete changes of clothing (check each day for soiled or wet items).
- Frozen breast milk (if applicable) for emergency use.
- Sleep sack.

Feeding of infants is structured as a special time in which each baby and his or her caregiver have time to be together. Our practice is to hold young infants while giving bottles unless alternate arrangements are made with a family to meet the needs of the infant. Older infants may sometimes hold their own bottle depending on the individual and the situation. Caregivers work together with families to introduce solid and/or table food. Snacks are provided by the center for infants eating solid food.

### ***Toddler Program***

The program for toddlers provides a comfortable and stimulating environment that encourages the development of independence and exploration critical to this developmental stage. Children in the toddler program range in age from approximately 14 months to 2.5 years. Children are ready to move from infant care to toddler care when they can walk, eat solid foods well (e.g., they are done bottle feeding), and get by on one nap per day (after lunch).

Each toddler is assigned to a “primary caregiver.” This provides continuity of one relationship and allows the teacher to form a special bond with the child and family. While all the teachers caring for the children work to form effective relationships with the children and families, having a “primary caregiver” provides the teacher and family the opportunity to create a special bond that results in strong communication.

There is a balance of group and individualized activities (typically arranged around themes) designed to foster language development, peer interaction, development of small and large motor skills, and sensory/perceptual development. Daily experiences are planned to stimulate each child’s physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

Based on each child’s readiness, teachers encourage children to feed themselves, dress themselves, and play both independently and cooperatively. Toilet training is planned on an individual basis; staff members work with families to ensure consistency between home and the center.

- Daily notes are provided for toddler families regarding their child’s day with information that includes:
- Activities and projects your child engaged in during the day, including both independent and teacher-directed activities.
- Eating, sleeping, and toilet habits.
- Toddler’s disposition throughout the day.

Families are requested to bring the following items to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center (please label everything with the child’s first and last name):

- Appropriate outdoor protection and clothing, including sunglasses, sun hat, and non-aerosol sunscreen labeled with child’s first and last name.
- One nap blanket.
- At least two complete changes of clothing.

- Diapers sufficient for the day (we recommend that at least a week's supply of diapers be left at The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center), and diaper cream if applicable.

***Please do not bring toys from home.*** Toys brought from home are difficult for children to share and may become lost or broken. However, children may bring books or CDs to share with the group, or special nap/quiet-time toys such as stuffed animals or dolls. Children will not be allowed to play with toy guns or other toy weapons at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.

### ***Preschool Program***

The program for preschoolers is individualized within the group setting so that children can work at specific developmentally appropriate skills as part of the larger group activity. Preschool ages vary widely—classes are for children who range in age from two-and-a-half to five years old, so programming will vary based on the specific developmental group. The prominent philosophy in preschool classrooms is play-based learning using investigation and projects. The curriculum provides a range of developmental levels in language, social, cognitive, creative, and motor skills that are administered through various enjoyable activities. The physical environment and daily routines are planned to provide learning options for any activity in which a child may be engaged, and it is the function of the teaching staff to develop and extend learning situations within any of a child's activities.

Preschool children will be encouraged to develop:

- Language skills through guided and spontaneous interactions.
- Social skills, by participating in large and small group activities, and interactions with classmates and other children at The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.
- Fine and gross motor skills, using small manipulative materials, large climbing equipment, and directed experiences in creative movement and motor skills.
- Independence in daily living skills.
- Concepts of quantity, causality, and spatial relations through directed exploration and experimentations.
- Writing and reading skills, appropriate to development interest level.
- Kindergarten readiness skills for all pre-K children.

Families of children in the preschool program receive communication through daily conversations with teaching staff and periodic newsletters.

Families are requested to bring the following items to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center (please label everything with the child's first and last name):

- Appropriate outdoor protection and clothing, including sunglasses, sun hat, and non-aerosol sunscreen labeled with child's first and last name.
- A complete change of clothing.
- A nap blanket.

***Please do not bring toys from home.*** Toys brought from home are difficult for children to share and may become lost or broken. However, children may bring books or CDs to share with the group, or special nap/quiet-time toys such as stuffed animals or dolls. Children will not be allowed to play with toy guns or other toy weapons at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.

### ***Typical Daily Routine***

Although each classroom has a posted schedule of activities, there is a similar pattern throughout. Families should plan for their children to be at the center between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. in order to take full advantage of the educational opportunities and physical activities.

|                         |                                                                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:30 – 9:00 a.m.        | Child drop-off, breakfast in rooms, free choice activities                |
| 9:00 – 11:30 a.m.       | Lesson activities (small group, large group, etc.) and outdoor/gym time   |
| 11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. | Lunch                                                                     |
| 12:15 – 2:45 p.m.       | Nap/quiet time                                                            |
| 2:45 – 3:15 p.m.        | Afternoon snack                                                           |
| 3:15 – 4:00 p.m.        | Lesson activities (small group, large group, etc.) and outdoor/gym time   |
| 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.        | Child pick-up, free choice activities (may include playground, gym, etc.) |

## **CURRICULUM**

As an early care and education program, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center strives to provide high-quality learning opportunities for children. In all the classrooms we use Creative Curriculum, a research-based, whole-child approach to education. By fostering all aspects of the child, we prepare them for success in school and life. This curriculum incorporates guidance for individualized instruction, helping teachers meet the needs of all learners. It also encourages meaningful partnerships with families, an essential practice that integrates family and school collaborations.

Weekly lesson plans are posted in each room to inform families of the range of fun, age-appropriate activities designed to challenge and support growth in learning domains (social/emotional, cognitive, language, dramatic play, art, and gross and fine motor skills). Consistent daily routines help support a child's emotional comfort and promote opportunities to learn in a hands-on, play-based environment.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center is committed to the development of individual children, families, and communities. Creating an environment for preschoolers, infants, and toddlers that matches their developing abilities and interests requires careful observation and thoughtful planning. The goal for teachers is to thoughtfully plan the environments that send a message to the child, "This is a place where I can play, have fun, and be happy."

Children will have space to store their artwork and personal possessions. The classroom is arranged into learning areas and may include library/quiet area, blocks, art, table toys, sand and water, math, cooking, science, music and movement, dramatic play, literacy, and computer science. Materials are arranged on low shelves so children can easily and independently select them. Picture labels are placed on containers and shelves so children will learn where materials

belong. Interest areas offer a carefully selected variety of learning materials so that no matter where a child chooses to play, they are learning.

### ***Developmental Screening***

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center uses a combination of methods to monitor and assess each child's progress. When a child enters a new classroom, teachers use a screening tool called the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) to establish a baseline for their overall development and performance in a variety of skills. We will often invite a child's family to complete the same questionnaire on their own child, which then gives the teachers and parents a focus for discussion around how observations are made and how best to communicate those observations routinely and not only during formal parent-teacher conferences.

Developmental screening is the practice of systematically looking for and monitoring signs that a young child may be delayed in one or more areas of development. Screening is not meant to establish a diagnosis for the child, but rather to help professionals determine whether more in-depth assessment is the next step. In most cases, screening rules out the likelihood that further assessment is needed.

### ***Social-Emotional Development***

We use ASQ for screening in all areas of development, including social-emotional development. According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, positive social and emotional development and learning in the early years provides an important foundation for lifelong learning and development, including mental health.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center incorporates friendship skills, emotional literacy, self-regulation, anger management, and problem-solving into every aspect of the curriculum so that all children can learn and practice these important skills. Children often exhibit behaviors that can be challenging to adults when they don't have words or skills to let others know what they want or need. Our staff receive routine training on how to teach social and emotional skills that can help children to efficiently use words and actions to get their needs met.

## **TRANSITIONING TO OLDER CLASSROOMS**

To prepare children for the cadence of elementary school, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center typically conducts classroom transitions as needed. We always follow the best interest of your child's development and progress. We determine whether your child is ready to transition to the next classroom based on their age and social emotional skills. Our age groups are aligned to give your child the optimal experience with each classroom full of caregivers. Refer to the tuition pricing chart for classroom ages.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips offsite are uncommon, but they may be planned according to availability and around certain themes. A family's written permission for the child's participation in field trips must be obtained at the time of enrollment and before each field trip and kept on file at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.

We often take walks around the grounds as part of our outdoor time. These excursions are not considered to be field trips and do not require written permission.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS AND PICTURE DAYS**

Periodically, we take candid photos of the children participating in different YMCA activities. We may also share pictures of our classrooms through a private social media group. Please understand that these pictures may be displayed in a presentation or used in flyers, brochures, and other publications concerning YMCA programs. If you prefer that your child's photograph not be used, please indicate this on the photo release form included in the enrollment packet.

In addition, we hold "school picture days" in the fall and spring. Families are notified in advance, and are under no obligation to purchase pictures when they come in.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center strives to respond to the needs of all children and families by providing a positive learning environment for all children enrolled in the program regardless of ability, special needs, or learning style, and we work with families whose children require special accommodations to meet their needs and allow children the opportunity to participate in their least restrictive environment. We will provide these accommodations to the greatest extent possible without undue hardship on the program. We may find that our program does not fit a child's needs. If behaviors or the developmental needs of a child exceed our early childhood knowledge, or if they prevent us from maintaining the mandatory teacher-child ratio, we will meet with families to discuss alternatives such as outside intervention. Appropriate efforts will be made with the family to determine the best course of action for all involved. A plan will be developed which may involve one or more of the following:

- Changing classroom placement.
- Recommending to the family that they seek outside help.
- Assistance with a referral to the local ISD.
- Recommending to the family that they seek another program that more closely meets the child's needs.

If the above steps fail to resolve the issue, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center reserves the right to make the final decision on whether continued enrollment is advisable. The center will provide the family with a two-week notice, except where such notice is not reasonable because of safety concerns. Center staff will offer to assist the family in obtaining alternative care.

## **DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY**

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center is committed to providing culturally competent and responsive experience. Our program adheres to a strict non-discrimination policy in both employment and enrollment, and our teachers are dedicated to providing a learning environment that is relevant to all children who are currently enrolled, and to their families. Annual training on issues related to diversity and appropriate practice helps the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center teachers to continually grow in their practice.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center knows that in order to be culturally relevant and responsive in the classroom, communication with families is paramount. We recognize that the backbone of a strong relationship with both children and families relies on an ability to communicate in ways that are most meaningful to each family and child. We strive to communicate with families in a variety of ways including home and program surveys, direct teacher communication, emails, and newsletters.

We welcome families to be a part of the classroom, sharing traditions with the children and teachers. Our staff is comprised of diverse individuals that offer different experiences and uniqueness to support the framework of acceptance and understanding of one another that not only is seen in the building but also in the community.

## **QUALITY RATING**

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center has an **Enhancing Quality - Validated** rating from Michigan's Great Start to Quality Initiative. Programs at this quality level set goals and receive coaching and consultation to evaluate their practices using research-based standards.

# Admission, Attendance, and Withdrawal Policies

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## ADMISSION POLICY

Children may be enrolled at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center throughout the year. The admission procedure, as space allows, is as follows:

Children aged six weeks to five years are accepted for care on either a full-time or part-time basis.

- **Full-time care** is defined as care that is delivered *four or five* days per week.
- **Part-time care** is defined as care that is delivered *two or three* days per week.
- Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center does *not* offer care for the following schedules:
  - drop-in care,
  - just one day per week,
  - just morning or afternoon care.

Children are selected for enrollment on a first-come-first-served basis when they submit an enrollment form (with fee, if required) for vacancies within the appropriate age/development groupings at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center. Occasionally, when more people wish to enroll than there are spaces for, there is a waiting list organized by date of application and age of child. Selection for enrollment is made as quickly as possible to allow families time to prepare for the transition into the program.

The admission procedure, as space allows, is as follows:

- The parents/guardians meet with the Program Director to tour the center and review center operation, policies, programming, etc. This tour includes time in one of the classrooms to meet the staff and observe the center “in action.” A tour packet is provided to the family, which includes instructions for submitting an enrollment application.
  - When completing the application, a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$100 must be submitted.
  - If there is space available in the program of their choice, the family is contacted to determine an enrollment date and schedule classroom visits.
- State regulations require that the emergency information and immunization records be completed and on file by the first day a child is in attendance without a parent/guardian. The Health Appraisal Form must be on file no later than 30 days after the first day of attendance. The Child Information Record must be updated at least annually so we are able to contact families in an emergency.
- An intake meeting with the classroom teachers *may* be arranged for families to ease the child’s transition into the program.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center is a high-quality preschool program that builds early literacy and math skills and develops the social and emotional foundation children need to persist

in school. But young children only receive the full effect of these benefits if they show up for class regularly. Developing a habit of good attendance is a key component of school readiness.

Each classroom posts its daily schedule for families to view. Generally, it is best to bring children to the center by 9 a.m. and leave them there until at least 3:45 p.m. to get the most out of our program. Families are required to call the center if their child will be significantly late (or absent altogether), as late drop-offs disrupt the curriculum for other students.

### **WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

A two-week written notice or email message must be provided to the Program Director by the family before withdrawing a child from the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center. Tuition will be charged for this two-week period even if the child does not attend.

### **DISENROLLMENT AND DISMISSAL GUIDELINES**

A family may be asked to leave the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center for any of the following reasons, although there may be others. Each disenrollment/dismissal will be handled on an individual basis by the Program Director.

- The child and/or family are not adjusting to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.
- The family and/or child is disrupting the safety or well-being of children and/or staff.
- Families have not completed and returned required enrollment forms promptly.
- Families are not engaging in the program.
- Nonpayment or habitual late payment of tuition or fees.
- Habitual late pick-ups.

## Tuition and Fee Policies

Tuition is paid to secure the space within our program and is due for each enrolled child. Although tuition rates are calculated by the day or week, there is no tuition credit for sick days, holidays, or days the center is closed.

Tuition is to be paid weekly, in advance of the care received. Tuition may be paid using credit/debit card, or e-check. Families are strongly encouraged to pay by auto-withdrawal from a bank account or credit card.

### ANNUAL ENROLLMENT FEE

Upon initial enrollment, a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$100 per child must be submitted. Subsequent enrollment fees of \$100 per child will be applied to family accounts each year in early September, coinciding with routine classroom transitions.

### FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME TUITION RATES

| Ages                                                                                   | Schedule             | Weekly Tuition | Fees                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Infant & Toddler (6 weeks to 35 months)                                                | Full-time (4-5 days) | \$299          | A non-refundable \$100/year registration fee is due at the time of registering for the Child Care Program.<br><br>Your child is not enrolled or guaranteed a spot until this form and fee are returned. |
|                                                                                        | Part-time (3 days)   | \$224          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                        | Part-time (2 days)   | \$179          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Preschool (36 to 48 months)                                                            | Full-time (4-5 days) | \$262          | Your child is not enrolled or guaranteed a spot until this form and fee are returned.                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                                        | Part-time (3 days)   | \$197          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                                                                                        | Part-time (2 days)   | \$158          |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| School-age Program (summers, holiday break, spring break; post-kindergarten to age 11) | Full-time (4-5 days) | \$236          | A non-refundable \$50/week registration fee is due at the time of registering for the School-age Program.                                                                                               |

### TUITION ASSISTANCE

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center accepts all forms of tuition assistance allowed under Michigan law, including employer-paid assistance, scholarships from the state's Office of Child Development and Care (CDC), and grants from institutions of higher education and other organizations. Such payments are applied directly to family accounts, reducing or eliminating the amount owed by the family. Our administrative staff will calculate whether the family will be responsible for any portion of tuition and will communicate the payment schedule to the family.

The Y is firmly committed to access for all, regardless of family financial situations, and the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center strives to provide scholarships to those in need. The amount of financial assistance awarded each year from the Y is dependent on the amount of fundraising and donations received.

To be eligible, families must first apply to Michigan's Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) at [www.michigan.gov/miBridges](http://www.michigan.gov/miBridges). If families do not qualify, a YMCA financial assistance form may be completed with a copy of the MDHHS denial letter. Those families that do qualify

will be asked to fill out additional documents as required for enrollment. Scholarship forms must be fully completed with all information included. All fees apply as normal until the application has been reviewed and approved. All scholarships are subject to availability of funds.

Difficulties in complying with any policy regarding tuition or fees due to extreme or unforeseen hardships should be addressed in writing to the Program Director.

### **LATE PAYMENT POLICY**

A late fee of \$25.00 is assessed if a tuition payment is not received by the due date. This would apply if a credit/debit card is declined.

### HEALTHY EATING & FOOD SERVICE POLICY

The YMCA considers healthy eating to be a fundamental component of everything we do in the community. For this reason, our staff receive routine training in identifying, preparing, consuming, and serving healthy foods. We encourage our staff to make good choices in their own eating patterns, and to model healthy habits to all the youth in our programs. Our youngest children are no exception, and good nutrition is incorporated into the curriculum of our early learning programs.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center participates in the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which requires us to plan and follow guidelines of high nutrition for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers; it also requires us to collect a Child Enrollment Form annually from families of each child at the center. All children with special dietary requirements will be fed to meet their individual needs. There is no fee for meals or snacks provided by the center. Menus are posted in each classroom, and all substitutions will be noted on it.

**For Infants:** The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center provides appropriate types and sufficient quantities of iron-fortified infant formula (Similac) and infant solid food for all meals and snacks served to infants at the center. Families may elect to provide their own breast milk, formula, and/or solid foods to be served to their child if they have so indicated on the Food Sign-Off Statement that accompanies the Child Enrollment Form; if none is provided, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will feed the child appropriately and notify the parent/guardian.

**For Toddlers/Preschoolers:** The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center provides appropriate types and sufficient quantities of food and milk for breakfast, lunch, and one snack served to toddlers and preschoolers.

Children's eating behaviors and attitudes towards food are formed early in life and influence their health and nutrition throughout their life. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center fosters social interaction, positive adult modeling, and relaxed mealtime experiences for toddlers and preschoolers by serving food in individual classrooms. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat food that is served. This allows children to recognize and utilize their internal cues about satiety and food preferences.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center recognizes that positive adult food behavior modeling influences children's attitudes and feelings towards food. The center's staff members regularly receive training in nutrition practices to prevent childhood obesity. Portion-size charts are posted in each classroom, and staff members are encouraged to serve appropriate amounts of food to children regardless of how much food the family sends in. Food and portion size preferences expressed by the family are honored to the greatest extent practical.

A fresh variety of food is ordered and delivered regularly to our center. Our kitchen functions as the main food storage and preparation area. Classrooms contain separate refrigerators and small

prep spaces for convenience and sanitation. Our facility is licensed and maintains a high standard of cleanliness, and staff are regularly trained in licensing standards.

## **ALLERGY-AWARE POLICY**

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center maintains an ALLERGY-AWARE facility where children who have a range of allergies and food sensitivities receive care and special protection to the greatest extent possible. The following guidelines are followed throughout the center and with the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center children when they are away from the building for a field trip.

- Allergy accommodations will be made on a room-by-room basis if the condition is life threatening. For example, in a classroom which includes a child with a severe nut allergy, no nut products will be allowed.
- In the case of an allergy so severe that it is dangerous for the child to touch small amounts of the food or breathe in its odor, staff will take reasonable precautions outside the classroom with the understanding that complete protection is not possible. An allergy action plan will be developed in conjunction with the family's physician for any child with severe allergies.
- Allergies that pose a major health risk will be communicated in writing to all other families in the classroom, and notices will be posted on classroom doors and other locations around the room as needed.

### ***Family Participation in Allergy Management***

The most important step in ensuring the safety of allergic children is communication. Communication from the family of the allergic child to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center and to the other families within the school is paramount. While food allergies can lead to severe reactions and death, the risks can be greatly reduced with education, management strategies, and emergency procedures.

### ***Allergy Prevention Strategies***

#### ***Parent/Guardian Responsibilities***

- Read this Allergy-Aware policy.
- Inform anyone else bringing your child to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center of this Allergy-Aware policy.
- Send a note attached to any unpackaged or homemade snacks intended to be shared with other children, listing the ingredients.
- Inform the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center of the severity and scope of a child's allergy, provide an emergency treatment plan signed by the child's doctor, and supply any medications for the allergic child. Communicate this information with the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff in new classrooms as a child transitions.
- In high-risk cases, work with the family physician to develop an allergy action plan for use at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.
- Follow the steps as outlined in this Allergy-Aware policy.

### *Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center Responsibilities*

- Provide annual training to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff on the Allergy-Aware policy and on prevention and treatment strategies. Provide introductory training on the Allergy-Aware policy to new staff upon hire.
- Encourage children to NOT share snacks, drinks, or utensils.
- Ensure all children wash hands with soapy water before eating.
- Communicate allergy information between the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff and classrooms as children transition.
- Ensure all children's hands and faces are wiped clean with individual facecloths by the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff after eating.
- Ensure all unpackaged or homemade snacks intended to be shared with other children are checked for attached note listing the ingredients.
- In consultation with the family in high-risk cases, develop an emergency plan in the event of accidental exposure to allergen.
- Ensure that classroom-specific allergies are communicated to families of all children in the class so they may plan/pack lunches and snacks accordingly.
- Ensure that all activities adhere to the guidelines of this policy, both inside and outside the center (e.g., cooking, crafts, and field trips).
- Outside and on field trips, take medication (i.e., Epi-pen, Benadryl) and emergency plan, and be aware of exposure risk (i.e., food & insects).

### ***Response in the Event of Allergic Reaction***

If any signs/symptoms of an allergic reaction are perceived by the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center classroom staff, administrative staff will be notified immediately. The emergency treatment will be implemented as necessary, and families will be notified.

## **OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY**

In accordance with state licensing regulations, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center teachers make every effort to have the children spend time outside each day. In extreme temperatures or conditions, this time may be minimized or eliminated. However, families should make sure children have sufficient clothing and amenities, such as water bottles and snow boots, to make outdoor play possible. It will be assumed that if a child is well enough to be in attendance that they are well enough to go outside.

## **REST POLICY**

Nap and rest period is required as part of our licensing. The State of Michigan requires children under 18 months of age to sleep on demand. During rest time, there is soft lighting and soft music will be played. State law prohibits any child under 12 months from using a blanket during rest time. Children under 3 years are provided space to rest at any time.

Individual mats and sheets will be provided for children. We ask that you send a small pillow, a blanket, and a small comfort item from home. Sheets will be washed weekly at the center. Home items will be sent home on Friday to be washed at home and returned the following week.

Quiet activities will be provided for children aged 18 months and older who are not asleep after 20 minutes of resting.

## **HEALTH POLICIES**

The issue of dealing with sick children in a group situation requires care, patience, and understanding on the part of families and caregivers. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center minimizes the spread of infection by conscientious use of the following procedures.

- Routine screening throughout the day of children and staff for illness
- Strict hand-washing procedures for staff and children in situations involving food service, toileting, and nose blowing
- Use of flush toilets and not potty chairs for sanitary reasons
- Careful washing of children's faces, removing saliva and nasal discharge using disposable wipes and tissues
- Frequent washing and disinfecting of toys and room surfaces
- Cleaning all rooms frequently
- Going outdoors each day for play periods (when appropriate—see "Outdoor Play Policy")
- Isolating children from care who may be infectious until they are able to be picked up

### ***Medication***

This policy adheres to the standards established by the State of Michigan. The following procedures must be followed:

1. Whenever possible, medication should be administered at home. Initial doses should be given at home so that families can monitor for side effects.
2. Medication, prescription or non-prescription, must be given to a child by a childcare staff member only; children may not self-administer any medication.
3. A childcare staff member shall give or apply medication, prescription or nonprescription, only with prior written permission from a parent/guardian.
  - a. For oral prescription or nonprescription medications and topical prescription medications, the Medication Permission and Instructions form must be filled out completely by the family indicating the dosage, times given per day, and the number of days to be given.
  - b. Topical nonprescription medication, including but not limited to diapering cream, triple antibiotic, sunscreen, and insect repellent, requires written parent/guardian authorization annually. Topical nonprescription medication does NOT include hand sanitizer, lip balm, or hand/body lotion, including petroleum jelly-based products such as Vaseline.
4. All medication (including all nonprescription topical medications) must be in its original container, stored according to instructions, and clearly labeled for a named child.

5. Prescription medication must have the pharmacy label indicating the physician's name, child's first and last name, instructions, name and strength of the medication, and it must be given according to those instructions.
6. A childcare staff member shall give or apply any prescription or nonprescription medication according to the directions on the original container, unless otherwise authorized by a written order of the child's physician.
7. If nonprescription medication states "See Doctor" for the student's age group, the medication must be accompanied by a signed doctor's authorization with dosing instructions.
8. For children with severe illnesses or conditions such as seizures, asthma, or allergies requiring an epi-pen or inhaler, Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center requires an emergency action plan signed by a physician.
9. Emergency medications such as epi-pens or inhalers will accompany your child whenever they leave the classroom (playground, gym, fieldtrip, etc.).

Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center employees receive training (upon hire and annually) on medication administration.

When bringing in medication for a child, families must deliver them to the classroom, where it will be stored in the locked medication box/cabinet. Families may inquire in the classroom at any time to check or remove the medication.

If the child transitions to another classroom, the medication will be delivered back to the family, who must then submit a new form with the medication to the office.

### ***Exclusion Policy for Child Illnesses***

All children are routinely screened throughout each day for signs of illness or injury; all staff are encouraged to stay home if they experience signs of illness. In an effort to minimize the spread of illness to our children and staff, **families are prohibited from bringing children to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center when they display any of the following symptoms**, as recommended by the Michigan Departments of Education and Health & Human Services:<sup>1</sup>

- Severely ill: A child that is lethargic or less responsive, persistent crying, severe pain, has difficulty breathing, has a rapidly spreading rash, or anything else that will require one-on-one care.
- Diarrhea: A child has two loose or watery stools. The child should have no loose stools for 24 hours prior to returning to school. *Exception:* A healthcare provider has determined it is not infectious. Diarrhea may be caused by antibiotics or new foods a child has eaten. Discuss with a parent/guardian to find out if this is the likely cause.

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<sup>1</sup> "Managing Communicable Diseases in Schools," Prepared by the Michigan Department of Education and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Divisions of Communicable Disease & Immunization; Version 7.0 (May 2024).

- Fever over 101° Fahrenheit or greater AND behavior changes or other signs or symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, or diarrhea). The child should not return until there is no fever for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- Vomiting (the forceful throwing up of stomach contents through the mouth)<sup>2</sup>: A child that has vomited two or more times. The child should have no vomiting episodes for 24 hours prior to returning. Exception: A healthcare provider has determined the vomiting is not due to an infectious condition.
- Abdominal pain: A child with abdominal pain that continues for more than two hours, or intermittent pain associated with fever or other symptoms.
- Rash: The child with a rash AND has a fever or a change in behavior. Exclude until the rash subsides or until a healthcare provider has determined the rash is not infectious.
- Skin sores: A child with weeping sores on an exposed area that cannot be covered with waterproof dressing.
- Certain communicable diseases: Children and staff diagnosed with certain diseases may have to be excluded for a certain period of time, if indicated by the Ingham County Health Department or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

If your child becomes ill at Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center with any of the above symptoms, you will be called to take your child home as soon as possible. Generally, a child will be sent home if he/she appears contagious or is uncomfortable enough to require constant one-on-one adult attention. *The teachers and Program Director will determine whether or not a child should remain at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center.* A child who appears contagious may be isolated from the rest of the group, under the supervision of a caregiver, until the family can pick him/her up. Families are encouraged to have back-up care providers available to pick up your child when you are unavailable to due to conflicts.

If your child does not meet the above criteria for exclusion from the program, but is not feeling well, you may receive an information call from the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center. Information calls will be given when your child is running a fever of less than 100.4° Fahrenheit, and/or is exhibiting other symptoms. The information call allows you time to assess the situation and prepare accordingly.

**In order to ensure the safety of staff and other children at the center, you must notify the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center office (via phone) within 24 hours if your child is ill with a communicable/contagious disease, such as COVID-19, strep throat, RSV, conjunctivitis, fifth disease, chicken pox, or influenza.**

Time at home allows your child to rest and recuperate. It also prevents infections from spreading to other children and staff members. We strongly suggest that alternate arrangements be planned prior to those occasions when your child is ill.

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<sup>2</sup> Vomiting should not be confused with spitting up (most commonly seen in infants under one year of age), which is the easy flow of stomach contents out of the mouth, frequently with a burp.

All the following guidelines will be used, collectively, to determine when a child can return to group care after an illness:

- The child's temperature has been below 101° Fahrenheit for 24 hours *without* acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- It has been 24 hours since the last episode of vomiting and/or diarrhea.
- The rash has subsided or has been confirmed in writing as non-contagious by a physician.
- The signs of possible severe illness (including lethargy, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing, severe pain, and uncontrolled coughing) have been checked and ruled out in writing by a physician.
- The child is no longer contagious and feels well enough to participate comfortably in the usual activities.
- If an antibiotic has been prescribed, the child may return 24 hours after the first dosage, or sooner with a physician's note confirming them as non-contagious.

Generally speaking, it is the *lack of symptoms* that indicate your child is ready to return to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center. A note from a physician may be required. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will make every effort to accommodate a child who is not ready to resume full activities after an illness upon return to the center.

See "Notification Procedures" under the Center-Family Communication section of this handbook.

## **ACCIDENT, INCIDENT, INJURY, AND ILLNESS POLICY**

Good safety measures will prevent most accidents but if an accident does occur the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff will call the family and/or 911 as appropriate. Families will be notified immediately if professional medical attention is required for their child. Caregivers will also provide written details of the incident and record any first aid procedures used.

If a family seeks medical care for a child due to an accident, incident, illness, or injury that took place at the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center, the family must alert the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center so it can be reported to the licensing agency. Families must indicate where the child was taken and what diagnosis was made.

An incident may be defined as anything out of the ordinary that a family would benefit from knowing, including child behavior such as engaging in exposure to another child. When a situation such as this is reported, the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will notify the families of the children involved within 24 hours. Staff members have been trained to alert the Program Director of all such incidents so they may properly report and notify families and any others as appropriate.

See "Notification Procedures" under the Center-Family Communication section of this handbook.

## **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

Our discipline policy makes great use of age-appropriate, non-severe, positive behavioral supports. Whenever possible, staff members use the technique of positive redirection,

distraction, or humor to change unacceptable behaviors. Teachers try to avoid power struggles by focusing on children expressed desires and capabilities. Teachers utilize the “teachable moment,” and help a child learn new behavioral skills to use in the future. Children also have the opportunity to remove themselves from the situation in order to regain control or have quiet time.

Physical punishment or language that demeans children is unacceptable and is never permitted at Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center. **All the following means of punishment are prohibited:**

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, biting, pinching, or inflicting other forms of corporal punishment.
- Placing any substances in a child’s mouth, including but not limited to, soap, hot sauce, or vinegar.
- Restricting a child’s movement by binding or tying him or her.
- Inflicting mental or emotional punishment, such as humiliating, shaming, or threatening a child.
- Depriving a child of meals, snacks, rest, or necessary toilet use.
- Excluding a child from outdoor play or other gross motor activities.
- Excluding a child from daily learning experiences.
- Confining a child in an enclosed area, such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar enclosure.
- Time out must not be used for children under 3 years of age. In children 3 years and older, time-out is only used to stop aggressive behavior or to allow angry or upset children to calm down; it is used only as a last resort to help the child gain a better sense of self-control. The time out will not last longer than it takes for the child to calm down, and the child remains supervised at all times.
- Children cannot be excluded from outdoor play or participation in large gross motor activities as a behavioral consequence.
- Children cannot be excluded from daily learning experiences as a behavioral consequence.

## **SECLUSION AND RESTRAINT POLICY**

The Lansing YMCA childcare centers adhere to the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) policy, required by law, outlining standards for the emergency use of seclusion and restraint in Michigan public schools. The policy applies to all students, with and without disabilities, and requires using proven practices to reduce and eliminate seclusion and restraint practices. If restraint or seclusion is used, it must be in emergency conditions only and staff using seclusion and restraint in schools must be trained. The Lansing YMCA childcare centers always promote the security of the center community and the care, safety, welfare, and dignity of each student.

Seclusion or restraint may only be used in emergency situations when other interventions have failed and there is great risk to the safety and well-being of the student or others. It cannot be used for staff convenience, as a form of discipline or punishment, or as a substitute for something less limiting or restrictive. Emergency seclusion may never be used for preschool students or students who have self-injurious or suicidal behavior.

## **BITING POLICY**

Biting is a very common behavior among children from birth to three years of age. Biting is a form of communication and is almost always a response to coping with a challenge or stressor. At the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center, we believe by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can proactively prevent many biting behaviors by the environment we create for the children.

Biting is a normal, yet unpleasant, phase that most children go through. It is instinctual—fight or flight—and childcare centers typically provide learning experiences related to biting. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the families, and the teachers involved.

For many children, biting is just a passing stage. Different children will need different instructional methods to help teach them alternative ways to cope in situations where they are biting. Children bite for different reasons and each reason calls for a different type of response.

- A child who bites out of frustration needs to learn alternate coping skills.
- A child who bites when teething may need teether.
- A child who bites when an ear infection is brewing may need a trip to the doctor.
- A child who bites for attention may respond to a social story.

Biting signifies that a child is having a difficult time with something, and it is the job of the early childhood professional to work to figure out what is causing the child the stress and how to help the child work through it.

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will take the following approach when dealing with biting situations.

- If a staff member observes a biting incident, the “bitten” child will be attended and comforted immediately. The area of the bite will be cleansed with soap and water, and ice will be applied if necessary.
- The child who did the biting will be moved to a different area of the room and a staff member will help the child understand that the behavior is not acceptable. The child will be redirected to an appropriate activity.
- The parents/guardians of both children (the child who was bitten and the child who bit) will be called or notified upon pick up. Neither family will know the identification of the other child.
- The biting incident will be documented. A copy of the report will be given to both families, as well as placed in their files.
- If the incident is repeated, it will be discussed with the family of the biter, and we will work with them to identify possible biting causes and discuss strategies to help change the behavior. The child will be monitored closely by staff, making sure he/she is busy with activities and materials during the school day.

After all preventative steps have been taken by the staff, and if the child continues to bite, the Program Director will call the family of the biter to pick up the child for the remainder of the day. Chronic biting may require that a child be suspended from enrollment for a period of time. If a child is suspended, the family will be informed that the child may return as soon as the biting has abated.

If the child returns to the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center, continues to bite, and is endangering the other children, the child may be terminated from the program.

## **FAMILY CONDUCT POLICY**

Parents and guardians are expected to always conduct themselves in a respectful and positive manner. The child(ren) associated with any adult who chooses to display conduct towards an employee, child, or other family that can be considered rude, offensive, intimidating, aggressive, or otherwise inappropriate may be subject to immediate disenrollment at the sole discretion of the center. This includes but is not limited to: name calling, cursing, threats of any kind, inappropriate tone of voice, physical or verbal aggression, physical altercations, or overall disrespect.

We will not get involved in any legal disagreements, disputes, or conflicts between two parents or guardians of a child and/or children. It is the parent/guardian responsibility to resolve their own conflicts without causing any issue to the center, its employees, other families, and children. If a conflict between parties cannot be resolved and results in behavior to our staff that can be considered rude, offensive, intimidating, aggressive, or otherwise inappropriate, the family may be subject to immediate disenrollment at the sole discretion of the center.

We take all concerns seriously and will work hard to rectify any situation presented. However, we also value our dedicated teachers, staff, and families and must ensure that we provide a safe and nurturing environment for them at all times—just as we do for our children. We thank you for your understanding and support.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AND PROHIBITIONS**

- Smoking or vaping is not allowed on Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center property, including inside a car in our parking lot.
- No weapons of any kind are to be brought onto the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center property.

## **PARKING POLICY**

- Please park in the lot near the center entrance when dropping off and picking up.
- Families and staff may park in any available non-handicap spot.
- A valid handicap parking tag is required to use the handicap parking spots, even for a short period of time.
- Families must drive slowly in the parking lot.

- Families must not leave vehicles idling in the parking lot, except in case of extreme heat or cold to maintain interior or engine temperatures.
- Families must not leave young children unattended in the car, even for a few minutes.

## **CENTER-FAMILY COMMUNICATION**

We exist to provide children with a positive developmental experience that enhances and supports, but does not supplant, the family in fostering child growth and development. Therefore, we strongly encourage good communication between families and staff. It is important for families and staff to share information about those things which may have an impact on the child's day or evening. When possible, it is best for families to communicate directly with the child's teacher or with our Program Director.

Families may expect communication from Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center in any of the following ways:

- Some classrooms use notes and newsletters to communicate with families.
- The administrative staff periodically produces a newsletter that highlights center activities and useful family information.
- Our social media presence (Facebook) provides families with photographs and timely information about early learning and events that are relevant to followers.

### ***Parent-Teacher Conferences***

Parent-teacher conferences are held at least once per year for families to talk in-depth with teachers about their child's development. Additional conferences may be requested as needed.

At the conference families are provided with a family-friendly report from our child assessment tools to guide the discussion of the progress of children across domains; we will also discuss goals for continuous progress and any additional support which may be necessary or helpful. Teaching staff will also share curriculum strategies for supporting children's development and discuss ways that families can support learning at home using household materials and within ordinary household routines. At the end of the conference, families and teachers write up a simple summary in a document that is signed by both parties, so there is a record of the event. Teaching staff will also provide families with information about how they may participate in the program and staff availability for phone calls and questions.

### ***Notification Procedures***

In the event of an accident, illness, incident, or injury involving a child attending the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center, the following procedures are implemented:

- If the situation is deemed an emergency by the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff, we will call 911 first and then alert both parents/guardians via telephone; text and email may also be utilized to reach the families.
- In non-emergency situations, we will notify the impacted families within 24 hours by calling the first parent/guardian listed on the Child Information Record, using all the phone numbers

provided until we reach the family. If we cannot reach that parent/guardian, we will leave voice-mail messages and proceed to call the second parent/guardian listed on the Child Information Record, also using all the phone numbers provided.

- If neither parent/guardian can be reached in a reasonable amount of time and the child needs to be picked up, we will call the first emergency contact listed on the Child Information Record, proceeding down the list until someone agrees to pick up the child.
- Accidents, incidents, and injuries that cause a family to seek medical care for the child must be reported to Michigan's childcare licensing agency. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center will notify the family that such a report will be filed and request that the family provide information about the diagnosis and where the child was treated.

### ***Confidentiality***

The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center practices professional confidentiality. All personal information about families, children, and staff is kept in locked files and may not be reviewed or shared without explicit approval of the Program Director. Additionally, information pertaining to a specific child will not be released without consent from the parent or legal guardian.

At the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center families are encouraged to share information with their child's teachers regarding their child's day-to-day activities, as well as any situations or experiences the child may be having that are new, stressful, fun, or exciting. Many times, families share important, but *private*, information with staff for the benefit of their child. Staff members are trained and expected not to divulge any information regarding a child to anyone but that child's family. This means that staff members do not discuss confidential information regarding children with other staff members (unless it directly concerns another staff member's care of that child), release or discuss any family information volunteered by families, or discuss any child or family outside of the center.

Upon enrollment, families will be given the cell phone number that may be used to communicate with staff while their child is in attendance. The center may also use this device to contact family members. **At no time should a parent/legal guardian communicate via a staff member's personal cell phone, regardless of the nature of the family/staff relationship.** In addition, **contact between families and staff via social media is strictly prohibited.** If you believe a staff member is not complying with these policies, please contact the Program Director.

### ***Cooperative Problem Solving***

Occasionally families have suggestions for improvement or questions about our program and policies. The Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center always encourages open communication between its staff and families. If an issue arises that needs clarification or information, working together is important. Options for solving problems include any one or a combination of the suggestions below.

- Families should attempt to clarify facts and/or concerns with the teaching staff directly, in person, on the phone, or via email. A private conference can be scheduled with prior notice.

- The Program Director is available to discuss issues with families, particularly ones involving policies, fees, and the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center procedures.
- We are licensed by the State of Michigan through the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, Bureau of Child Care Licensing. Families can initiate an investigative process by contacting a licensing consultant there.

The following actions may be used to resolve concerns between the Oak Park YMCA Early Learning Center staff members and families:

- Fact-finding with the teaching staff, Program Director, and family.
- A meeting with the staff and family to discuss the issue and explore solutions which may involve, but are not limited to:
  - Monitoring the situation
  - Teacher training
  - Disciplinary action

In matters where a consensus resolution does not emerge, the final decision on conflicts will be determined by the Branch Executive.

## **ABUSE REPORTING HOTLINE**

The Y has a zero tolerance for abuse on, towards, or with youth, and it is imperative that everyone in our buildings and programs understand our expectations so we can all work together to keep kids safe. At minimum:

- Youth will always be treated with respect and will not engage in verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse or mistreatment of other minors, employees, volunteers, members, or program participants.
- Any registered sexual offender, or person who has been convicted of a felony involving violence will be prohibited from all Y facilities and programs.
- No minor, whether member or program participant can actively participate or engage in a personal romantic relationship between staff (both adult and minor) or volunteers.
- Direct or text messaging between minors and employees/volunteers is not allowed, unless approved by a program supervisor and administrator. Members, guests or program participants who are minors will comply with the organization's policies governing the use of personal mobile communication devices while in programming.

If you have any concerns about the safety of anyone in our facilities or programs, please call the KNOW, SEE, RESPOND Reporting Hotline at 517-827-9625 or



## **QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS**

Questions and concerns regarding your child or the program should be brought to the immediate attention of the Program Director in person, through email, or by phone.