



YMCA CHILD CARE

Early Childhood Learning Centers
Infant - Preschool Childcare
METROPOLITAN YMCA OF THE ORANGES

metroymcas.org/childcare

**2026-27 PROGRAM
POLICY GUIDE**



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WELCOME

Welcome to the Metro Y Family!

Thank you for choosing our Y for your child's early learning journey. At the Y, we know that every child is special, curious, and full of potential. Our early learning programs are designed to support the whole child—helping children grow physically, socially, and emotionally from infancy through school age.

Each day, children explore their world, build meaningful relationships with caring adults and new friends, develop independence, and gain confidence—all within a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment where they can truly thrive.

Across the country, Y child care programs serve nearly 40,000 children, giving families peace of mind knowing their children are well cared for while they work. Here at the Metro Y, we are proud to be recognized by Grow NJ Kids, New Jersey's Quality Rating Improvement System, and to have earned Praesidium Accreditation. This important accreditation reflects our strong commitment to the highest standards in safety and abuse prevention.

Because of this commitment, you can feel confident knowing that your child's safety and well-being are always our top priorities—while we continue to encourage learning, growth, and joyful experiences every day.

Thank you for trusting us with your child. We are honored to be part of your family's journey and are so glad to welcome you to the Metro Y community.

Warmly,



Richard K. Gorab, President & CEO
Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges

MISSION STATEMENT

Strengthen community through Youth Development,
Healthy Living and Social Responsibility.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

OUR PHILOSOPHY & APPROACH TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Our YMCA Early Childcare Learning Centers understand that parents and guardians are the primary influence in children's lives. We complement that influence by building relationships based on mutual trust and support. Through open communication, we collaborate with parents and guardians to provide the best possible care for each child.

Early childhood education equips your child with the tools and skills necessary for developing a lifelong love of learning. At the Y, we believe that social-emotional development is crucial for building self-esteem, learning to regulate and communicate emotions effectively, becoming a successful part of a group, and forming relationships that foster positive and meaningful engagement. Our programs emphasize the YMCA's core values of caring, respect, honesty, and responsibility.

Creating safe spaces for your child to learn, explore, and grow is our top priority at the Y. We have established comprehensive practices and procedures, including secure entry points, ongoing staff training and development (including certification in CPR and first aid), and regular site inspections and maintenance of buildings, playgrounds, and equipment to ensure our centers are safe.

We want you to feel confident that you've made the right choice for your child. Please let us know if you have any questions about our policies or anything in our Family Guide

WHAT MAKES A QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER?

- Frequent, positive, and warm interactions among teachers and children
- Planned learning activities appropriate to children's age and development
- Specially trained teachers and administrators
- Ongoing professional development
- Adult/child ratios that allow individual attention for children and increased safety
- Varied age-appropriate materials
- Respect for cultural diversity
- A healthy and safe environment for adults and children
- Inclusive environments
- Consistent communication with parents who are welcome visitors at all times
- Effective administration
- Ongoing evaluation

Daily Schedule

A consistent daily schedule and routines help children feel comfortable in their environment. Daily schedules will include a variety of age-appropriate hands-on learning activities, free choice, handwashing, meals/snacks, outdoor activities, and enrichment. For infants, parents will receive a daily sheet via the Tadpoles app that indicates the activities for the day, as well as changing and feeding times.

Literacy Development

Whether it is a caregiver softly singing a lullaby to a sleepy baby, a classroom of toddlers excitedly looking at family photos, or a teacher reading a popular book at story time, language and literacy are interwoven into learning and routine activities at every age.

Enrichment Programs

A variety of enrichment programs may be available including music and movement, theatrical arts, STEAM, physical education, and swim lessons. Additional fees may apply. Please speak with your center administrator for additional information.

Screen Time

Our programs provide an activity-focused, hands-on early learning environment. We believe children learn best through active participation, hands-on experiences, interactive conversations, and exploration. Our programs follow the recommendations established by the American Academy of Pediatrics including no screen time for children 0 – 18 months and a limit of one hour or less per day for older children. Teachers may utilize technology such as computers and iPads to facilitate learning activities or participate in virtual field trips.

Physical Activity and Nutrition

The Y is committed to supporting healthy living by adopting a set of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards. Based, in part, on years of research with key partners, the HEPA standards will build a healthier future for our children by creating environments rich in opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity.

Our early childhood programs follow HEPA guidelines that develop healthy foundations including:

- Access to healthy beverages
- Eliminating fried foods and providing healthier options for meals and snacks
- Providing information and materials focused on healthy eating and physical activity
- Supporting exclusive breastfeeding
- Staff modeling healthy eating behaviors
- Providing children with opportunities for moderate and vigorous physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day for full day programs and 30 minutes for half-day programs
- Providing daily opportunities for infants to explore their indoor and outdoor environments under adult supervision; providing daily tummy time
- Limiting screen time

Social and Emotional Development

Social and emotional development programs for Pre-K students, such as Mind Up and Harmony Academy, foster the knowledge, skills, and attitudes children need to develop healthy identities, create meaningful relationships, and engage productively with others.

Lessons include topics such as celebrating differences, empathy, communication, problem-solving, and peer relationships. Children work together to set class goals that reflect how they want to interact and be treated by one another.

Social Responsibility

Opportunities for children to participate in social responsibility projects throughout the year. For example, children may participate in a trike-a-thon to raise money for a cause or contribute to a holiday coat and mitten drive, all while learning the importance of helping others. We encourage families to give back to our Y community through our Y For All Annual Campaign, ensuring every child can thrive, regardless of their financial situation.

A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS

The Y is made up of people of all ages and from different walks of life working side-by-side to strengthen communities. Together we work to ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, age, cultural background, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, ideology, income level, national origin, race or sexual orientation has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Our core values are caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility – they are the foundation of the Y and guide everything we do.

Every early childhood classroom plays an important role in increasing awareness and acceptance of diversity. You will find that our materials and activities reflect a variety of races, religions, cultures, abilities, and genders. We encourage parents/caregivers to share information about their culture, language, and country of origin for all to learn.

CHILD AGE GROUPING

Infants

Our nurturing caregivers understand the importance of the first year. Infants are assigned to a primary caregiver to encourage trust and child/adult bonding. Teachers use written communication to ensure that parents have a clear sense of their child's day at our center. A typical day will include activities such as water play, finger plays, songs, and the encouragement of gross motor development.

Waddlers

For children ages 13 – 23 months, the relationship with the primary caregiver is still key. Our teachers ensure each child is stimulated by organized activities including music and movement, story time to support developing language skills, water play, and fine and gross motor skills. Activities are play-based, allowing children to grow and learn.

Toddlers

The toddler age from 2–3 years is a time of independence and emerging self-image. Our caregivers spend time with children working on emotional development, fine and gross motor skills, language acquisition, and self-help skills such as feeding and dressing themselves. Throughout the year, toilet training is introduced but never forced. Your child will have many special moments that the teachers will share with you.

Preschool

Our qualified caregivers guide our preschoolers through a structured program. The preschool classrooms are set up in learning centers that aid in preparations for kindergarten. These centers include a wide variety of experiences and materials including STEAM, literacy, language arts, blocks, water, sand tables, and dramatic play. There is time for children to circulate among the learning centers, as well as time to participate in special small group activities that are planned by the staff.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR LEARNING

The Creative Curriculum®

The Creative Curriculum® is a play-based learning curriculum that focuses on interest areas and fosters creativity in both children and teachers. Being creative means thinking of new ideas, obtaining information by asking questions, and learning through trial and error.

The Creative Curriculum® has five fundamental principles:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning
- Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions
- Teacher/family partnerships promote development and learning

Infant and toddler classrooms follow The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, which emphasizes the importance of the child/caregiver relationship. The Creative Curriculum® emphasizes a classroom environment filled with responsive daily routines and meaningful, individualized experiences that nurture your child's learning and development.

The routines will sound familiar: hellos and goodbyes, diapering and toileting, eating and mealtimes, sleeping and nap time, and getting dressed. These routines are the foundation of your child's day; they are also the foundation of learning. The consistent and nurturing interactions that children experience during everyday activities build trust and allow them to learn through experiencing the world around them.

In addition to daily routines, The Creative Curriculum® will support your child's teacher every day as they engage your child in meaningful experiences, such as playing with toys, enjoying books and stories, creating art, and going outdoors. In each of these experiences, teachers observe what children do and select materials that match their growing abilities and interests.

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool is based on 38 objectives for development and learning that focus on all the areas that are most important for school success: social-emotional, cognitive, math, literacy, physical, language, social studies, science, and technology, and the arts. These objectives are built into every activity that happens in the classroom, which means that all day long, the teacher is helping your child build skills and knowledge in these important areas.

In The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, learning happens through studies. Studies, which span several weeks, are in-depth, project-based investigations of topics that are part of your child's everyday life. They feature topics such as trees, buildings, clothes, and balls. In a study, children raise questions about the topic and find answers by exploring, experimenting, and investigating in a hands-on way—through activities that take place in the classroom and outdoors.

Importantly, teachers will follow the lead of the children and pursue the questions and investigations within each study that are most interesting to the children in their classroom, thus promoting a love of learning. Teachers will also continue to have the freedom to add their own "handprint" when lesson planning, utilizing their personal experience and passions to shape the studies.

NON-DISCRIMINATION IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

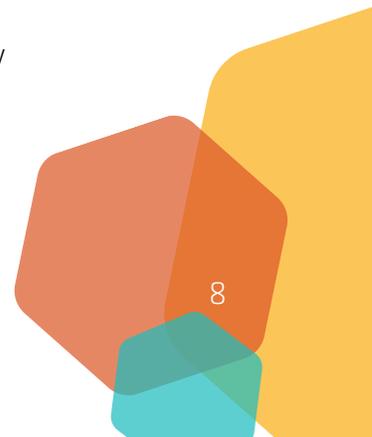
As a place of public accommodation, the YMCA is proud to serve a diverse community of individuals, including those with disabilities. The YMCA will work with prospective and current participants with disabilities, and/or their parents/guardians, to ensure that individuals with disabilities are offered full and equal enjoyment to the YMCA's goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations. The YMCA does not discriminate the provision of services to individuals with disabilities, including children with diabetes, in any YMCA programs including, but not limited to, childcare, camps, before and after-school programs, classes and recreational programs. Accordingly, the YMCA will not exclude individuals with disabilities from enrollment. The YMCA also will not impose or apply eligibility criteria that tend to screen out or screen out individuals with disabilities.

Prospective or current participants with disabilities, and/or their parents/guardians, may, at any time, request modifications to the YMCA's policies, practices and procedures and/or request auxiliary aids or services. Reasonable modifications and auxiliary aids and services can be wide-ranging. A few examples include working with children who have diabetes to administer the necessary care they need and allowing a program participant to have a service animal.

All requests for modifications or for auxiliary aids and services should be directed to the applicable Program Director, the Branch ADA Compliance Officer or the Association Office ADA Compliance Officer. Program Directors may be reached in person or by calling the Branch's main telephone number and asking for the Program Director. Contact information for Branch ADA Compliance Officers is located at metroymcas.org under the "About the Y Leadership" tab. The Association Office ADA Compliance Officer, Ed Philipp, may be reached at ephilipp@metroymcas.org or at 973-758-9622.

The YMCA will work with prospective or current participants in our programs, and/or their parent/guardians, to promptly address all requests for modifications to the YMCA's policies, practices and procedures and/or for auxiliary aids or services and to determine what reasonable modifications and/or auxiliary aids and services are available. Our goal is to ensure that all participants in our programs with disabilities have access to the full and equal enjoyment of all YMCA programs. Accordingly, the YMCA conducts individualized assessments on the specific facts of each request and will not apply a general prohibition against providing particular types of reasonable modifications. The YMCA will make reasonable modifications for individuals with disabilities, including children with diabetes, unless the request for modification amounts to a fundamental alteration of the applicable YMCA program. Similarly, the YMCA will provide auxiliary aids and services for individuals with disabilities, unless the request for the auxiliary aids or services creates an undue burden or amounts to a fundamental alteration of the applicable YMCA program.

The YMCA prohibits retaliation against any individual for exercising their rights to request and/or receive a modification to the YMCA's policies, practices and procedures or auxiliary aids and services. The YMCA further prohibits retaliation against any individual who in good faith participates in any investigation or proceeding related to a request for modification to the YMCA's policies, practices and procedures or auxiliary aids and services.



Home Language Policy

We make every effort to communicate with children and families in their home language, including sign language. Parents are asked to share words in their home language with their child's teacher to help make their child feel more comfortable in the classroom. Teachers will attempt to label some of the classroom materials in the home language of the students. Parents are also encouraged to share books or other materials in their home language with the class.

Hate Speech Policy

Metro YMCA of the Oranges denounces the use of words or images to harass individuals or groups based on gender, gender expression, race, religion, sexual orientation, or any other aspect of identity. Hate speech of this nature is contrary to our mission statement, diversity statement, and core values. Individuals determined to have participated in such harassment may be subject to consequences including suspension and expulsion.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Please read through the entire Family Guide and policies provided during registration. Please keep us informed of any changes and information you think will help us better serve you and your child.

You are required to complete and sign all enrollment, parent information, waivers and medical release forms before your child starts our program. Your child will not be allowed to start the program with incomplete paperwork.

Communication & Methods of Parental Notification

Building and maintaining a strong home-to-school connection and keeping you involved in your child's day-to-day learning experiences is of the utmost priority. Your center utilizes a communication app, such as Tadpoles/Class Dojo, as well as daily sheets, emails, phone calls, parent meetings, and parent/teacher conferences, to provide you with regular updates on your child's activities and development.

Feedback and Complaints

Feedback, concerns, or complaints may be addressed directly with a staff member or administrator. If an administrator is unavailable to speak with you in person, we will follow up by phone or email. We will investigate all concerns objectively, confidentially and fairly to everyone involved, ensuring that we follow up regarding outcomes.

Please participate in the satisfaction surveys that are distributed throughout the year. We want to know about your experience with us to gauge your satisfaction and learn ways to improve our programs and services.

Emergency Closings

The safety of your family and our staff is always our top priority. Your center may close during extreme weather conditions, a facility-related emergency, or when mandated by the State or local authorities. In the event of an emergency closing or delayed opening, announcements will be made across multiple channels including Tadpoles/Class Dojo, email, and posted to our website and social media page.

If an early dismissal is called due to inclement weather or a facility-related emergency, we will communicate with parents/caregivers through Tadpoles/Class Dojo app and email. If there is no response we will follow up with a phone call and call your child's emergency contacts if we cannot reach you.

Illness

If a child becomes ill during our program, the Director or their designee will contact the parent/caregiver. Parents are contacted first, then the emergency contact, unless otherwise noted.

Communicable Diseases: An email will be provided to parents if 2 or more children have been diagnosed with the same illness concurrently.

Injuries

For any injury occurring during the program that requires first aid treatment, the parent/caregiver will be required to sign an Incident Report.

- If a minor injury occurs during the day, an Incident Report will be completed and the parent will be notified at pick-up.
- If a child receives an injury to the head/face, falls from a height greater than the height of the child, or the child cannot be consoled, the staff will call the child's parent, and will leave a message if the person does not pick up.
- If a more serious injury occurs, requiring further medical attention, the parent will be notified by phone. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the parent will be asked to come to the center immediately to pick up the child.
- In a medical emergency, 911 will be called, and the parents will be called immediately. A staff member will accompany emergency personnel and stay with the child until a parent or an authorized emergency contact arrives. The permission-to-treat form that is completed during registration will be brought to the hospital by the staff member.

Behaviors

If a child exhibits minor behavior issues, the child's teacher will notify parents during pick up or drop off, or by a phone call. If a child is exhibiting more serious behavior issues that cannot be controlled, or if the behavior warrants sending the child home, the staff will call the child's parent/guardian. If the parent cannot be contacted, the emergency contact will be called.

Open Door Policy

We maintain an open-door policy. Parents/legal guardians may stop in to visit their child's classroom at any time. We do ask that you provide the center administration with notification prior to arriving at the center, so that we may best accommodate your visit.

Social Media, Email, and Internet

The Y recognizes the value of social media and other online communication tools for business purposes, such as connecting with members, staff, donors, and volunteers.

Employees - all employees must demonstrate the Y's values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility when using social media or other online communication tools for work-related purposes.

- Parent/staff relationships are limited to the center's social media sites and approved devices only.
- Staff shall ensure that communicating with parents through approved devices does not detract from supervising the children in their care.

Families - Families of children at Metro Y child care centers are requested to be respectful and exercise good judgment and common sense in social media interactions.

- Photos or videos taken by parents are for family use only.
- Please do not post/share photos or videos of children other than your own.

Identifying or personal information of staff, children, and Metro Y parents must not be posted on any social networking site or webpage without express written consent by the individuals and the Center Director.

Photos, Photography, and Video

We respect the privacy of our participants. No photos or videos will be taken of any child without your consent. We will ask at the time of registration whether we can take pictures for educational purposes (such as classroom or center displays) or to share with you directly through the Tadpoles/Class Dojo app. If consent is given to take pictures, we will ask for approval first if we are interested in using your child's photo for Y marketing purposes (such as newsletters, media advertisements, or articles).

Any breaches of the center's Policy on the Use of Technology and Social Media must be promptly reported to the Director.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YMCA CHILD CARE

When it's all new, the first days can be challenging. Your center director will provide suggestions to foster a smooth transition from home to school.

Here are some ways to make the transition a little easier:

- Plan to spend a little extra time with your child the first few days while they make the adjustment and ease into the new routine.
- Set up time with a staff member in the first week to answer questions and make sure you have all the information you need.
- Share with staff any information about your child that will help them settle in.

Center Hours

Operating hours are 7:00am – 6:00pm, but may vary by location, please confirm with your center. Please be sure to pick up your child by the scheduled pick-up time. Late pick-ups will incur a fee of \$25 for every 15 minutes after closing time. Please be sure to notify the center if you expect to be late.

Drop-off/Arrival at the Center

- Please escort your child to the designated drop-off location and do not let your child out of the car unattended.
- Review center-specific drop-off procedures for your child's location.
- If your child will be absent or will arrive after 9:30 am, please notify the center. Please discuss your family's drop-off schedule with your child's teacher or center management.
- Vehicle exhaust is hazardous to human health, especially children. Per NJ State law, idling beyond three minutes in unattended vehicles is not permitted.
- Please help us maintain an organized environment by avoiding leaving strollers and/or car seats at the center for the day.

Pick-up/Policy on the Release of Children

Each child may be released to the child's parent or person authorized by the parent to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent cannot be reached. If a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court order, the center shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

Failure to Pick Up

If the parent or person authorized by the parents fails to pick up a child by the time of the center's closing, the following procedures will be followed:

- The child will be supervised at all times.
- Staff members will attempt to contact parents and persons authorized by the parent for pick-up and emergency contacts.
- If staff is unable to arrange for the release of the child within one hour past the center's closing time, the staff member will call the Division of Child Protection & Permanency 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline (877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child.

If a parent or authorized person appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired while picking up, to the extent that, in the judgement of the Director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

- The child may not be released to such an impaired individual;
- Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the 24-hour State Central Registry Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child.

For the safety of your child:

- Children are never permitted to leave the center with unauthorized persons.
- Your child will only be released to the persons that you have authorized in the YMCA's electronic registration form system. Please verify that these individuals will be available to come for your child when you cannot.
- Persons picking up your child will be asked to present a government-issued photo identification (i.e. driver's license, passport).
- Update your authorized list/emergency contacts, including names and phone numbers, whenever a change occurs. In the event of an emergency or unexpected situation, if you need to add someone to your authorized pickup list, please contact your center administrator.
- The parking lot is often crowded. Please take your child by the hand until you reach your car.
- For everyone's safety, loitering outside the center is not permitted at pick-up and drop-off.

Court Orders & Confidentiality

In cases where an enrolled child is the subject of a court order, the Y must be provided with an original certified copy of the most recent court order and all amendments for our files. If a court order is not on file with the Y, both parents will be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees on a need-to-know basis to ensure we can provide the most appropriate care for your child. Employees are strictly prohibited from disclosing confidential information about other children in the program.

Enrollment and Payments

Your child's enrollment will be confirmed by the center administrator. You will be assigned a unique link to register online and submit your registration fee. Once you receive the link, click "forgot your password" and follow the prompts to create a new password. Your login will be the email address you provided during the enrollment process.

Tuition Payments

Enrollment and tuition are annual. Your annual tuition will be charged in weekly installments that will begin the Sunday before your child's confirmed start date. Payments will be automatically charged every Sunday to the authorized credit/debit card or checking account you provided during registration. Changes to your child's schedule must be requested in writing two weeks in advance. Any change is subject to the approval of the center administrator. Partial week schedules are fixed. Switching of days due to illness or closures is not permitted. We are not able to make up days due to absence or vacation. Cancellations may be requested with 30 days written notice. Tuition will not be prorated for any reason.

Third-Party Payments

The Y accepts third-party subsidies from qualified families.

- Parent/guardian is responsible for submitting all required paperwork
- Registration must be for 5 days per week
- Parent/guardian is responsible for making sure contacts including email and phone number are current
- Parent/guardian will be responsible for any unpaid balance by the third-party provider
- Services may be interrupted or terminated for failure to make payments on time or to comply with the terms of the Preliminary Parent Applicant Provider Agreement.

Y For All Financial Assistance

The Y is a leading 501c3 nonprofit organization for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. Through funds raised from the Annual Campaign and special events, we can provide financial assistance to qualifying individuals and families so that everyone has a chance to learn, grow, and thrive at the Y. If you or your family would like more information about financial assistance or to donate, please contact your center administrator.

Absenteeism

Please notify the Center Director if your child will be absent for the day or an extended period. If we do not receive notification, then a center administrator will contact the parent/guardian to confirm your child's absence. Please contact us if there are any issues impacting your child's attendance. Regular, unexcused absence impacts a child's learning and development and may result in termination of enrollment and waitlisting for re-enrollment.

Please note – all illness-related absences will require a doctor's note to return.

Leave of Absence & Vacation Time

Enrollment is ongoing. Any leave of absence is subject to termination of enrollment. If you plan to return, you will be required to re-register and pay the registration fee. This includes a leave of absence for any reason, including vacation and summer breaks. Your child will be placed on a waitlist if enrollment is full. We will not hold slots during the summer months.

Scheduled Center Closings

Centers will be closed for holidays and teachers' training on the following days:

- Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Thursday & Friday), Christmas Eve & Christmas Day, New Year's Eve & New Year's Day.
- Teacher Training Days: August 27 - 28, 2026, November 6, 2026, April 9, 2027

Your center administrator will communicate any changes to the above dates.

STAFFING AND SUPERVISION

Supervision

Proper supervision is critical in providing a secure environment where children can learn and grow. All staff go through a rigorous hiring process, including extensive background and reference checks. As part of our State Licensing, all staff are fingerprinted and required to complete extensive orientation to their position and on-going professional development.

Metro Y is committed to providing continuous, attentive, and appropriate supervision to all children in our care, allowing us to provide the best possible supervision for each child:

- Staff-to-child ratios will adhere to state regulations and licensing requirements.
- Children will be supervised at all times, including indoor and outdoor play, nap times, mealtimes, and during transitions between activities.
- Extra care will be taken during transition times to ensure all children are accounted for and supervised.
- The playground and outdoor areas will be inspected before children are allowed to use them. Any identified hazards will be immediately addressed and documented in the facility management system.
- Children will be supervised during bathroom visits and diaper changes. Privacy will be respected while ensuring safety.
- Staff will ensure children are released only to authorized individuals listed on the child's enrollment form.
- During special activities and field trips, additional staff or volunteers may be used to maintain proper supervision.
- All staff will receive regular training on supervision techniques, safety procedures, and emergency response.

Code of Conduct

As a character development, community building, nonprofit organization, the Y acknowledges and pledges its responsibility to act and operate in a framework of ethical behavior.

Per the Metro Y's Child Abuse Prevention Policies and Staff Code of Conduct, staff members are not allowed to sign out any child from the program or transport any child in their car unless the staff and the child or child's family or guardian are related. Staff members may not be alone with the children they meet in YMCA programs outside of the YMCA. This includes babysitting, sleepovers, and inviting children to their homes. Any exceptions require a written explanation and are subject to prior approval by the Executive Director.

National Sex Offender Screening

We conduct checks through the National Sex Offender Registry on all adult (18 years and older) members and visitors through a web-based platform that will notify us instantly if a sex offender is attempting to enter the building. Anyone with a sex offender record, including visitors, vendors, contractors, family members/friends, and staff, will not be allowed access to the building and/or children in our care.

Praesidium Accreditation

Metropolitan YMCA of the Oranges has achieved full accreditation from Praesidium Inc., the leader in abuse risk management. This prestigious honor publicly demonstrates that Metro Y has worked to achieve the highest industry standards in abuse prevention.

To achieve accreditation, the Metro Y staff underwent a rigorous, 12-month process that included a comprehensive review of the Metro Y's internal safety policies and procedures, staff interviews, and onsite facility inspections conducted by certified Praesidium staff. Metro Y now joins a small group of YMCAs around the world that have achieved this highly respected accreditation status. For more information, visit Praesidiuminc.com.

Steps to Protecting Children

1. Learn the facts of child sexual abuse. Understand the risks. Realities, not trusts, should influence your decisions regarding children.
2. Minimize opportunity. If you eliminate or reduce one-adult/one-child situations, you'll dramatically lower the risk of sexual abuse for children.
3. Talk about it. Children often keep abuse secret, but barriers can be broken down by talking openly about it.
4. Stay alert. Don't expect obvious signs when a child is being sexually abused.
5. Make a plan. Learn where to go, whom to call, and how to react.
6. Act on suspicions. The future well-being of a child is at stake.
7. Get involved. Volunteer and financially support organizations that fight the tragedy of child sexual abuse.

Please educate your children about appropriate and inappropriate physical, verbal and emotional contact. Make sure that your child knows that if they experience any inappropriate actions at our Y (or elsewhere), that they should alert you immediately.

If you see warning signs from your child or adult, or you hear about something that sounds like abuse, report it immediately. If your child tells you about sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior, here's how to react. Your response plays a big role in how your child understands abuse and how he/she recovers.

1. Stay calm.
2. Comfort your child.
3. Listen carefully.
4. Ask for examples.
5. Do not threaten or criticize the person your child is accusing.

If what you learn from your child or if what you've observed or overheard sounds like abuse, call the CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE at [877.NJ.Abuse \(877.652.2873\)](tel:877.NJ.Abuse) or the police. If what you learn from your child, or if what you've observed or overheard, sounds like a boundary violation, suspicious or inappropriate behavior, or a policy violation in an organization, share your concerns with the individual employee, supervisor, or the person in charge of your organization. Be sure to follow up with both your child and the adult you've talked to.

Guiding Behavior

At the Y, positive discipline is a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of the individual child, the group, and the adult. Methods of positive discipline shall be consistent with the age and developmental needs of the children and lead to the ability to develop and maintain self-control. Please review the [Information to Parents](#) resource which can also be accessed in your registration account.

Behavior & Discipline Policy

Discipline at our YMCA is looked at as a learning experience. Children of all ages need to explore and test their curiosity. Exploration is imperative to the learning process and is encouraged within our center in a safe environment under the guidance of our teachers. As a child explores, they experience many trials and errors before a concept is understood or learned. Our discipline policy flows from this understanding. Just as a child is not expected to learn a color the first time it is experienced, they too are not expected to learn appropriate behavior without constant modeling and a lot of positive reinforcement.

The goal of our YMCA staff is to work cooperatively with the children and parents to help children develop self-regulation. We hope to help children become increasingly independent. We want children to feel good about themselves and to learn about their needs, along with those of other people. We want children to learn to self-regulate emotions, see the possible consequences of their actions, and accept alternative behaviors.

We use a combination of the following steps to ensure positive discipline:

- Make adjustments to the classroom environment to avoid possible problems.
- Redirect the child to another activity providing positive and constructive direction.
- Use “do” statements instead of “don’t” statements.
- Recognize that occasional inappropriate behavior is best ignored.
- Encourage the child to consider alternate solutions and the possible effects of choosing those alternatives.
- Determine why the issue has occurred and what can be done to avoid it next time.
- Use time away from the group to help an individual child calm down. When the child is calm, we will talk about the issue with the child and work toward resolution.
- Recognize and acknowledge positive behavior.
- Involve the child in decision-making when possible.
- In a situation where a child may physically harm themselves, another child, or an adult, we will use restraint holding the child with sufficient strength to protect the child and others until the situation is under control.
- Communicate with the parent/caregiver about the child’s behavior to gain insight and discuss effective strategies to improve behavior.
- Under no circumstances shall disciplining a child involve hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment, unsupervised isolation withholding of emotional responses or stimulation, enforced silence for long periods, association of a child’s behavior with rest, toileting or food or any form of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

If there is an ongoing problem with your child’s behavior, the teacher and director will meet with the parents/guardians to discuss the problem. Together they will come up with a plan or method of handling the particular situation. We strive to keep an open communication with the parents/guardians concerning all facets of their child’s development.

Suspension & Expulsion Policy

We are committed to working with all families to prevent a child from being suspended or expelled from our programs. Our staff will utilize the steps outlined in the Behavior Policy to help a child develop better self-regulation.

In addition, we will:

- Always use positive methods and language while disciplining children. Praise appropriate behaviors. Consistently apply consequences for rules. Give the child time to regain control.
- Document the child’s disruptive behavior and maintain confidentiality. Give the parent/guardian written copies of the disruptive behavior that might lead to expulsion.
- Schedule a conference with the director, classroom staff, and parent/guardian to discuss how to promote positive behaviors. Give the parent resources regarding methods of improving behavior.
- Recommend an evaluation by professional consultation on premises.
- Recommend an evaluation by local school district child study team.

Child's Actions for Expulsion

The following are reasons we may have to suspend or terminate a child from this center:

- Failure of a child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts
- Ongoing physical/verbal abuse to staff or other children
- Excessive biting

Parental Actions for a Child's Expulsion

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payment
- Failure to complete required forms, including child's immunization record
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child
- Physical or verbal abuse to staff

If the remedial actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's behavior warranting a suspension or expulsion. The parent/guardian will be informed about the length of the suspension and the expected behavioral changes required for the child to return to the center. Failure of the child to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the program. In the case of expulsion, the parent/guardian will be given a specific date that allows sufficient time to seek alternate childcare, whenever possible (depending on the risk to other children's safety or welfare).

A child cannot be suspended or expelled from the program as a form of retaliation if the parent/guardian has made a complaint regarding a program's alleged violations of licensing requirements, reported abuse or neglect occurring at the program, or questioned the program regarding policies and procedures.

CHILD HEALTH & WELLBEING

The following guidelines are required by the NJ Department of Children and Families Office of Licensing: A physical examination must be completed before a child is allowed to participate in our program. We must have an up-to-date immunization record on file for your child. Any additional immunizations must be added to your child's file. Each child must have a health examination by a licensed physician within:

- six months prior to admission for children up to 2 ½ years or
- one year prior to admission for children over 2 ½ years

Illness

Metro Y is committed to ensuring the safety and health of your child and our employees. If your child is ill and will be absent, please notify the center as soon as possible. If your child develops symptoms while at the center, we will contact you to request that you pick up your child immediately, and follow the guidelines related to your child's condition.

If your child is ill:

To maintain a healthy environment and prevent the spread of illness, we kindly ask for your cooperation in keeping your child home if sick. Keeping sick children home helps protect other children and staff from getting sick, prevents outbreaks of contagious illnesses, and ensures your child gets the rest and care they need to recover fully.

Your child may return once they have been symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication, or with a doctor's note stating the child is well enough to participate in activities and does not pose a health risk to others.

A child who has any of the illnesses or symptoms of illness specified below shall not be admitted to the center on a given day unless a medical diagnosis from a health care provider, which has been communicated to the center in writing, or verbally with a written follow-up, indicates that the child poses no serious health risk to himself or herself or other children. Such illnesses or symptoms of illness shall include, but not be limited to, any of the following:

- Acute diarrhea, characterized as twice the child's usual frequency of bowel movements with a change to a looser consistency within a period of 24 hours, or bloody diarrhea;
- Two or more episodes of acute vomiting within a period of 24 hours;
- Elevated oral temperature of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit or over or axillary temperature of 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit or over in conjunction with behavior changes;
- Red eyes with discharge;
- Lethargy that is more than expected tiredness;
- Severe pain or discomfort and/or too ill to participate in activities;
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin;
- Infected, untreated skin patches;
- Difficult rapid breathing or severe coughing;
- Undiagnosed skin rashes with fever, behavior change, or increasing tenderness or open blisters;

- Weeping or bleeding skin lesions that have not been treated by a health care provider;
- Mouth sores with drooling; or
- Stiff neck
- If your child is suspected to have lice, we will ask that you pick your child up immediately and have him/her treated. Your child may return when free of lice and live nits.

Administration of Medication

Medication will be administered to your child only under the following circumstances:

- The physician-prescribed dosage schedule does not allow the parent to administer the medication to the child before or after childcare.
- Prescribed and over-the-counter (OTC) medication is in its original container bearing the pharmacy prescription label or OTC box.
- The parent has provided written permission to administer medication along with the Physician's Orders to the YMCA.

One staff person will administer the medication while another observes. Both staff persons will sign the Medication Log.

Communicable Diseases

Per NJ executive order, please notify the center immediately if your child contracts a communicable disease, so we can take the necessary steps and inform the Health Department if necessary. Health notices will be communicated to families when we have been notified that a child in that classroom has a suspected or diagnosed communicable disease. Notifications may be provided to the classroom or the entire center depending on the case and guidance provided by the Health Department. Please follow the guidelines related to the specific illness as stated on the health notice. The identity of children with an illness or communicable disease will not be provided for privacy reasons.

Injuries

If a minor injury occurs during the day, an Ouch Report will be filled out and given to the parent.

For any injury occurring during the program that requires first aid treatment, the parent/caregiver will be required to sign an Incident Report.

- If a minor injury occurs during the day, an Incident Report will be completed and the parent will be notified at pick-up.
- If a child receives an injury to the head/face, falls from a height greater than the height of the child, or the child cannot be consoled, the staff will call the child's parent, and will leave a message if the person does not pick up.
- If a more serious injury occurs, requiring further medical attention, the parent will be notified by phone. If the injury requires immediate medical attention, the parent will be asked to come to the center immediately to pick up the child.
- In a medical emergency, 911 will be called, and the parents will be called immediately. A staff member will accompany emergency personnel and stay with the child until a parent or an authorized emergency contact arrives. The permission-to-treat form that is completed during registration will be brought to the hospital by the staff member.

Allergy Aware Environment

Our centers implement a range of measures to minimize the chance of a child with a food allergy being exposed to a known allergen. Please read carefully so that you fully understand the guidelines that will be in place.

- Parents are required to alert the YMCA of known food allergies on the health form. Please discuss appropriate strategies to minimize risks with the Director and provide a Physicians Care Plan and appropriate medication as needed.
- The Director will ensure classroom teachers are aware which of their children are at risk for an allergic reaction. Staff will be educated and trained in the prevention, recognition and treatment of allergic reactions including anaphylaxis.
- Age-appropriate education will be provided to children to help raise awareness and manage the risk of an allergic reaction.

To reduce the risk of exposure to life-threatening foods for young children, we are also a Nut-Free center.

- All snacks provided by the YMCA will be free of peanuts/nuts.
- Children must refrain from bringing to school ANY products that contain peanuts/nuts. This includes all snacks as well as lunch items. If a lunchbox is found to have peanut or nut products, those items will be removed and an alternative nut-free item provided.
- We do not allow food sharing at school. If we have a special event with food, we will check ingredient lists during these events to eliminate any possible reactions.
- Any baked items brought in for celebrations should be store-bought and in the original unopened packaging with the ingredient label detailing any potential allergens intact.

Please read the ingredient labels of all snacks, including those on this list, to ensure that it does not contain any nuts at all or any of the following: peanuts/nuts, peanut/nut butter, peanut oil, peanut/nut flour, peanut/nut meal, or any variety of the statements, "contains peanuts" and "may contain traces of peanuts/nuts".

Helpful Peanut Allergy Info:

www.foodallergy.org/page/peanut-allergy

Some Unexpected Sources of Peanut:

- Sauces such as pesto (pine nuts), salad dressing, gravy and salad dressing
- Some vegetarian food products, especially those advertised as meat substitutes
- Potato pancakes
- Glazes and marinades

Your support and understanding of this policy is greatly appreciated!

Breastfeeding

The Y recognizes the importance of breastfeeding and is committed to providing a supportive environment for breastfeeding mothers. We will accommodate the needs of breastfeeding mothers in a manner that ensures privacy, comfort, and respect.

- Staff members will encourage and support breastfeeding mothers to continue breastfeeding.
- Caregivers/teachers should feed infants on cue unless the parent/guardian and the child's primary care provider give written instructions otherwise.
- Infants should always be held for bottle feeding.
- Staff members will receive professional development training on promoting and supporting breastfeeding.
- Breastfeeding mothers will have a clean, welcoming place to breastfeed or express their milk. A refrigerator will be made available for the storage of expressed milk.
- No infant is fed the expressed human milk of another infant's mother. A mother's milk is for her child only.
- Infants are not permitted to have bottles in the crib and will not be allowed to carry a bottle while standing, walking, or running around. A plan to introduce age-appropriate solid foods (complementary foods) to infants will be made in consultation with the child's parent/guardian and primary care provider.

Safe Sleep Practices

We follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) safe sleep guidelines to support infant health and safety:

- Infants are always placed on their backs to sleep in safety-approved cribs.
- Cribs remain free of pillows, quilts, toys, and other soft items.
- Any alternate sleep position requires a written physician's note outlining the medical reason and time frame.
- Infants receive supervised tummy time while awake to support their development. Tummy sleeping during rest may increase the risk of SIDS.

Emotional Wellbeing

The mental, emotional, social, and developmental health of your children is just as important to us as their physical health. We strongly encourage parents and guardians to share mental/emotional/developmental needs and/or existing management plans with the Center Director so that we can partner with you to provide the best care possible for your child.

To support mental, emotional, and social development, we utilize evidence-based curricula such as [Harmony Academy](#) and [MindUp](#) that help build resilience, foster healthy relationships and create a sense of belonging through fun games and age-appropriate activities. These curricula are appropriate for youth in pre-K through middle school, and are intended to foster knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to develop healthy identities, create meaningful relationships, and engage productively with others. Lessons include topics such as celebrating differences, empathy and critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, and peer relationships.

The Metro YMCA has a Mental Health Team that consists of a Mental Health Director and Mental Health Specialists who can provide mental and emotional support to childcare staff and children. The team will partner with staff to provide activities to promote the social and emotional wellbeing of children; and partner with families to address any emotional or behavioral needs of children. They are also available to provide families with resources and referrals to address individual needs upon request.

CHILD GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

Continuity of Care

Our centers practice continuity of care to ensure secure attachment and bonding, especially with infants and toddlers, creating long-lasting support systems and relationships, which strengthen home-school partnerships, allow for formative skills to develop and advance, and decrease stress from multiple transitions.

- Looping – children will remain with the same lead and assistant teachers for the first three years in the Infant/Waddler and Toddler age groups. If a transition is pending, families will be given sufficient notice to visit the new classroom, meet the teachers, and prepare for the move.
- Multi-Age Classrooms – pre-school children will be grouped into Pre-K 3 and Pre-K4 classes. Due to the 11-hour care day, there will be times when there are mixed classrooms, such as Before and After Care. We encourage communication between staff teams to ensure AM and PM staff have an understanding of each child's daily activities and can share with families.

Classroom transitions typically happen at the beginning of the academic year, however, there may also be transitions during the school year if your child is developmentally ready to move up. Factors that may determine a move include teacher observation, developmental age, socialization and language skills, independence and self-help skills. We'll make these decisions with your input and work to transition your child into their new classroom in a way that supports their social and emotional well-being.

Ages & Stages

From birth to 5 years, your child should reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act and move. We utilize the reliable screening tool, Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), to identify potential developmental delays or concerns in children from 1 month to 5 ½ years of age. Parents answer questions about their child's abilities in different areas of development like communication, gross motor skills, fine motor skills, problem solving and personal-social skills. Our staff then review the information provided and score the questionnaire. We will discuss the results with you and determine if further assessment or intervention is needed for your child.

Parent teacher conferences based on the ASQ are offered twice per year. If a new child starts during the year, their first ASQ will be at 30 days so that we can use it as a baseline. If delays are noted, a referral may be made to the child's pediatrician, the local child study team or to Early Intervention. We will also share activities to support your child's development.

Toilet Training

It is important that staff and parents work together to help the child achieve independent toileting. Toilet training is a process that children will experience in different ways. Staff and parents should adopt a simple and consistent routine with the child. There will be accidents at times, so we recommend sending your child with extra clothes including underwear, socks, and shoes. Please allow time and be patient.

Biting

Biting is a very common behavior among toddlers. There are several possible reasons why children under the age of three bite. Some of the most common causes of biting are:

- Teething
- Lack of language skills to express strong feelings. Biting is a substitute for messages a child can't yet express in words, like: I am so mad at you; You are standing too close to me; I am really excited; I want to play with you.
- Over-tired or overwhelmed by the sounds, lights or activity in the setting.
- Experimenting to see what will happen.
- Need more active playtime.

To minimize biting behavior, our teachers will:

- Let the biting child know in words and manner that biting is unacceptable.
- Ensure the child who was bitten receives care and attention, clearly communicating that biting does not result in more attention for the biter.
- If your child is verbal, our teachers will talk about the different strategies they could use next time, instead of biting.
- Observe the child to identify potential triggers to their behavior, so they can anticipate and redirect the child's attention when a bite might occur.
- Change the environment, routine, or activities as needed.

What can a parent do if their child begins to bite?

Keep in close communication with your child's teacher if you notice biting behaviors in your child, whether in your presence or at the child care center. Work together to identify if there are any stresses or environmental triggers, such as a schedule that is too demanding or difficult transitions, that are contributing to the behavior. Learning a new behavior takes time. Consistency among caregivers is very important. Fortunately, biting is a phase that passes as your child learns other ways to communicate their feelings.

What if your child is bitten?

Seeing a bite mark on your child is very difficult to handle, and even worse, infant and toddler bites are often on the face. It is natural to be upset, but keep in mind that it is a consequence of the group situation and not really the fault of the child, the family, or the program. Your child might as easily have been the biter. We will not release the name of the biting child for this reason.

Every biting situation is different and poses unique challenges. Teachers in childcare are trained to minimize the biting behavior and will communicate with you about the strategies used in the classroom, and what you can do to support your child. We will take all possible measures to help a child overcome the "biting habit".

Visit www.zerotothree.org or www.cdc.gov/actearly for suggestions and additional resources.

Staff/Family Relationships

The Y encourages a positive and cooperative relationship between families and staff. This relationship is always professional and must not extend beyond the classroom or the center. As per our Child Protection Policy, staff members are prohibited from babysitting any child that actively attends or participates in a Metro YMCA program including childcare, or is an active member of the Metro YMCA of the Oranges. Please speak with your center administrator if you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy.

Family Involvement & Events

Our programs are strengthened by active family involvement. The Y maintains an open-door policy, meaning that any parent or guardian can visit the center and their child's class at any time. In addition to visiting the center, there are several ways that parents can become involved such as volunteering for special events. Supporting the Y's Annual Campaign and participating in your center's family association. Please speak with your center administrator for additional information.

Family events may be offered throughout the year so that parents, children, and staff can gather socially. These may include international events, carnivals, picnics, and family nights. All caregivers are encouraged to participate in family activities and events. Events will be communicated through email and social media.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Families will have the opportunity to meet with their child's teacher to discuss and review their child's progress throughout the year. An assessment of your child's progress will be reviewed, and you will have the opportunity to engage and ask questions about your child's development. While parent-teacher conferences are more formal opportunities to discuss your child's experiences, parents are welcome to ask for a conference at any time.