



Early Childhood Education
& School Age Child Care
Parent Handbook
Updated 11/6/19

Most updated version will always exist on our website

Welcome Y Families:

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Early Childhood Education and School Age Child Care provider. At the Y, we recognize that successful youth development requires a holistic approach focused on achieving social emotional, physical and cognitive milestones. Our programs place caring, dedicated staff in children's lives to nurture them along their journey to adulthood so that they can become active, thriving, and contributing members of society.

At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. Every day we work side by side with our neighbors to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. We believe in strengthening the foundations of community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

At the Y, we serve thousands of children, countywide, through Early Childhood Education, School Age Child Care, Camp, Programs and Volunteerism. We are not only here for the children we serve, but for the parents and guardians who care for them. This handbook is designed with the parent/guardian in mind; placing pertinent information within the first few pages of your reading.

Our Mission:

At the Y, strengthening community is our cause. The Y serves three crucial areas of focus to help individuals, families and communities to learn, grow and thrive.

The Y is **For Youth Development**, because we believe that all youth deserve the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve. That's why, through the Y, millions of youth today are cultivating the values, skills and relationships that lead to positive behaviors, better health and educational achievement.

The Y is **For Healthy Living**, improving the nation's health and well-being. The Y brings families closer together, encourages good health and fosters connections through fitness, sports, fun and shared interests. As a result, millions of youth, adults and families are receiving support, guidance and resources needed to achieve greater health and well-being for their spirit, mind and body.

The Y is **For Social Responsibility**, giving back and providing support to our neighbors. The Y has been listening and responding to our communities' most critical needs for 160 years. Whether developing skills or emotional well-being, welcoming and connecting diverse populations or advocating for healthier communities, the Y fosters the care and respect all people need and deserve. Through the Y, thousands of volunteers, donors, leaders and partners are empowering millions of people, and the communities in which they live, to be healthy, confident, connected and secure.

Our Inclusion Philosophy:

We are for all. We serve all people regardless of age, sex, race, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), or financial circumstances.

"For all" is a simple but powerful phrase. But without it, the Y mission is incomplete. At the Y, we strive to understand and value each person's unique dimensions of diversity and help them overcome barriers to inclusion so they can fully participate in society and reach their potential. Each of us, through our everyday actions, has the power to contribute to a more connected, cohesive world for all." – Kevin Washington, CEO, YUSA

Confidentiality:

We respect the privacy of all families and the children we serve and we ask our families and teachers to do the same. Please respect our children, families and staff by refraining from discussing and/or gossiping about sensitive and confidential information; **this includes any sharing on social media.**

All school records and information concerning a child and his/her family are kept confidential. Any information regarding the child including progress reports, payment information, etc. will only be released upon written consent from the legal parent/guardian or upon legal order.

Partnership with DHS (Department of Human Services)

Our Youth Education Centers and School Age Child Care sites are licensed providers through the state of Pennsylvania, Department of Human Services (DHS). Families may contact DHS through their website: <http://dhs.pa.gov/>

Partnership with Keystone STARS:

The YMCA is a participant in the quality child care program known in Pennsylvania as Keystone STARS. This program requires additional training and requirements that must be met by the center in order to qualify for each STAR level. When you choose a center that participates in Keystone STARS, you can be sure that the center and its employees are adhering to stricter guidelines. Participation in this program also means that the center may qualify for some grants designed to further enhance the quality of our program.

Curriculum:

Our curriculum reflects a blend of adherence to the State of Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards, Keystone STARS, and a variety of professional resources. We promote positive outcomes which support a high-quality learning environment. Through applying our curriculum, our teachers are fueled with resources which support them in the planning and managing of their day. Through play and discovery, our practices build children's confidence, creativity and critical thinking skills.

Our themes include, but not limited to: Families, community helpers, animals, holidays, and seasons, in addition to academic themes of colors, shapes, numbers, and letters. This approach enables the teacher to address the various interests of young children, while including an interactive approach to overall growth across developmental areas. Each day's plan provides for a balance of individualized, center based, and small and large group activities. Appropriate active and quiet activities are also provided. Teachers move among the children, facilitating their involvement with materials and activities, and encouraging positive social behaviors.

Our center-based classrooms are designed to offer a safe, secure, and stimulating atmosphere that invites creative learning, orderly exploration and positive socialization. Centers provide an informal atmosphere where children can make choices and friends and learn to solve problems. Research has shown that children learn through play which our staff facilitates. Our lesson planning is intentional and encourages children to consider what they are doing and what they are learning.

Program Objectives:

- Ensure a safe environment for children, one that encourages the development of friendships and respect for themselves and others.
- Provide creative programming that utilizes developmentally appropriate activities that children will enjoy.
- Encourage positive self-esteem and develop the child's self-discipline.
- Develop problem solving abilities as well as conflict resolution skills to enable children to have a solid foundation in appropriate responses to life challenges.
- Enhance each child's ability to communicate needs, wants, feelings, and ideas.
- Provide positive guidance via caring and well-trained staff.

Environment and Measurable Outcomes per Classroom:

INFANT: Ages 6 Weeks to 12 Months:

Our infant room is a warm and nurturing environment with extensive individualized attention. Parents provide a daily schedule for caregivers to follow.

TODDLER I: Ages 12-24 Months

Socialization skills, singing songs and circle time are regular activities. Small class size enables one-on-one time between your child and the caregiver. This program features an age-appropriate curriculum designed to enhance early learning.

TODDLER II: Ages 24-36 Months

Socialization skills, independence, and self-help skills are developed. Songs, finger plays, circle time, gross motor, and outside time make for a fun and exciting day. This program features an age-appropriate curriculum.

PRESCHOOL: Ages 3-5 Years

This program features a developmentally appropriate curriculum based on best practices, including name and number recognition. Curriculum includes swim lessons and gym time (branch pending). Circle time, center time, music, tabletop and outside play offer a well-rounded day for each child. ***Requirement:** Child must be fully potty trained or possess the required self help skills to change him or herself accordingly (Example: Demonstrates the ability to change out of a soiled pull-up, clean him or herself, and change into a fresh, clean pull-up). In times of a BM (bowel movement), parent/caregiver will be asked to come to the classroom to change the child.

KINDERGARTEN ENRICHMENT (NEWTOWN): Ages 5+

State and local guidelines, accompanied by our nurturing curriculum, are used to develop individual learning plans to best prepare children for first grade. A half day wraparound option is also available for children attending Kindergarten at another school and need before and after care.

PA PRE-K COUNTS (MORRISVILLE)

Pre-K Counts is a government funded program that is designed to expand learning opportunities to families that may be at an economic or social disadvantage. The program is provided at no cost to the family, but families must submit an application and meet specific guidelines. Children entering this program must be 3 years old prior to September 1.

SCHOOL AGE (BTSD SCHOOLS, FAIRLESS HILLS, MORRISVILLE, NEW HOPE-SOLEBURY, PALISADES, & QUAKERTOWN)

Our School Age Child Care program is an educational before and after school program. This nurturing environment supports children socially, emotionally and developmentally through areas such as healthy snack time, homework engagement and themed activities. This program allows children to acquire strengths in developmental areas beyond the classroom.

Transition Information/Assessment Information:

- Information regarding transition from one room to another will be provided to you when your child is ready for the next room. The teacher will speak with the family and provide information regarding the program the child will be transitioning to.
- Child assessments will be completed at minimum two times per year; observations are ongoing. The Y will always grant greater observations and/or progress conversations with families when requested.
- Parents and children transitioning to Kindergarten are encouraged to schedule a Kindergarten registration/orientation as per instructions of the school district. Parents are responsible to call their elementary school to schedule.
- **Upon written request, children transitioning to other programs will have their records forwarded to their new program.**

Care and Supervision:

Children are cared for and supervised at all times according to state mandated ratios for each particular age group. Ratios change for nap, swimming and for mixed age groupings. The phrase "supervised at all times" means that each staff person shall be assigned the responsibility of supervising specific children.

Staff Training and Clearances:

We have an excellent blend of early childhood and elementary teachers, college students, and child care professionals who participate in orientation and ongoing training sessions. Our staff cares about each student as an individual, and we strive to build self-esteem through positive values. Their experience, talent, and enthusiasm will provide your child with experiences to enhance their ability to grow in spirit, mind, and body. It is mandatory for our staff to have criminal record checks, child abuse history clearance, FBI clearances, health appraisals, and documentation for all the qualifications their position requires for DHS (Department of Human Services) licensing and Keystone STARS.

Suspicion of abuse and/or neglect: Mandated Reporter:

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of the YMCA are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of the YMCA are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at the YMCA take

this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. As mandated reporters, the staff of the YMCA cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Not providing appropriate meals including a drink for your child
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Sending a sick child to school over medicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

CHILD CARE RATIOS (NUMBER OF STAFF TO NUMBER OF CHILDREN)

Children 6 weeks to 12 months:	1:4
Children 13 months to 24 months:	1:5
Children 25 months to 36 months:	1:6
Preschool/Pre K	1:10
Young School Age	1:12
School Age	1:15

Custody Orders:

Parents are never to ask Y staff to submit a statement or serve as a witness during a custody order. When an enrolled child is the subject of a court order (ex. - Custody Order, Restraining Order or Protection from Abuse Order), the Y must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

In the absence of a court order on file with the Y administration, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. The Y cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to

their child, the Y suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, the Y is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of the Y cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. The Y will report any violations of these orders to the court.

Babysitting Policy:

STAFF EMPLOYMENT BY CLIENT

Y employees are prohibited from being employed by any client (current or former). Parents are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Parents who employ the YMCA's staff will have their services terminated and any deposits will be forfeited. Staff who become employed by current or former clients of the YMCA will have their employment with the YMCA terminated. Employment refers to any relationship outside of the agency's services which involves an employee of the YMCA to interact with a current or former client of the YMCA. Such relationships include but are not limited to, baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny services, and carpooling regardless of whether or not those services are voluntary or paid.

Y Leadership & Hours of Operation:

Early Childhood Education Leadership:

Fairless Hills:

Phone Number (215) 949-3400
Ryan Hazelett Advanced Director of Youth Development; rhazelett@ymcabucks.org
Janet Allen Associate Director of Youth Education; jallen@ymcabucks.org
Gail Tomlinson Program Coordinator; gtomlinson@ymcabucks.org

Morrisville:

Phone Number (215) 736-8077
Angela Cloak Regional Director of Youth Education & Pre-K Counts; acloak@ymcabucks.org
Karen Karass Program Coordinator; kkaras@ymcabucks.org

New Britain:

Phone Number (215) 348-4214
Valerie Tanner Advanced Branch Director Newtown & New Britain; vtanner@ymcabucks.org
Kim Pawlishyn Program Coordinator; kpawlishyn@ymcabucks.org

New Hope-Solebury:

Phone Number (215) 862-0222

Karen Kleger Director of Youth Education and NHS EDP; kkleger@ymcabucks.org

Newtown:

Phone Number (267) 759-6665

Amy Zook Director of Youth Education; azook@ymcabucks.org

Quakertown-Palisades:

Phone Number (215) 536-9622

Carlie Bearn Director of Youth Education; cbearn@ymcabucks.org

Y Administration:

Trish Feintheil, COO, tfeintheil@ymcabucks.org

Virginia Doyle, CFO, vdoyle@ymcabucks.org

Lori Howard, Controller, Central Bucks Region, lhoward@ymcabucks.org

Diana Flounders, Controller, Lower Bucks Region, dflounders@ymcabucks.org

Roe Horn, Controller, Upper Bucks Region, Rhorn@ymcabucks.org

For payment issues, please direct all correspondence to childcarefinance@ymcabucks.org.

Financial Assistance Support:

Region: Catherine Refice, crefice@ymcabucks.org

Hours of Operation:

Fairless Hills Youth Education Center:

Monday - Friday
6:30AM - 6:00PM
Day options available

Fairless Hills School Age Child Care:

Monday - Friday
Onsite: 6:30AM-9:00AM (Before Care) and 3:00PM-6:00PM (After Care)
BTSD: 6:45AM-9:00AM (Before Care) and 3:00PM-6:00PM (After Care)

Morrisville Youth Education Center:

Monday - Friday
Pre-K Counts hours vary by classroom
School Age Child Care and PKC Wrap Care
6:30AM - 9:00AM (Before Care)
2:45PM - 6:00PM (After Care)

New Britain Youth Education Center:

Monday - Friday
7:30AM - 6:00PM
Day options available

New Hope-Solebury Clubhouse for Kids:

Monday - Friday
Child Care: 7:00AM - 6:00PM
EDP Program: 7:30AM-School Start (Morning Care) and School Dismissal-6:00PM (After Care)
Day off program and flex time options available
Extended Day Program

Newtown Youth Education Center:

Monday - Friday
7:00AM - 6:00PM
Day options available

Palisades School Age Child Care Program:

7:15AM-9:00AM (Before Care) and School Dismissal-6:00PM (After Care)

Quakertown Youth Education Center & School Age Child Care Program:

Monday - Friday
6:15AM - 6:00PM
Day options available

Registration and Financial Obligations

Enrollment/Registration Procedures:

There is a one-time, \$50 registration fee per child or \$75 per family. This fee is waived for children who are receiving subsidy through ELRC (Early Learning Resource Center) or YMCA Financial Assistance. Children who dis-enroll and re-enroll after a six month time lapse will have to pay the registration fee again. This fee is due at the time of enrollment. The following registration forms are also required prior to the child's first day of care:

1. **Registration and emergency release form
2. **Physical health form (to be completed by child's doctor)
3. Signed parent handbook agreement form
4. Civil rights compliance form
5. **Signed tuition payment agreement
6. YMCA membership application
7. Photo/video permission slip, for documentation purposes

**Must be updated every six months and/or information changes. Children under the age of two must submit physical health form every six months. Children over the age of two must submit annually.

The child may not begin care until all of the above required paperwork is complete, and child is entered into our registration software. Failure to collaborate with the Y in submitting and updating the above forms may result in termination from the program.

Note: Tuition is considered the responsibility of the parent enrolling the child. It is not the responsibility of the Y to collect split payments from different parents/family members.

Tuition Payment Policy:

- All families are required to enroll in electronic draft
- Financial terms and conditions must be signed
- Failure to make timely, routine payments will result in suspension of care and financial assistance when applicable

For payment issues, please direct all correspondence to childcarefinance@ymcabucks.org.

Withdrawing Your Child:

YMCA of Bucks County requires a thirty-day written notice when planning to withdraw your child from any of our Youth Education Centers. This allows emotional, positive closure for the child, his/her teachers, and friends. After one full week of a "no call no show" absence, the Y will terminate care, release the "spot" and cease all billing.

Absences:

Please notify us by 9:00AM the morning of care if/when your child will not be attending the center. If your child is out because he/she is ill, please inform the staff as to what the illness is. If necessary, we will post a contagious disease notification so all families are aware of possible exposure.

Important Note: The Y does not credit nor refund for absences unrelated to illness. Illness will be considered for credit as follows:

- After two or more consecutive days of illness, the Y will consider a credit with a signed doctor's note
- The signed doctor's note must be related to the time frame of credit request
- The credit will be based upon the doctor's recommendation of how long the child must stay home from school/care

The Y does not credit nor refund for events outside of our control which cause closure of the center (snow, power outage, etc.). Families receiving financial support through ELRC or the YMCA Financial Assistance Program must adhere to consistent, daily attendance - otherwise are at risk of forfeiting subsidy. Furthermore, families receiving support from ELRC, who exceed the current 40 absences July-June (date span of ELRC contract) threshold, will be charged the Y's daily rate.

Lateness and Late Fees:

Parents must pick-up their child/children prior to closing time of the center. After the first five minutes of closing of the Y, a \$1 per minute late fee will be added to the family's account after a five minute grace period. As excessive lateness negatively impacts our staff, this can result in possible termination from the program. Continual lateness resulting in a late fee may result in termination of the program.

Vacation and Summer Policy; effective 9/1/19:

With the exception of our Kindergarten Enrichment Program, our Early Childhood Education Program operates year-round, September - August.

As our standard operating expenses such as staff wage/salary, medical benefits, utility costs, rent, supplies, etc. do not fluctuate, nor can our collection of payments. Therefore, the Y does

not waive nor credit fees for absences; including vacations and illnesses.

Furthermore, families who choose to stop care over the summer months forfeit their “spot” for September.

We understand rare, life changing occurrences will happen. The Y is here for you. Please speak with your Director if you or your family is experiencing an extended illness, family emergency, sudden family change such as job loss, and/or financial hardship.

Financial Assistance:

The policy of YMCA of Bucks County is that no individual or family will be denied membership or program participation due to the inability to pay. **Individuals seeking financial assistance for child care must first be screened for ELRC funding. Details and links can be found on our website: ymcabucks.org**

Parents who have been placed on ELRC’s waiting list may be assisted by the YMCA’s Financial Assistance Program. Financial assistance may be obtained by applying and furnishing proof of need. Financial assistance may be limited by the availability of funds. A sliding fee scale will be established for those in need of financial assistance based on gross monthly income and the number of people in the household. See detailed Financial Assistance Application found on our website: ymcabucks.org.

- The YMCA’s levels of financial assistance may depend on the success of fundraising, special events, etc.
- Applicants may apply directly to the YMCA.
- Financial assistance will not be awarded in the full amount of the program or service fee. Applicant is expected to pay their fair share of membership or program fees.
- The assistance granted is for one year; the recipient will then need to reapply.
- It is the recipient’s responsibility to re-apply when the grant period has expired. The family is responsible for the full-payment once the financial assistance agreement has expired.
- Note: The timeliness of response and approval is based upon the timeliness of submitted required documentation; delay of submission negatively impacts processing time.
- The Y reserves the right to review any financial assistance agreement on a monthly basis.
- The YMCA reserves the right to refuse assistance to any applicant.
- Financial Assistance is jeopardized when fair share payments are not made on time or absences from the program are excessive.

School Calendar and Closure Information

Typical School Closures Dates (may be subject to change and individualized based on location):

To best support our families, we strive to schedule school days off in accordance with the school districts in which we serve.

Beginning January 1, 2020:

New Year's Day
Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Day
Presidents' Day
Memorial Day
Labor Day
Election Day
Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Christmas Day

**Important Note: Calendar subject to change. Any additional closure days are considered branch specific, and will therefore be shared by the individual branch.*

Important Note: If the Y and/or Youth Education Center is open during a time frame in which the school district is closed, families needing additional or extended care will need to register for our Holiday/Extended Day Program called School's Day Out. Examples include:

- Children enrolled in ½ day programming who need full day
- Pre-K Counts children whose program is closed due to the holiday; calendar distributed by director
- A registration calendar will be available at the beginning of each session and will be listed in our program brochure. Registration is required so we can staff appropriately.

Snow, Severe Weather and Emergency Closings:

In times of snow and severe weather, parents are advised to immediately check our website prior to arriving at the center.

- www.ymcabucks.org

When the school district of the associated branch goes into delay/closure; Early Childhood Education (ECE) and School Age Child Care/Extended Day Program (SACC/EDP) will shift their programming times accordingly. School district association is as follows:

Bristol Township School Sites - School Age Child Care:

- If Bristol Township Schools enter morning delay; Morning Care will begin at 9:00AM at the school sites.

Fairless Hills Branch - Child Care:

- When Pennsbury School District goes into morning delay, Fairless Hills Child Care will automatically shift to an 9:00AM opening.

Fairless Hills Branch - School Age Child Care:

- School Age Child Care will shift to an 9:00AM start time and care will be provided; bussing will operate as standard in accordance with the school district start time.

New Hope-Solebury - Clubhouse for Kids & Extended Day Program (LES & UES):

- When New Hope-Solebury School District goes into morning delay; Child Care will automatically shift to a 9:00AM opening.

New Britain:

- When Central Bucks School District goes into morning delay; Child Care will automatically shift to a 9:00AM opening.

Newtown:

- When Council Rock School District goes into morning delay, Child Care will automatically shift to an 9:00AM opening.
- Kindergarten in Newtown is a full day program and will therefore open at 9:00AM with the rest of the center.
- We do not offer Child Care bus transportation in Newtown, therefore transportation is a non-issue.

Morrisville Pre-K Counts:

- Upon school district morning delay, each Pre-K Counts Program will begin at a two hour delay as per the individual Pre-K Counts classroom start time. For example, if the Pre-K Counts classroom begins at 8:30AM, the delayed start time for that classroom will be 10:30AM.

Morrisville Branch - School Age Child Care & Pre-K Counts Wrap Around Program:

- School Age Child Care and Pre-K Counts Wrap Around Program will shift to an 9:00AM start time, bussing will operate as standard in accordance with the school district start time.

Palisades - School Age Child Care

- When Palisades School District goes into morning delay; before care **will not** be provided. All parents must drop off their children at the school or the school's bussing in according to school district arrival time.

Quakertown - Child Care and School Age Child Care:

- When Quakertown School District goes into morning delay; Child Care will automatically shift to a 9:00AM opening, bussing will operate as standard in accordance with the school district start time.

Important Note: When YMCA of Bucks County associated school districts announce early dismissal due to weather, parents are responsible to pick up their children at the schools. We do not offer transportation. Our childcare center will close early as well, in accordance to their local school district. Parents will be asked to pick up their children in a timely manner.

Sign In/Sign Out Sheets, etc.

Parent/guardian must sign their child "in" when arriving and "out" when leaving; each center has their own method of sign in/out communication; please follow instructions accordingly. Furthermore:

- Always be sure that a teacher has acknowledged your child's arrival/departure.
- If another adult is to pick-up your child, please make sure that adult is authorized on your emergency form. This adult will need to present photo identification when picking up your child.
- In the event of a rare change in pick up due to an emergency, and the pick-up adult is not listed on the emergency form, you must call and alert us so we can complete proper DHS forms. Again, photo identification will be required when picking up your child.

Inclusion Policy:

INCLUSION POLICY

YMCA of Bucks County welcomes all children and is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early learning and development experiences that support the full access and participation of each and every child. We believe that each child is unique and we will work in partnership with families and other professionals involved with the child to provide the support every child needs to reach their full potential.

Procedures:

Admissions/Waiting List

Children of all abilities are accepted into care at YMCA of Bucks County and families interested in having their child attend the program will be given an equal opportunity for admission. A waiting list may be maintained and in the case of Pre K Counts, children with the highest point total will be served first.

Inclusive Environment

Early childhood educators at YMCA of Bucks County use developmentally appropriate practices and consider the unique needs of all children with planning. Staff will make every attempt to

make any adaptations or modifications necessary to meet the needs of the children. Schedules, routines and activities are flexible and early childhood educators will work with therapists, special educators and other professionals to integrate individual accommodations, modifications and strategies into classroom routines and activities. Any adaptations will be reviewed with families and other professionals supporting the child.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality applies to all verbal and written information about potential, enrolling and previously enrolled children and their families. All staff will be briefed on the need for confidentiality and will be expected to fulfill their obligation to respect the protection of privacy. Written records will be stored in a secure location with access limited to the director and the child's teacher. No information will be released about a child and the parent/legal guardian without written permission of the parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility held by early childhood educators as mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect as outlined in Pennsylvania law or when information is subpoenaed by the court.

Family Centered Practices

YMCA of Bucks County acknowledges and respects the priorities each family has for their child. Families are encouraged and supported to collaborate with staff to ensure that each child has an opportunity for optimum success. Each center communicates with each family daily and has regular meetings to discuss the child's successes and challenges.

Professional Development and Support for Staff

Training and support is provided to ensure that all staff are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the developmental and educational needs of all children. All staff attend training focused on effective inclusion and/or other disability topics whenever possible. Additional support and resources are provided as appropriate.

Collaboration with Other Professionals

Many children with disabilities or other special needs are supported by developmental and educational professionals such as therapists, teachers and others. YMCA of Bucks County welcomes those professionals and works with them to assure the child's success. The service provider is encouraged to provide services in the context of the early childhood classroom environment and the child's teacher and the service provide work collaboratively to determine the best strategies to support the child in the group setting. YMCA of Bucks County supports the teacher's participation in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings.

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION

- YMCA of Bucks County will endeavor to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions by:
 - Creating a positive climate that focuses on prevention
 - Developing clear, appropriate and consistent expectations and consequences that address the disruptive behaviors.
 - Ensure fairness, equity and continuous improvement
 - Collaborations with Early Intervention, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, Behavioral Health and other services.
 - Family engagement- establishing positive relationships with families that are responsive both culturally and linguistically.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY

- The policy of YMCA of Bucks County and its branches is to serve all people regardless of age, sex, race, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English Proficiency) or financial circumstances.
- If your child has an IEP we ask that you share that information with us. By working together towards common goals we can strive to support the children in our care. All information will remain confidential.
- If you are an English Language Learner, we will endeavor to utilize the services of the high school and/or college language departments in our area.

SCHOOL TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

- Group meetings will be held each year for parents/guardians regarding transitions for children from one program to another or to an educational setting.
- All Pre K children who will be attending kindergarten in the fall, will visit the local elementary school in May prior, participate in kindergarten activities and receive transition materials to "ease" the transition.
- Families and children are encouraged to connect to their new school setting by visiting prior to the child's start date.

CARING FOR OUR CHILDREN

- Our facility uses the "Caring for Our Children" performance standards as set by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Public Health Association
- The goal of the YMCA of Bucks County is to provide health and safety performance standards for all children who are in child care programs.
- Children with chronic medical conditions, including asthma, allergies, diabetes, seizures etc. require written information from the child's doctor so that the child can be properly cared for and staff know when to administer treatment and/or call for 911 if needed.
- Medical information including when and if medication is to be administered
- Permission from the parent/guardian to administer medication for example an epi-pen, inhaler, Benadryl, etc.
- Training if needed for staff to recognize symptoms and needs.

AGES AND STAGES:

- YMCA policy is to use Ages and Stages as a resource for our teachers to gain knowledge of a child's social and emotional and cognitive development.
- Parents/Guardians are asked to fill out specific questionnaires that will provide a reliable structure for addressing the emotional, social and cognitive development of children under five.
- Results will help staff identify children who may need additional supports.
- Cognitive needs will be addressed by individualized instruction for children who may need additional assistance learning skills.
- Families will meet with teachers and results will be discussed at the Getting to Know You Welcome Meetings and conferences.

CURRICULUM STATEMENT/CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

- Classroom activities are focused around Creative Curriculum and lesson plans reflect Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards.
- The learning environment provides a balance of individualized, center based, and small and large group activities.
- Teachers moved among the children, facilitating their involvement with materials and activities, and encouraging positive social behaviors.
- Our center-based classrooms are designed to offer a safe, secure , and stimulating atmosphere that invites creative learning, orderly exploration and positive socialization. Children can make choices.
- Research has shown that children learn through play which staff facilitates. Our lesson planning is intentional and encourages children to consider what they are doing and what they are learning.

FAMILY GROUP

- Parents/Guardians interested in serving on a Family Committee are asked to see Director.
- Parent/Child Care/Community Partnerships are crucial to children's success.
- We are looking for "Stakeholders" who are interested in helping us with continuous quality improvement, making suggestions to include families in other center events, and helping us to develop a survey.
- Development of annual group activity to involve other parents in meeting program learning goal.

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to become involved in their child's education by participating in conferences, completing at-home activities, parent meetings, field trips, classroom parties, the Family Group (above). Volunteer opportunities are available.
- Please see your child's teacher.
- Families are invited to participate in our special events, Graduation Activities, and others throughout the year.

- At some sites, on site trainings may be made available during the year through the Bucks County Quality Child Care Coalition, The Bucks County Intermediate Unit, our local Health Department, etc.

Parent/Family Volunteers

- Volunteer policies have changed.
- Volunteers must now have current **Child Abuse and State Police**. The child abuse and state police are free for volunteers.
- If you are interested in volunteering in your child's classroom or on field trips, you will need to have above clearances on file with the YMCA of Bucks County. We will give you the information on how to obtain the clearances.
- Volunteers are under the guidance of Y staff and never alone with a child.
- If you are interested, please see your child's teacher for further information.
- No parent will be allowed to volunteer without the appropriate clearances.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND REFERRALS

- Upon enrollment the family member/guardian is given a booklet listing Community Resources and contact information.
- Classroom developmental observations may provide information indicating possible need for a child to be referred to community resources. For example, if a three year child appears to need speech therapy, the teacher or director will provide the necessary contact information to the family member/guardian so that he/she can contact the appropriate agency, in this case, the Bucks County Intermediate Unit.
- If at any time a family member or guardian needs a referral, the YMCA will help provide appropriate information. The nature of these inquiries shall remain confidential.

PA PRE K COUNTS GENERAL INFORMATION (MORRISVILLE)

- This program is funded through a grant from Pennsylvania and there are no fees charged for the program.
- Enrollment criteria includes: family income is 300% or less of Federal Poverty guidelines, PA residence, English Language Learners (ELL), Special needs, etc. A waiting list will be maintained for those families who have not received a slot.
- The school year is 180 days and children are expected to have no more that 18 absences. Additional absences may result in removal from program.
- Limited space is available for children requiring "wrap around care" either before or after the Pre K Counts Program. Please check for space availability and fee.
- Our program is licensed by DHS and is a Keystone STAR 4 site.
- **See your child's particular room schedule for the hours of operation.**
- Please have your child here each day by his/her scheduled start time.
- Please call the center if you will be late. Tardiness that becomes habitual may result in your child being removed from the program.
- We follow a modified school calendar for both the United Way and Pennsbury grants. Every family will receive a calendar at the beginning of the school year. Modifications will be shared with all families.

- We offer food through the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. You may chose breakfast and lunch or just breakfast or lunch. Please understand that it is all or nothing, meaning you can't choose breakfast one day a week and then the next week, eat breakfast four days. The meals are nutritionally balanced. You may opt out of that program and pack for your child.

Expectations of Parents/Guardians & Behavioral Policy:

Communication and daily information:

Families and staff need to keep the lines of communication open at all times. For longer, more meaningful conversations regarding an issue, concern or requested support; please call the Director to schedule a meeting with the teacher.

- Classroom teachers will provide information daily.
- For our School Age Child Care families, please check your child's book bag when necessary for important information that might be sent home. Please read the "Daily Board" for information regarding your child's day.

Child assessment, observations and communication with parent/guardian:

Children will be observed and assessed within 45 days of enrollment or moving to another classroom. Formal assessments are completed every October and May. Assessments use the following state and national resources: Work Sampling/Teaching Strategies Gold, OUNCE, and a developmental checklist for school age children.

Results of the child assessments/observations shall be used for planning curriculum. Some children may need a little extra assistance learning a skill. When a teacher observes that a child may need additional practice, the teacher will make appropriate accommodations with his/her lesson plans.

Assessments and Family Conferences:

After assessments are complete, there will be an opportunity to discuss in greater depth through a family/teacher conference. The child's progression in physical, social, emotional and cognitive behaviors will be discussed.

- Conferences will take place at minimum twice per year (preferably November and May/June). Conferences can be completed in person or by phone if the parent is unable to attend.
- If you are unable to meet in person or phone, your child's teacher will ask you to sign a form indicating that you waive the conference. The teacher will provide a copy of the assessment in a sealed envelope. If you have any questions we encourage you to speak with the Director.
- Dated conference notices will be kept in each child's file.

Parent Cooperation Policy:

At the Y, we consider ourselves to be part of your extended family; caring for most children within our program/s 40+ hours per week.

As a family, we ask all parents to demonstrate the Y core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. **The Y reserves the right to suspend a family from care when the parent/guardian demonstrates the following:**

- Excessive lateness or lack of payment
- Failure to submit important documents for licensing, such as medical forms, emergency contact, etc.
- Aggressive, threatening behavior towards staff and/or another parent/guardian
- Harmful, negative language used towards the Y, the center, staff, etc.
- Lack of parent/guardian cooperation and/or follow-through in addressing physical, emotional and/or behavioral needs of the child

Positive Behavior Modification Policy:

If a staff member has observed inappropriate behavior, inappropriate development level of the child, or concerns for the welfare of a child in the classroom, the staff will report this information to the Director. The Director will conduct observations of the child's interactions with other children and the staff. The Director will notify parents and legal guardians of sensitive topic areas. A care plan meeting will be set up with staff, the Director, and the parents or guardian. The Teacher and Director will inform and assist the parent and/or guardian in making the referral to the appropriate agencies. Administration will help coordinate on-site services during program hours for the benefit of the child.

If aggressive, disruptive, destructive or disrespectful behavior occurs to a staff member or to another child the following disciplinary action will be taken:

The Y reserves the right to pause and/or suspend care for any family whose child displays the following:

- Harm to self
- Harm to other children
- Inability to thrive within the standard teacher/classroom ratio

The Y believes that no parent/guardian should ever be surprised by a request to pause and/or suspend care. When a child demonstrates harm to self, harm to others, or an inability to thrive within the classroom teacher/classroom ratio; communication to parent/guardian is as follows:

1. Incident One: Teacher will verbally share the incident with parent/guardian
2. Incident Two: Teacher will verbally and in writing share the incident with the parent/guardian
3. Incident Three: Teacher will request a Parent/Guardian/Teacher conference; the summary of the conference will be emailed to the parent/guardian within 48-hours.
****If harm to self or others is evident, a pause in services may be part of the behavior modification plan***
4. Further Incidents: Director will request a meeting between Parent/Guardian/Teacher and when age appropriate, the child will also be included in the meeting. A behavior modification plan will be designed and agreed upon between the family and the Y. ****If harm to self or others is evident, a pause in services may be part of the behavior modification plan***

Discipline Policy:

All families deserve a safe, stable and enjoyable environment while at the YMCA and disruptive individuals can quickly destroy the cooperative atmosphere of a class/site. This policy has been adopted with the safety of all of the families in YMCA childcare in mind.

- Children will display the Y core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.
- We follow the guideline: "Keep yourself, to yourself."
- Children will not use their hands and/or feet to express themselves; kind words are encouraged.
- Parent collaboration and support is required when behavior modification is needed.

The YMCA expects that each child will be or will learn to be responsible for his or her behavior, will be respectful towards others and will act in a caring and honest manner. From time to time, all children need help and direction in learning, developing, and maintaining appropriate behavior.

If a child exhibits frequent disruptive and/or aggressive behavior, a family conference will be scheduled. Continued disruptive and/or aggressive behavior may result in temporary suspension or permanent dismissal from the program.

Guidelines for Positive Discipline:

Our role as educators is to help children develop to their fullest potential and to recognize the many facets of child development. It is important that our discipline policy focus on guidance, redirection and praise rather than punishment or negative reinforcement. We strive to help children learn self-control, while at the same time developing positive self-esteem.

Discipline must be age appropriate and stated in language that children understand. It is important to have support from families in order to build good character in children.

- We set realistic expectations for children's behavior.
- We provide an environment that will increase the probability children will succeed.
- We give children choices and alternatives to turn destructive situations into constructive situations.
- We validate what the children say and feel; if appropriate.
- We use natural and logical consequences and empower the children to be responsible for their own behavior.
- We teach preschool and older children to use problem solving skills and strategies to resolve conflicts.
- We work out behavior plans with the family when needed.

Illness, Medications and Emergencies:

ILLNESS:

Important note: If the child demonstrates any of the physical signs listed below while in our care, parent/guardian will be notified for immediate pick-up. **The parent/guardian has a maximum time frame of one hour to pick-up their child; after one hour we will move to contacting the emergency contact in our system.**

Teachers cannot properly care for the sick child without interfering with the care of the other children. If a child exhibits any signs of contagious disease, you will be asked to provide a medical evaluation.

A child may be sent home or may not be admitted into care at the center for the following situations:

- Minimum temperature of 101 degrees orally or 100 from the armpit (this excludes reactions children may be having from immunizations). Note: Children need to be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning to care.
- A behavior change making the child unable to participate; for example sluggish, sleepy and/or inconsolable.
- If stool is not contained in the diaper.
- Exceeds 2 or more loose stools; or stools are abnormal for that child.
- Vomiting 2 or more times while at school. May return 24 hours after vomiting has stopped.
- Bronchitis, which is an upper respiratory infection with severe coughing and mucous. May return as per direction of doctor's note.
- Severe cold with fever, coughing, sneezing, and nose drainage. May return when symptoms are gone or with the direction of a doctor's note.
- Whooping Cough. May return as per direction of doctor's note.
- Rashes that have oozing/open wound. May return after rash has disappeared or as per direction of doctor's note.
- Impetigo. May not return until treated and as per direction of doctor's note.
- Scabies. May not return until treated and as per direction of doctor's note.
- Ringworm. Red circular patches on skin and heads. Must consult physician and may not return for 24 hours and as per direction of doctor's note.
- Chicken Pox. May not return until pox have healed and as per direction of doctor's note.
- Measles. May not return for at least five school days, rash has disappeared, and with direction of doctor's note.
- Mumps. May return after fever and swelling are gone and with the direction of a doctor's note.
- Head lice. May return once the child has been treated. Staff will check the child before readmitting.
- Children receiving antibiotics may return after 24 hours of medication or at the direction of a doctor's note.

The Department of Human Services requires whenever there is an illness that is infectious or contagious that we notify all the families. The American Academy of Pediatrics supplies child care centers with informative handouts for staff and families. Classroom staff will be responsible for distributing informational handouts to families with children enrolled.

Certain diseases are reportable to the Board of Health and may result in your child not being able to attend child care until cleared by a physician.

Medication Policy:

If at all possible, families should administer medications while the child is in their care. Medication can be given just before drop off, at the time of pick up, and just before bedtime if the medication is 3 times a day. When this is not possible, staff will administer medication under the following conditions:

- All medications, whether prescription or non-prescription, must be followed according to the label. All medications must be logged into the Medical Log located in each room. **If the medication is non-prescription, and has no directions for children under the age of two, and the parent wants a child under the age of two to receive the medication, THE YMCA CANNOT ADMINISTER WITHOUT A NOTE FROM THE CHILD'S PHYSICIAN STATING NAME OF CHILD, DOSAGE, LENGTH OF TIME MEDICATION IS TO BE ADMINISTERED, etc.**
- All prescription medications must be current, in the original pharmacy container, and have the child's name, instructions, and physician's name. The instructions must also be placed in the medication log by the parent or guardian.
- Medication must be signed in and out daily, listing the exact amount of medication required for that day. Please send the medication in its original packaging.
- Medications will be kept in a locked medication box/cabinet in the classroom for ease of accessibility.
- The YMCA retains the right to refuse to administer medication if the Director or Assistant Director feels that there is a conflict. The parent/guardian will be notified.
- Non-prescription medications will not be administered by YMCA personnel longer than five to seven days from the start of the administration or if the instructions state a shorter time. Families need to understand that if the child is still showing symptoms beyond 5-7 days, they need to consult their physician. We will administer medications if accompanied by a note from the doctor if the instructions are contrary to the container instructions.
- If a child is still showing symptoms it will be suggested that the family take the child to the physician.

If you or your child does not have health care insurance, please contact our office and we will make every attempt to assist you. This information will remain confidential.

Medical Emergency Procedures:

- A First Aid kit will be accessible for use by trained staff.
- Medical information will be reviewed and kept accessible for each child.
- **In the case of a minor injury** that occurs while in care, First Aid procedures will be followed. Parent/caregiver may be notified of the incident via phone, especially if the injury involves the head, neck or back.
- Staff will complete an accident report, and provide a copy for parent/guardian at pick-up. A copy will also be placed in the child's file.
- Parents may be asked to pick up the child depending on the nature of the injury and the child's reaction to being injured.
- **In the case of a major emergency**, 100% of our attention will be with the child. Y staff will assess the scene, and if necessary, immediately call 9-1-1. Y staff will next notify the parent/guardian. In times of medical transport, if the parent/guardian is not available, a Y staff member will ride with the child and wait at the hospital for parent/guardian arrival.
- Y staff will provide the hospital with the child's medical information as completed in the emergency contact form.

Transportation:

If your center includes transport, please note the following:

All vans/busses are compliant in accordance to state and insurance requirements; including equipped with seat belts, fire extinguisher, first aid kits, emergency contact information, and emergency cellular phones. All drivers must be cleared to drive through the YMCA insurance company.

As student attendance is taken on the van/bus prior to departing from the YMCA and prior to departing from school, **please call immediately if your child will not need transportation service.**

If your child misses the van/bus, it will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian to take their child to school.

Safety standards:

- Staff to child ratios will be maintained.
- All children must sit correctly in their seats and wear seat belts at all times.
- Children under 8 will be required to sit in appropriate child car seats.
- Children must respect and obey the driver at all times.
- There will be no eating or drinking on the vehicles.
- In case of an emergency, children must follow the directions of the driver.
- Approved bus companies may be used for trips.

Perceived impaired inability to drive:

If a **parent/caregiver** appears to be unable to safely assume responsibility for a child, the YMCA will contact an alternate release person as indicated on your child's Emergency Contact/Parental Consent Form to arrange for transportation. The Y also reserves the right to call the police. This is for the safety of you and your child.

Outdoor Child Activities:

Children are expected to go outside when the forecast temperature/wind chill is above 25 degrees, the forecast temperature/heat index is less than 90 degrees, there is not precipitation falling, and there is no current air quality alert. It is understood that given these parameters there may be portions of some days that do not meet the conditions of weather permitting since forecasts are generally targeted to a point in time in a day.

Children go outside every day, weather permitting, so please dress your child appropriately.

Clothing and Footwear:

Please label all clothing. The Y is not responsible for lost or missing clothing/footwear. Additionally:

- All children must have an extra set of seasonally appropriate (properly labeled) clothing stored in the child's cubby.
- If your child wears diapers, be sure to provide enough diapers and wipes for each day's needs. We suggest that you bring in a week's supply at a time.
- Please leave a pair of rubber soled shoes (sneakers) in your child's cubby if he/she arrives at the center wearing boots or smooth soled dress shoes. **Flip flops, open backed foot wear, sandals, and "jellies" are dangerous and are not allowed at the center. "Water shoes" are recommended for outdoor water play. Sneakers and socks remain the safest footwear for active children in a child care center. Children without appropriate footwear will not be allowed on playground equipment. It is dangerous to walk down steps with open shoes.**

Rest Time:

Rest time in our full day programs is based on DHS regulations as well as age appropriateness. Labeled blankets and cuddly toys may be sent in but must be taken home every Friday to be cleaned. Quiet music is played in each room.

- All infants are placed on their backs to sleep according to the guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics. Each infant has his/her own labeled crib.
- Toddlers and Preschoolers have individually labeled cots/mats.
- Cribs and cots/mats are disinfected on a regular basis.
- **Note:* To maintain proper ratios, children who do not sleep will relax on cots, reading books for a short rest period.

Toys from Home:

Generally, we discourage children from bringing toys from home, except for specific program purposes such as "Show and Tell". Toys from home often cause conflict and we cannot be responsible for their safekeeping. However, you may bring a soft, cuddly toy for rest time.

Hand-held electronic games ARE NOT PERMITTED. The Y is not responsible for games and cartridges that are stolen or lost.

Nutrition:

Snacks are provided by the Y. Some of our programs participate in a local food program. If your program does not participate in a local food program, and meals are provided from home:

- As we serve what you send, and cannot force your child to eat in a prescribed order, meals provided from home are to be well balanced and meet good health guidelines.
- Parents are welcomed to provide milk or water. 100% fruit juice is acceptable but a solid fruit/vegetable shall also be included. Milk is the preferred dairy but cheese, yogurt, pudding and cottage cheese is also acceptable (fruit snacks are not considered a fruit).
- Consider serving a rainbow of foods – the more color, the more balanced meal.
- **Note:* Please limit sugar, salt and caffeine (chocolate in all forms), packaged or fast foods.
- **Also note:* Per DHS guidelines we must dispose of food once it has been served.

Handwashing:

All parents, children and staff are encouraged to wash hands upon arrival each day. This is an important step in helping to reduce the spread of germs and illness within the center. Teach children the proper way to wash hands by having them sing their ABC's and washing inside, outside, and all around ensuring that the backs of their hands and in between fingers are washed.

School Age Suspensions:

The YMCA will not provide care during the day if your child is sent home from school for any reason including disciplinary concerns or illness. The YMCA will only provide care during regularly scheduled times such as before and after school and half and full days off from school, excluding YMCA holidays.

- Families are responsible for transporting children to/from schools when field trips require the child to be there at times other than their normal schedule.
- If for some reason, your child's school schedule changes, please inform the YMCA as most of the schools do not inform us when there are calendar changes.

Please continue to next, final page of this handbook for acknowledgement and signature. Once signed and submitted to your Director, the signature page will be part of your child's file.

Acknowledgement of Agreement:

I understand the importance of maintaining a positive, healthy relationship with the Y. This includes working collaboratively with my child's teacher, Director and extended staff.

I understand the importance of meeting my child's payment schedule and that I will be placed on automatic billing. If accounting needs to continually dedicate additional time in securing my payment, I place my child's enrollment at risk.

I understand teachers cannot properly care for my sick child without interfering with the care of the other children. If my child/children demonstrate physical signs of illness, as listed on page 19/20 of this handbook, I will be notified for immediate pick-up. I further understand I have a maximum time frame of one hour to pick-up my child; otherwise my emergency contact will be contacted. If my child exhibits any signs of contagious disease, I will be asked to provide a medical evaluation.

I understand that my child's care falls within a classroom setting; set by state ratios. If my child needs greater attention than the ratio can support, or displays harm to self or others, my Director will schedule a parent/teacher conference to discuss an action plan of care with me.

I understand that the guidelines of this handbook may change at any time. When they do, I will be alerted by the Director and the website will always host the most up to date version of this handbook.

Child Printed Name

Parent/Caregiver Printed Name

Parent/Caregiver Signature

Date