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FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
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# CHILD CARE CAREGIVER HANDBOOK

## YMCA of Coastal Georgia

### 2025 – 2026



[YMCAofCoastalGA.org](http://YMCAofCoastalGA.org)

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# Introduction

## History of YMCA Child Care

The Young Men's Christian Association is a nationwide, non-profit, organization that was founded in 1844, in England, by George Williams. The original purpose for the YMCA was to provide a place for young men to come together in a Christian environment. YMCA Childcare Centers began to emerge in the 1960's and 1970's as more women entered the workforce. Today, about 30% of YMCA's offer childcare programs.

YMCA Before and After School Enrichment (YBASE) programs originally began as afternoon enrichment and sports clubs in the 1960's. As the demand grew, the program expanded into the morning and afternoon format that we know today. Today, more than 1 in 10 children in group school-age care are in a YMCA program.

Between our full day childcare centers and our YBASE programs the YMCA of Coastal Georgia is the largest non-profit childcare provider in the state of Georgia.

The mission of the YMCA is:

***To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.***

## YMCA Early Learning Program Philosophy

YMCA early learning programs nurture children's natural desire to learn by providing ample opportunities to explore and learn through developmentally appropriate activities. Lesson plans are aligned with the Georgia Early Learning Development Standards (GELDS) and are designed to be culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate and cover each of the 5 learning domains identified by the GELDS (Physical Development and Motor Skills, Social and Emotional Development, Approaches to Play and Learning, Communication, Language and Literacy, and Cognitive Development and General Knowledge). Each child is encouraged to develop at his or her own rate.

Evaluative surveys and questionnaires are used to track early learning and development in each program to individualize instruction and learning activities.

To ensure that children's needs are met in the most complete way possible, the YMCA collaborates with outside organizations, such as schools, therapists, and social service agencies. All partners working within the Child Learning Centers are given background checks and fingerprint screenings and are never left alone in a room with any child in the YMCA's care.

The YMCA takes its role as a childcare provider seriously, but it does not undermine or diminish the role of the family. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage Caregivers and other important adults in the child's life to be involved in the program, to visit their child while at the program, to participate in events, and to provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals including through participation in our Parent/Community Advisory Councils. If you ever have any questions about your child's experience with, or participation in, the program please do not hesitate to reach out to any YMCA staff member. Unless we have written authorization through your CORE account to do so, we will not allow any child to leave the facility with anyone other than the authorized person designated who can show a valid identification.

## **YMCA Program Goals**

YMCA programs are based on a Judeo-Christian concern for human life and are designed to help children and their families meet the following seven goals:

**Grow personally**--We encourage people to set personal goals and to work toward them in programs which help to develop healthy self-images.

**Clarify values**--YMCA programs provide opportunities for reflection both on personal values and on the relationship between stated values and actual behavior. We encourage values that reflect Christian traditions and beliefs. The Core Values of the YMCA are: Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility.

**Improve personal and family relationships**--The YMCA programs for individuals and families help people to develop cooperative attitudes and communication skills.

**Appreciate diversity**--YMCA programs encourage a diversity of thought, cultures, religions, and ethnic traditions which will lead to communication and understanding among all people. Equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or Caregiver/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.

This program believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their individual capabilities and needs. If your child has a diagnosed special need, please ask to fill out our intake form which outlines our policies.

**Become better leaders and supporters**--Shared leadership and support are the organizational principles that YMCA programs teach, practice, and encourage.

**Develop specific skills**--The development of individual skills is essential to achieve personal goals and to improve confidence and self-esteem.

**Have fun**--Enjoyment and laughter are essential for all programs and contribute to people feeling good about both them and the YMCA.

## **YMCA Early Learning Childcare Goals**

The YMCA's early learning childcare program strives to support and strengthen families by:

- improving communication among family members.
- increasing family members' abilities to work and play together.
- helping families share their values with each other.
- increasing their sense of community with other families
- helping families improve their economic stability.

The YMCA also wants to help children develop to their fullest potential. Early learning programs promote children's growth and learning through these 10 goals:

- Help children to develop healthy self-esteem.
- Allow children to learn through discovery and play.
- Offer developmentally appropriate activities to help children develop physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially, and spiritually.
- Allow each child to develop a positive relationship with their teachers.
- Involve children in some aspects of planning their own activities.
- Provide space, equipment, and, most importantly, teachers that aid the children's development.
- Believe in the value of all children and help children appreciate the diversity and uniqueness of their peers.
- Involve children in their community to develop their social and living skills.
- Encourage expression of feelings, whether sad, joyful, or otherwise, and respond to those feelings.
- Encourage children to be involved in other YMCA and collaborative programs, such as swimming, caregiver-child programs, music, art, and dance.

## **A Three-Way Relationship**

YMCA childcare programs are centered on the three-way relationship that exists among children, their caregivers, and program leaders. It is not enough for the YMCA to work only with children. YMCA programs strive to support and to assist the caregivers, to strengthen caregiver-child relationships, and to increase the importance of families. These concepts are basic to the YMCA's philosophy and mission which make YMCA childcare centers stand apart from other programs.

Many toddlers and preschool children will spend a significant amount of time in our programs. Childcare, more than any other program, offers the greatest potential for the YMCA to accomplish its mission in the lives of the children and families which it serves.

Caregivers are a key to the childcare programs' success. They and other important adults in the child's life are an important part of YMCA leadership, and they are involved as much as possible. Staff will promote caregiver involvement by:

- encouraging children to share their joys, fears, and accomplishments, with their caregivers
- offering support systems for caregivers, including referral networks, direct family services, caregiver training, and co-ops
- planning activities that involve the whole family
- asking caregivers to volunteer for advisory councils, committees, evaluation teams, fund-raising events, family nights, and positions as teacher assistants

The third part of that three-way relationship, the leadership staff, is crucial to a successful program. The YMCA strives to hire qualified and certified staff with high levels of competency and proven ability. Credentialed corporate staff oversee YMCA early learning programs ensuring that teachers and other program leaders meet, and often exceed, state licensing requirements. Quality childcare programs encourage and reward ongoing staff education, emphasize professionalism, and offer salaries and benefits that reduce turnover.

# Admittance Requirements

The YMCA does not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. We operate on a first come first serve basis for all of our classes when children meet the following requirements:

## Infant Room & Older Infant Room

- Children must be 6 weeks old and released by their pediatrician to enroll in this classroom.
- Registration must be completed prior to the child's first day of attendance.
- Current 3231 (Immunization Forms) must be submitted on the day of registration.
- Children must bring a pack of diapers and wipes upon enrollment. Caregivers will be notified when more are needed.
- Bottles must be provided by the caregiver that are labeled and filled each day with the infant's formula or breast milk. We strongly encourage caregivers to provide a labeled, extra bottle that can be used in the event of a spill, spit up, or feeding increase due to a growth spurt. (See Meals and Nutrition)
- Weekly fees must be set up on Automatic draft with a debit or credit card only. **If an account is more than two weeks delinquent, enrollment will be terminated.**

## One Year Old Room

- Children must be one year old and walking to enroll in this classroom.
- Registration must be completed prior to the child's first day of attendance.
- Current 3231 (Immunization Forms) must be submitted on the day of registration.
- Children must bring a pack of diapers and wipes upon enrollment. Caregivers will be notified when more are needed.
- Weekly fees must be set up on automatic draft with a debit or credit card only. **If an account is more than two weeks delinquent, enrollment will be terminated.**

## Two Year Old Room/Two-Three Year Old Transition Room

- Children must be two years old to enroll in this classroom.
- Registration must be completed prior to the child's first day of attendance.
- Current 3231 (Immunization Forms) must be submitted on the day of registration.
- Children must bring a pack of diapers or pull ups and wipes upon enrollment. Caregivers will be notified when diapers (pull ups) are needed.
- Weekly fees must be set up on automatic draft with a debit or credit card only. **If an account is more than two weeks delinquent, enrollment will be terminated.**

## Three Year Room

- Children must be three years old and fully potty trained to enroll in this classroom. Special accommodations will be made for special needs children if necessary, with medical documentation.



- Registration must be completed prior to the child's first day of attendance.
- Current 3231 (Immunization Forms) must be submitted on the day of registration.
- Weekly fees must be set up on automatic draft with a debit or credit card only. **If an account is more than two weeks delinquent, enrollment will be terminated.**

## **Georgia Pre-K**

- Children must be 4 years old by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year.
- Children must be a resident of the state of Georgia and show proof of residency.
- Children must have an updated 3231 (Immunization Form) and EED (Ear, Eye, Dental, and Nutrition) record submitted with the enrollment packet.
- Valid Birth Certificate and Social Security Card, or other documentation showing legal US residency must be on file.
- Proof of eligibility in TANF, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Medicare, etc. if applicable.

**It is imperative that the information listed on the enrollment forms be accurate. If your contact information changes, we must be notified in writing within 24 hours.**

## **Attendance**

The YMCA of Coastal Georgia Childcare Centers operates at capacity for most of the year. For this reason, we require that tuition be paid in full weekly. Please see the "Fees" section for more detailed information.

Each school year one week can be designated as "vacation" in which the child does not attend for a full week, and payment is waived. Once the vacation week has been used, full payment is due weekly.

Apart from the one vacation week offered to all families, all childcare fees must be paid in full every week. This includes weeks where there are weather related closings, snow days, emergency closings, holidays, and child absences. These fees will not be pro-rated, credited, or refunded in the event of an unexpected closure.

## **Pre-K**

The Pre-K teachers will keep daily attendance and tardy records. Excessive absences or tardies will result in termination from the program. Policies for Attendance are set forth by Bright from the Start Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. The specific policy from the Georgia Pre-K Operating Guidelines follows:

### **3.13 Chronic Attendance Issues**

Chronic tardiness is defined as late arrival or early departure more than once per week. Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing more than two days per month without medical or other reasonable explanation. Chronic tardiness or absenteeism may also be defined by an established regular attendance pattern(s), e.g., if a child is late every Monday or absent every Tuesday or leaves early every Friday.

Providers are required to document efforts to assist Caregivers/guardians of children who do not attend on a regular basis, are routinely late, or routinely leave the program early in improving attendance. A meeting with the Caregiver/guardian should occur to determine the reason(s) for the problem and identify ways to resolve the problem. Inability to resolve the problem after documented interventions should be referred using the *Chronic Absenteeism or Tardiness Report* (See Appendix F) for disenrollment consideration. Requests should be submitted in writing to the program's Pre-K Consultant.

#### **Consecutive Absenteeism**

Children who do not attend class for 10 consecutive days without a medical or other reasonable explanation **must** be removed from the roster. Bright from the Start approval is not needed; however, the program is responsible for reporting student end dates on the roster. The end date is defined as the last day the child physically attended the program.

Caregivers will be notified in writing when absences or tardiness are excessive. These notifications should be taken seriously. Caregiver meetings will be called for excessive situations and a plan of action put into place.

## **Behavior Policy**

As childcare professionals, we are committed to providing a positive, supportive environment for all the children in our care. Our staff understands the importance of teaching children how to appropriately interact with one another and the educational setting around them as they grow and begin to actively experience their environment. Developmentally appropriate guidance techniques and classroom management strategies are employed in each classroom and take into consideration each child's individual needs. Our staff strives to create an emotionally supportive environment that promotes self-awareness, self-regulation, and positive social skills in an effort to maintain a calm, stress-free atmosphere for play. While we try to foresee difficulties and re-structure the classroom to suit the needs of the children, there are sometimes challenging behaviors that persist. The YMCA of Coastal Georgia has developed a Behavior Incident Report System (BIRS) for managing behaviors:

### **What We Teach**

Our staff is trained in positive guidance techniques and work with the Director to create a classroom design that meets the needs of each child in our care. We believe in teaching children appropriate ways to interact with one another and useful strategies to employ when they feel upset or angry.

1. **We teach and model appropriate behaviors** beginning in the infant room. Teachers teach and model appropriate behaviors for children and call attention to those who choose to respect each other and play nicely together.
2. **We teach children to identify their emotions** and describe how they feel before they act on that feeling. Some children are quick to act and do not realize the impact of their actions. We teach children to recognize when they are getting upset, stop, and think about why they are mad. For the youngest children, our staff gives them the words of self advocacy and help speak on their behalf. As children age our staff teach the

children, through modeling and role playing, how to use their “big voice” to advocate for themselves, set boundaries and appropriately express their feelings. All children learn about their emotions through pictures, books, songs, and direct instruction.

3. **We teach children to regulate their emotions** through a variety of self-calming exercises. The goal is for the children to help one another realize when they need some personal space, alone time, or other activities to help them calm down and relax.

## **What We Practice**

In addition to teaching children developmentally appropriate methods for self-regulation and self-control, we commit to providing the best environment for each child at their developmental level.

We follow the guidelines below to help us create a consistent, emotionally stable environment to assist children in maintaining socially acceptable behaviors:

1. **We set realistic expectations for behaviors** and include the caregivers whenever possible to help us understand the emotional and social needs of their child.
  - We state clear expectations for behaviors in each classroom and explain them explicitly to the children in a variety of age-appropriate ways.
  - We are consistent with rules and expectations as a staff team to prevent confusion among the children.
  - In our older classes, we involve the children when making class rules to give them a sense of community and show they are a valued part of our community.
2. **We create an environment where children can be successful** by providing a wide variety of developmentally appropriate activities and actively involving children in the learning process.
  - We believe children learn best when they are actively experiencing their environment. Our curriculum allows children to freely explore centers and play with real objects and materials that relate to their learning goals.
  - We allow children the opportunity to make choices and teach them logical consequences to those choices. We encourage new experiences and support children as they explore new concepts.
  - We will make every effort to “child-proof” the environment and create an area that children are successful in without stress or competition. We will add or rotate materials and change the environment as needed to provide a new atmosphere for the children to successfully play. We will also vigilantly restructure schedules throughout the year to meet the needs of the children as they grow.

3. **We focus on positive attention and communication techniques** to gain children's trust and create a strong relationship with each child in our care. Children need to feel that they are an integral part of our lives and that we care about their needs individually. Children respond well to adults who take the time to listen and communicate with them on their level. Our staff team is trained to pay close attention to the needs of each child and care for them accordingly.

## **Collaborating with Caregivers**

We involve caregivers as much as possible in our curriculum and child learning center events. The more caregivers are involved with their child's educational experience, the more everyone benefits. When a child is having a rough day, the teacher will communicate with the caregiver to bring to light to the challenging behaviors and strategize ways to prevent them from becoming commonplace. We are here to support, care for, and protect all children in our care. We understand that as children grow, they test limits, experiment with behavior and consequences, and require time to learn ways to regulate their own behaviors. With that in mind, we will take time to meet with caregivers and strategize ways to create a safe, successful environment for their child should the challenging behaviors become chronic. Please see the appendix for a full description of the BIRS process.

## **Biting**

Biting is a developmental obstacle that some children experience as infants and toddlers. Developmental norms show that children ages 0-3 experience times when they cannot communicate efficiently or verbalize their needs or emotions. Biting may also occur when children want attention, are experiencing teething, anxiety, exploration, imitation, and autonomy. It is important to recognize that this behavior is a normal part of growth and development for each child even though some children spend more time in this stage than others. Patience is required by both parties involved. Caregivers will be offered resources about biting.

When biting occurs:

- The caregivers of both children will be notified by phone and/or communication application, and the situation explained. If the bite broke the skin, the biter will be sent home. If the biter has bitten three times in a day, they will be sent home.
- The bite will be washed, and a band-aid applied if necessary.
- An BIRS for both children will be completed and filed.
- If a child bites more than three times in a day and if a bite breaks the skin, a caregiver/teacher meeting will be required within 48 hours and a support plan will be implemented to support the child's developmental needs and growth.

If a child consistently bites over a period of several weeks the YMCA must advocate for the welfare of all children first. In a situation where a child is chronically biting their friends, alternate care may be recommended.

## Strangulation/Choking Hazard Prevention

In order to create a safe environment for all children in the center, the following items, which present safety hazards, are prohibited:

- Jewelry with the exception of screw closed stud earrings
- Strings inside the hood of “hoodie” sweatshirts
- Hair accessories, such as beads, small barrettes, etc. that present a choking hazard or can be inserted into other, small openings in the body, such as the nose or ear.

If you have any questions about this policy or would like to inquire about a religious exemption, please contact your childcare center director.

## Birthdays and Holidays

The YMCA of Coastal Georgia Childcare Centers will provide a curriculum that is rich in cultural diversity. Activities and foods that expose children to a variety of different cultures will be implemented. Families are encouraged to share celebrations and traditions with the program. Children are offered the opportunity to participate in all events the YMCA offers.

### Procedures for Celebrations

- The classrooms are not party venues. Please do not arrange for outside party entertainers to come to the childcare center. Please do not send room decorations for your child’s birthday as staff will not be able to put them up.
- All children’s birthdays will be celebrated. Caregivers will be notified in advance by the classroom teacher when a child’s birthday will be celebrated in the classroom. A written notice will be placed on the caregiver bulletin board/classroom door advising them of the date and time of the party/celebration. Verbal communication with caregivers from the teacher will reinforce the written notice.
- **Balloons are never allowed in the classroom as they present a choking hazard and are in violation of state licensing rules.**
- Invitations for an outside of school party may only be passed out at school if every child in the class is invited.
- Please see Meals and Nutrition for more information about bringing food into the childcare center.

## Child Abuse Policy

The State of Georgia defines child abuse as “the physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a caregiver or caretaker by other than accidental means.” Neglect and exploitation of a child are considered child abuse as well.

The teachers and staff at each of the YMCA of Coastal Georgia Childcare Centers are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Each teacher is trained to recognize the signs of abuse or neglect and are given explicit instructions to follow if they suspect the maltreatment of a child.

Teachers are also well informed of the penalties for false reporting and failure to report. Should anyone in our facility suspect or witness child abuse or neglect, the Director will be immediately notified, followed by the Department of Family and Child Services, however, it is not necessary for a Director to approve any mandated reporter reporting suspicion of abuse or neglect to DFCS.

## Confidentiality

All original childcare records are kept at the respective Childcare sites in a secure location. A copy of the first two pages of the registration form is kept in each child’s classroom/program area to alert teachers to the following information:

Authorized Pick-Up Persons

Allergies

Emergency Medical Information

Contact Information for Caregivers

Records are viewed by YMCA Childcare Professionals and Bright From the Start Licensing Professionals during licensing visits. Once completed, registration forms can only be altered by the person who originally signed the form enrolling the child. This includes, but is not limited to, change of address, change of phone numbers, change of custody/caregivers, and adding authorized pick up people.

All records are stored securely in the childcare center while your child is enrolled and will be stored for 7 years after withdrawal date in a secure, off-site storage facility.

## In the Classroom

Within the YMCA Child Learning Center classrooms, confidential and sensitive information about each child and their families will only be shared with those who “need to know” in order to appropriately care for your child. We strive to protect each family’s right to privacy and include training on this topic during each of our employees’ new hire process. Information about your child will only be shared with those listed on the enrollment form as guardians. Written consent must be obtained from a legal caregiver or guardian for any caregiver meeting or information exchange to take place with any other family member. This includes information regarding illness, injury, pick up and drop off times, and all information listed on enrollment forms or center records.

## **In the Event of an Incident**

Should an incident occur between your child and another child, information about the altercation will not list any specific names. The YMCA protects the confidentiality of each child, and all teachers are prohibited from discussing the occurrence with any staff person who is not directly involved. Any disciplinary actions taken will not be shared with anyone other than the legal caregiver(s) of the child being disciplined. Any staff member who acts in violation of this confidentiality policy will face immediate disciplinary consequences.

## **Cameras in the Classroom**

Each classroom is equipped with security cameras accessible only by the Director, Assistant Director and corporate childcare staff. These cameras are used to ensure best practices are followed in each classroom and, when necessary, to review any incidents that may be in question. In order to protect the privacy of all children and adults in the room, caregivers are not permitted to view camera footage, however, if at any time a caregiver has a concern about an incident that was captured on the cameras the YMCA will enlist the services of a third party to review the footage and make a report to the caregiver and the YMCA.

## **Damages**

### **Assistive Devices**

The YMCA of Coastal Georgia is not responsible for any lost, stolen, damaged, or broken assistive devices such as hearing aids, contact lenses, or glasses. Please have adequate replacement insurance for such items should they become damaged, misplaced, or broken.

### **Electronic Devices/Toys from Home**

The YMCA is not responsible for toys brought from home including electronic devices, games, and cell phones. These items should not be brought to childcare and will not be replaced by the YMCA. YMCA staff are prohibited from disclosing the names of other children who may have been involved in an item becoming damaged.

## **Outside Food**

With the exception of PreK students who are not enrolled in the lunch program, and students with documented special diets, outside food is not permitted to be brought into the classroom. Please have your child finish all outside food prior to signing them into class.

# Drop Off/Pick-Up Procedures

## Childcare

Drop off times are specific to your childcare location, however we ask that all children be dropped off no later than 9 am.

Effingham Child Learning Center	6:30am – 6:30pm
Golden Isles Child Learning Center	7:15am – 6:00pm
Habersham Child Learning Center	6:30am – 6:00pm
West Chatham Child Learning Center	6:00am – 6:00pm

We understand that it is not always possible to control the timing of medical and therapeutic appointments, but we ask that you not return your child to the program after 12:00 pm without prior authorization and approval from the Director.

**Your child will be allowed to come in late if you have a doctor's excuse in hand stating that they were at an appointment.**

Our instructional day is carefully planned, and we want the children to gain the most from our program with as little interruption as possible. Please be mindful of your child's lunch and nap schedule when making doctors' appointments.

Please make sure you enter the building from the main childcare entrance and walk your child into their classroom. Each room has a check-in station located near their classroom door. Per our state guidelines, it is required that you sign in/out your child every day. The back door to the facility always remains locked. Children must be picked up by the above stated closing time for your center. Please refer to missing caregiver procedures for further information on late pick up.

## Pre-K

The instructional day is set by your child's location. You may drop your child off to the classroom no earlier than 15 minutes prior to the program start time. Children who are not picked up at the end of the program will be charged a late fee of \$1 per minute unless there are extenuating circumstances that have been communicated to the center director. Please refer to missing caregiver procedures for further information on late pick up. Children in Pre-K can be enrolled in our after school Fun Club program at the center, however, your child must be registered prior to them attending this program.

## Other Requirements

Caregivers or Legal Guardians must sign their child in and out each day on the tablet located at the front of the building.

Only those individuals listed in the Authorized Pick-Up Persons section of the Enrollment Packet



will be allowed to sign the child out. Caregivers must indicate in their CORE account if they are adding or removing a name from the list and must notify the center director of any changes. No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to sign a child out. Written permission must be on file with the Director for individuals under 18 to be authorized pick-up people.

We are a 100% ID program. All persons seeking to check a child out must show a picture I.D. before the child is released.

## **Emergency Procedures**

### **Emergency Closings**

The YMCA of Coastal Georgia will make announcements on emergency closings due to severe weather or natural disaster using local media channels and the [ymcaofcoastalga.org](http://ymcaofcoastalga.org) website. Should severe weather threaten our area, please stay tuned to local media outlets and be vigilant to check your email for communication.

Childcare programs and Georgia Pre-K do NOT follow the schedule of the local school system with respect to closings and openings. The YMCA of Coastal Georgia will make the decision to close programs early should impending weather pose a threat to our participants, families, and staff. All notice of closings will be sent in writing via email, through the Daily Connect app, through local media outlets, through the YMCA of Coastal GA Facebook page, and by phone when necessary.

### **Fire Emergency**

Children will be escorted from the CLC classrooms by their teachers and led out the primary or secondary fire exits to the rendezvous area previously designated by the CLC Director. Each teacher will then complete a name-to-face check based on the sign in sheet record to ensure that each child left the building.

The CLC Director will clear the building and check each area to make sure all participants and staff have been evacuated. If a fire emergency exists, the fire department will be called, and children safely led to the designated emergency shelter.

If the center is disabled for more than 1 hour or programming will not be able to continue for the day, the CLC Director and teachers will contact Caregivers to pick up their children. Caregivers will have 1 hour to pick up their children. Information on re-opening the facility will be given as soon as all the damage is surveyed.

Fire Drills are practiced monthly in all childcare programs.

## **Severe Weather**

In the event that severe weather threatens the area, the YMCA will enact the tornado/severe weather protocol and have all children and staff evacuate to their designated areas until the all clear is given. Children and staff will be required to evacuate to the designated safe place when a tornado siren is heard and/or a tornado warning is in effect.

Children will be led to their designated safe place and a name-to-face check completed to ensure all children have evacuated the classrooms. The CLC Director will check the facility once more to ensure all parties have evacuated.

During an active tornado warning, we ask that Caregivers do not sign their children out as all children will be in a safe place and it will be difficult to manage an exchange of care safely.

## **Electricity or Water Outage**

From time to time, the center may experience a power or water outage that causes the level of care in the center to be diminished temporarily. Should this occur during normal program hours, the child learning center will evaluate the situation and make a call for an emergency closing if necessary.

If at any time the facility is without electricity or water for more than 1 hour, the decision will be made to close for the remainder of the program day.

## Fees

Childcare has a non-refundable registration fee of \$65 due at enrollment for members and for non-members. The following weekly fees are due each **Monday** for the following week of care. Weekly fees must be automatic draft. **If an account is more than two weeks delinquent, enrollment will be terminated.**

### **Habersham, West Chatham, and Effingham Childcare Fees**

Members:	\$215	\$215
Future Members:	\$268	\$268

### **Golden Isles YMCA Childcare Fees**

Members: \$195  
Future Members: \$248

You have one hour to pick up your child if you are contacted for either an illness or behavior problem. You will be charged \$1.00 per minute thereafter.  
Children whose caregivers who are chronically late, or with whom we are consistently unable to get in contact with during the school day, may face disenrollment.

## Pre-K

The Georgia Pre-K program is a lottery funded program made possible by a contract with Bright From the Start and the YMCA of Coastal Georgia. Grant funding is awarded each school year in June and plans are finalized from there depending on the number of classrooms and students are awarded by BFTS.

Pre-Registration takes place in April at each location. Paperwork days will also be scheduled during the spring and early summer to gather the necessary information for enrollment. Caregivers will be notified in early summer, once BFTS has awarded the contract to the YMCA, as to their child's acceptance into the YMCA Pre-K program.

## Lunch Fees

If your child registers for the before and after school program, fees will be charged for participation.

Georgia Pre-K programs will serve a USDA approved lunch to all families who want it for a weekly fee. Menus will be distributed monthly and meals must be paid by the week, it is not possible to purchase for individual days only. Anyone with special circumstances, please contact the Childcare Director prior to the first day of school.

## Holidays and Professional Development Days

Childcare fees do not change to reflect days closed for holidays throughout the year. **There are four professional development days per year that will be announced in August of the prior year.** Those days will be posted at your child's facility. Childcare will be closed on the following days:

New Year's Eve and Day	Independence Day
Martin Luther King Day	Labor Day
St. Patrick's Day**	Thanksgiving Day
Good Friday	Friday following Thanksgiving
Memorial Day	Christmas Eve*
Juneteenth	Christmas Day*

\*Christmas Holidays may be adjusted year to year to account for the holiday falling on a weekend. Adequate notice will be given if changes are made.

\*\* Golden Isles will remain open for St. Patrick's Day

Georgia Pre-K operates on a school calendar approved for the purpose of this program alone. The school calendar will be released in August of each year and does not necessarily align with the calendar of the local school system. GA PreK at the YMCA does not engage in any eLearning days as designated by local school systems, these will be in-person instructional days.

## Illness

A child will not be accepted or allowed to remain in the classroom if the child has the equivalent of a one hundred one (101) degrees Fahrenheit or higher oral temperature or any other contagious symptom (ex.: rash, diarrhea, or sore throat).

Caregivers will be notified when their child is ill and have one (1) hour to pick up the child or a late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged to the account. **Children cannot return to the center until 24 hours after their last symptoms.**

## Communicable Diseases

Caregivers will be notified within 24 hours when an occurrence of any of the illnesses on the Communicable Disease Chart presents itself in a classroom. The chart can be found at the entrance to the Childcare Center or on [decal.ga.gov](http://decal.ga.gov).

## Lice

If a child in the center has lice or nits in their hair, the Caregiver will be called immediately, and the child will not be allowed to return for 48 hours while being treated. Upon return to school, the child must be checked by the Director and cleared to re-enter the classroom. The Director reserves the right to request a doctor's note verifying that the child has no more nits.

The classroom where lice was found will be disinfected and the carpets professionally cleaned.

## **Inclusion**

YMCA childcare makes every effort to accommodate children with special needs and welcome them into our classrooms. Children who are diagnosed with learning or physical disabilities while in our program will be referred to either Babies Can't Wait or Pre-School Intervention depending on their age. The YMCA will do everything possible to make our center accommodating to all children.

Determining our ability to provide services will be done on a case-by-case basis. It is important that if accommodation is needed and/or the child has a diagnosis, that the caregiver fill out the Inclusion Intake form when registering the child. The YMCA reserves the right to request IEP's and other documentation for review to determine our ability to provide required services. While our teachers have extensive training, we currently do not employ anyone who is certified in Special Education.

GA PreK has an Inclusion department. In the event that a child is in need of an evaluation the Inclusion department will be notified and parents will be advised of the process moving forward.

## **Late Pick-Up Policy**

To uphold safe staff to child ratios, we are implementing the following late pick-up procedures:

- After 6:05pm there is a \$1.00 per minute late fee to be paid at pick up time. (6:35 at Effingham)
- Please see missing Caregiver procedures.

You have one hour to pick up your child if you are contacted for either an illness or behavior problem. You will be charged \$1.00 per minute thereafter.

Caregivers who are chronically late, or who are unable to be contacted, will be warned but could possibly face their child being dis-enrolled from the childcare center.

## **Meals and Nutrition**

YMCA Child Learning Centers and After School Programs follow USDA guidelines when meal planning for all childcare programs. All Child Learning Centers serve Breakfast, Lunch, and Snacks for all children enrolled.

Menus are made available for all childcare programs monthly and substitutions will be announced if necessary. All meals are prepared on site and served in accordance with USDA guidelines. Whenever possible, fresh fruits and vegetables are served as well as 100% juice and water. We strive to serve healthy meals that provide children with a variety of textures and flavors in a pleasing atmosphere that promotes healthy eating. Children will not be required to finish their plates, but gently encouraged to try everything we serve.

Except for in GA PreK classrooms, outside food is not permitted without prior approval from the Childcare Director due to licensing and food program restrictions.

## **Special Needs/Accommodations:**

When a child requires a modified diet for medical reasons, a written statement from a medical authority shall be on file. When a child requires a modified diet for religious accommodations, a written statement from the child's caregiver shall be on file. When a child has a personal dietary preference a written statement from the child's caregiver shall be on file.

With any special dietary accommodation an appropriate substitution will be offered and documented to ensure compliance with USDA requirements.

## **Infant Meals**

Infant meal plans must be completed prior to children being dropped off for the first time.

Breast milk and formula must be measured in the appropriate quantities and in ready-to-feed bottles labeled with the child's name and current date. Bottles will not be kept overnight.

Formula cannot be mixed by classroom teachers. Bottles will be heated in a crock pot of warm water. Microwaves will never be used to heat milk.

We encourage breastfeeding if possible and provide a breastfeeding area at each YMCA Child Learning Center location for mothers who wish to feed their child throughout the day. Each location has a different area set aside for mothers. Please contact your Child Learning Center Director for more details.

Baby food must be supplied by caregivers for infants. Jar food will not be heated. Specific instructions for quantities of food and heating instructions should be completed on the infant meal plan.

## **Milk**

In accordance with USDA guidelines for childcare centers, we serve whole milk to our one-year-old classes only. Children, from their second birthday on, will be served either skim or 1% reduced fat milk at Breakfast and Lunch.

Should your child have an allergy to cow's milk or need a milk substitute due to medical reasons, please submit a letter from your child's physician that states specific beverage options for your child for mealtimes. Only milk substitutes such as lactaid, soy milk, oat milk and almond milk will be allowed as viable options for mealtimes.

## **Required Documentation for Mealtime Substitutions**

Per our state guidelines, every child must eat our prepared meals. We follow USDA guidelines and have a specific amount per food group we must prepare. Should any child enrolled in the

program require any substitution of food or drinks, a letter from the child's physician is required for their permanent file. This letter must specifically state the allergy or substitution and list choices for items that are of comparable nutritional value.

An agreement will be made on a case-by-case basis between the family and the child learning center as to how the accommodation will be made. Menus are available the week prior to the new month.

Foods will not be prepared, nor any accommodations made for children solely based on their individual taste preferences.

### **Class Parties and Birthdays**

Caregivers are given the option to choose between a fun dance party, reading a special book from home, or bringing in a small snack to their classroom. Each classroom has one day per month that they celebrate the children who have birthdays that month. Please keep in mind the YMCA mission to form "healthy bodies" when choosing a birthday treat to share.

## **Medication**

Any child that requires medication during the hours they are in the care of the YMCA must have a medication authorization form on file. This form must be signed and dated by the caregiver and is valid for **one week** only.

All medications should be in the original pharmacy container with an unaltered label. The label should contain the following:

- Doctor's Name
- Prescription Number
- Name of Medication
- Date prescription was filled
- Child's Name
- Dosage
- Dosage Intervals

Medication will be given at a time that is specified by the individual classroom teacher in accordance with the prescription recommendation and documented on a Medicine Log kept in the locked medicine cabinet.

## **Missing Caregiver Procedure**

If a child is left at a YMCA Program for more than **45 minutes** past closing and no contact can be made with caregivers, legal guardian, or emergency contacts, the YMCA will take the following actions:

- The person in charge will close the facility as normal and contact the Director, or other executive staff.
- The child will be taken to the YMCA facility's main entrance.

- If contact with the Caregiver has not been made **1 hour** after the program closes, the police will be notified as well as the Department of Family and Child Services.

The above protocol will be followed if the caregiver CAN be contacted and refuses to pick up their child in a timely manner after the close of the program.

If a Caregiver is refusing to come get their child after the given hour, that is considered neglect and will be reported to Department of Family and Child Services.

## **Outdoor Play**

All children will be taken outside daily. Teacher-directed activities will be provided as well as time for individual free play.

Outside time will be shortened or cancelled on days that the temperature is below 32 degrees, above 100 degrees, or if there is a heat advisory. When these days occur, as well as rainy days, teachers will plan indoor gross motor activities.

Water play activities will be incorporated for select classes during the summer months, with caregiver permission.

## **Caregiver Code of Conduct**

The YMCA of Coastal Georgia requires that all caregivers of children enrolled in the Child Learning Center, Child Watch, Mother's Morning Out, After School Care programs, and Holiday Camp programs behave in a manner consistent with the values and mission of our organization. One goal should be shared between the caregivers of enrolled children, teachers, and administrators of the child care program: To educate our young people in a protected environment that promotes decency, courtesy, and respect for others. Caregivers are required to uphold the guidelines listed below:

### **Swearing/Cursing**

There can be no inappropriate language from any adult within the walls of the Child Learning Center, YMCA Program site or any part of the facility where children populate. Inappropriate language is offensive and will not be tolerated. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward staff members or children.

### **Threatening of Employees, Children, or Caregivers**

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. All threats towards employees, children, or caregivers will be reported to the appropriate authorities. The adult making the threat may be prohibited from entering the facility in the future or their child(ren) may be unenrolled from our program. Caregivers must always be in control of their behavior.



## **Staff Interactions**

Caregivers are welcome to have informal meetings with classroom teachers when it is convenient for both parties. The YMCA maintains strict classroom ratios and teachers cannot be pulled away at certain times. Caregivers who wish to have a formal conference with a classroom teacher should request them through the Childcare Director or Assistant Director. Inappropriate confrontations between caregivers and staff will not be tolerated. It is expected that all disagreements or differences in opinion be handled in a calm and respectful manner, out of the presence of children. Caregivers who are aggressive, harassing, or otherwise acting in ways that make staff uncomfortable in doing their job may be asked to disenroll from the program and find alternative care.

## **Physical/Verbal Punishment of Children on YMCA Property**

The YMCA does not condone corporal punishment in our childcare setting; such acts are not allowable, by staff or caregivers, on YMCA property. Behavior concerns can and should be addressed with your child's teacher, but teachers cannot suggest forms of punishment or behavior modification strategies with caregivers informally. Caregiver meetings can be scheduled at the convenience of the caregiver and administrators to discuss behavior plans and corrective action steps for negative behaviors.

Caregivers are prohibited from discussing behavior concerns about other children with administrators or classroom teachers. This is a breach of confidentiality. In addition, it is inappropriate for a caregiver to seek out another caregiver to discuss behavioral concerns or incidents involving their child.

## **Violations to the Conduct Policy**

Should a Caregiver behave in a manner that is inconsistent with the agreed upon code of conduct, they will be asked to leave the premises immediately and the situation and events will be investigated. Once the investigation is complete, the caregivers and adults involved will meet to discuss further action. Inappropriate behavior among adults on childcare property will not be tolerated.

## **Chain of Command**

Each of the YMCA Childcare programs has a Childcare Director and possibly an Assistant Director who are responsible for the day to day operations of the center. Caregivers who have concerns about the day-to-day operation of the center should contact either the Director or the Assistant Director to discuss potential ways to alleviate the situation. If a caregiver has attempted to resolve a concern with center administration and is not satisfied they can call the corporate Childcare Operations Specialist or Vice President of Early Learning at 912-354-5480.

# Caregiver Communication and Conferences

We use the Daily Connect App to maintain frequent communication with caregivers throughout each day of care.

Newsletters will be distributed monthly. Please be aware of all news and events so your child does not miss any activities. These items will be placed near the check-out station in each classroom.

Caregiver Meetings are held at the caregiver's request throughout the school year. We also hold conferences to discuss the child's progress in class in December (Fall Semester Conference) and May (Spring Semester Conference). Your child's portfolio will be available at both regularly scheduled conferences for you to view and comment on.

Developmental checklists will be completed regularly, with the frequency determined by the age of the child, and conferences will be held on an as needed basis.

## Payments

### Weekly Fees

Payments are due each **Monday** for the following week of attendance. All payments must be set up on auto draft from a credit or debit card only.

### Late Payments

Payments not made on Monday will have a \$10 late fee added. This fee will carry over to following weeks until the bill is paid in full.

Accounts falling more than two weeks behind will automatically be withdrawn from all YMCA programs unless other arrangements have been made.

### Scholarships

The YMCA offers scholarships to those families who have limited income, as available. Forms are located at the front desk and are evaluated on a case by case basis.

There are a limited number of scholarships given out yearly and supporting documentation regarding the applications must be kept up-to-date.

Families must apply to the CAPS program, a state childcare subsidy program, before being evaluated for a YMCA scholarship. The status of your CAPS claim has no bearing on the evaluation of your YMCA scholarship.

## **Potty Training**

The YMCA believes that each child grows and develops differently and we appreciate the fact that potty training is unique for each child enrolled. Each of our Child Learning Center programs is equipped to start potty training children when they enter the two year old classroom. Developmentally, this is the earliest time that a child is equipped with the verbal and physical skills to understand what is involved to make the act of potty training successful.

When you believe your child is ready to start potty training, alert the center staff and a plan will be put into place to help your child successfully learn this skill. The YMCA believes that successful potty training happens quickly when Caregivers and staff work together to keep the queues consistent and precise.

The YMCA will not reward pottying with food at any time. Stickers and other rewards may be offered during potty training. This method is encouraged at home as well to keep the reward system consistent.

## **Sleeping/Rest Time**

In order to prevent fatigue and renew energy, the center will provide an opportunity for children to rest and relax during the day. Children require different amounts of rest. The program will be flexible enough to allow individual children to relax in a variety of ways. A scheduled rest period will be provided and will be age-appropriate in length. A mat is provided; a top and bottom cover should be brought from home and laundered weekly. Children are never required to nap. Children who choose not to nap will be offered quiet activities during nap time.

## **Supply Lists**

Classes may have a supply list that will be distributed to caregivers upon enrollment or when your child graduates to a new age group. All supplies should be purchased and returned to school as quickly as possible. If you have a financial hardship, please contact the Childcare Director.

## **Toys**

Toys from home should not be brought to any program unless specifically requested by the teacher (ex. show and tell).

- \*These toys should not be electronic or require batteries of any kind.

- \*They will be stored in the cubby and brought out at the teachers' discretion.

- \*The YMCA is not responsible for lost toys and will not replace them.

## **Withdrawal**

Two weeks' notice is required when withdrawing a child from the program. Attendance is not required; however, full payment must be made for two weeks after the Withdrawal Form is signed by the Child Care Director.

## **YMCA Mission**

To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

Our Child Care programs project the mission of the YMCA by teaching the children five core character values: Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, and Faith. Each week, the teachers will focus on one of the five character values and highlight lessons to reflect that character value. We will also have non-denominational Bible stories and devotion topics presented to the children at circle time.

# Caregiver Agreement

I have read and agree to abide by the policies and procedures of the YMCA Child Care Center as stated in the Caregiver Handbook. I understand that non-compliance with the said rules and regulations is grounds for expulsion from the program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Caregiver or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Child's Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program

## Volunteer Opportunities

Please let us know if you would like to be involved in any of the following committees at the YMCA Child Care Center:

\_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Community Advisory Committee  
\_\_\_\_\_ Childcare Specific Fundraisers  
\_\_\_\_\_ Room Mom or Dad  
\_\_\_\_\_ Teacher Appreciation Week Festivities  
\_\_\_\_\_ Trunk or Treat  
\_\_\_\_\_ Thanksgiving Feast  
\_\_\_\_\_ Angel Tree  
\_\_\_\_\_ Annual Campaign Fundraising

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_