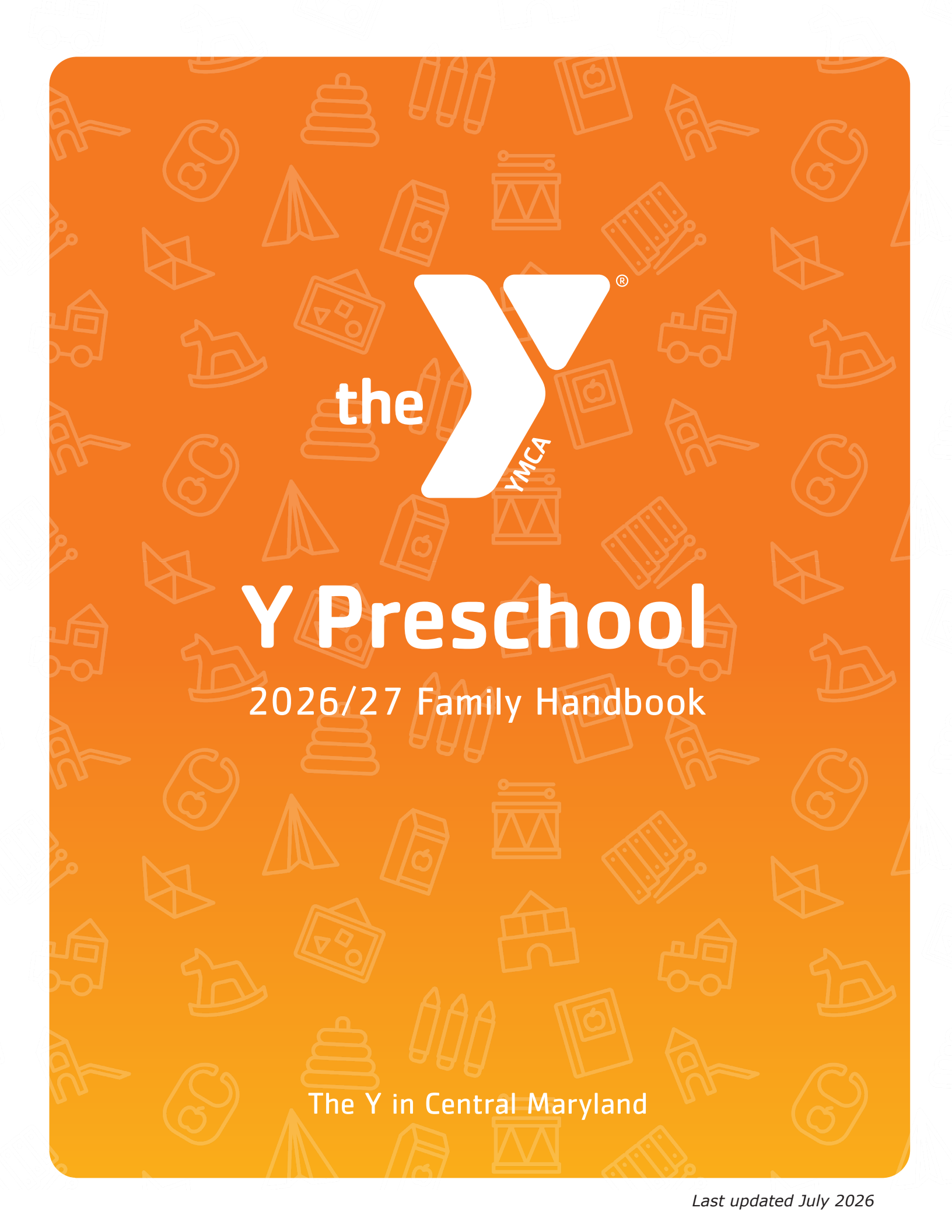




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Y Preschool

2026/27 Family Handbook

The Y in Central Maryland

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Welcome to Y Preschool!

For many of you, this will be your child's first adventure away from home. It may also be your first experience with the Y. To help with this transition, this handbook is designed to answer your questions and provide a deeper understanding of our Y Preschool philosophy and program. Together, we can create a rich and rewarding experience for your child and wonderful memories that will last a lifetime.

The Y in Central Maryland's preschool program has provided trusted educational and developmental support to children and families in Central Maryland for over 50 years. Our preschool programs are licensed by the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care (OCC) and combine a safe and happy educational environment with a curriculum designed to stimulate intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth. The Y has taken an innovative approach in designing programs that meet the needs of the various communities we serve. We offer both full-time and/or part-time (Chipmunks only) preschool, as well as infant/toddler and before and after school enrichment (at select locations).

Each day, you will be provided detailed information capturing your child's journey with us. You'll receive daily reports from your child's teacher outlining your child's activities, routines, and care, including information on food eaten, length of naps, diaper changes, new skills learned, classroom activities, special accomplishments, and more. Our centers maintain an open-door policy and parents/guardians are encouraged to observe our programs. If you have any questions about our program, we encourage you to talk to your preschool director. Our directors are available to speak with you in person, by phone, or via email.

Thank you again for joining our Y family. Together, we will partner to provide an environment that is both supportive and enriching to your child's overall development.

Sincerely,

The Y Preschool Team

Our Mission and Philosophy

The Y is a charitable organization in Central Maryland dedicated to developing the full potential of every individual through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

The Y Preschool philosophy incorporates the Y's mission and builds on it by providing opportunities for children to: learn through play; develop cognitive and physical health; become enthusiastic learners; develop character; and be independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners.

Our Core Values and Operating Principles

Our programs and services are infused with our four positive character values: Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility. And every single day, in every Y site and program, we ask that our associates, members, volunteers and participants embrace our four core operating principles to ensure the best experience for everyone involved: Cleanliness, Empathy, Engagement and Safety.

Our Vision

The Y will build a more connected central Maryland community in which Y membership creates a sense of engagement, empathy, health, and well-being for all. This greater sense of connection will impact people and families more deeply across all of the Y's points of access.

Our Focus

At the Y, we are committed to providing family-oriented, affordable, high quality programs that focus on building healthy and connected communities through Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility.

The Y is a place for everyone. People from all walks of life are embraced and financial assistance is provided to actively engage the entirety of the community.

Demographic Information

The Y receives financial grants, gifts, and donations from public and private sources. Many of these sources require us to provide an overview of the customers and communities we serve which may include age, grade, sex, and number of children by school or community, as well as race and household income. Specific and individual information about you or your family is never isolated and shared. This information is helpful, but optional.

Children with Special Needs

We act in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other applicable federal, state, and local laws pertaining to the provision of services to children with different abilities. Our goal is to meet the individual needs of the child within the structure of our program and the abilities of our teachers, while maintaining a healthy and safe environment for all children and teachers. We will make reasonable accommodations to provide children with different abilities full and equal access to our programs and services in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs so long as doing so does not place an undue staffing or financial burden on our program or does not pose a safety risk to the child or others in the center. We will make no assumptions concerning any individual's abilities or different abilities and will make an individual assessment to determine if we can meet each child's needs in our group setting.

At the time of enrollment, the parent/guardian must indicate if any special accommodation is required for their child. If a child has a medical condition, medical paperwork must be completed accordingly. It is imperative that the parent/guardian, director and teacher directly involved with the child, be familiar with the medical needs of the child to best meet their individual needs. Special medical needs include asthma, food or other allergies, ADD or ADHD, physical limitations or any other diagnosed condition.

If a child has an IEP or an IFSP, we require parents to provide a copy upon enrollment so that we can make reasonable accommodations to best meet the needs of your child. Please note, this information will be shared with the Maryland State Department of Education on an as-needed basis, as well as with members of the preschool team, Child Find, Project Act, and Infants and Toddlers to help meet the needs of your child. Our preschools work directly with these and other agencies, such as Speech Leap, to provide a strong foundation for your child.

Confidentiality Policy

Our policy is to maintain confidentiality and respect each family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information. However, when the teacher has reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, we are required to share information with agencies and individuals who may be able to intervene in the child's best interest.

Enrollment

Before enrollment, parents/guardians must request a tour of the center for a brief orientation; any questions will be addressed. Children may not participate in the program until all necessary paperwork is completed and submitted to the Preschool Director prior to your child's first day:

- Registration Form w/ Registration Fee (online)
- Emergency Card (online and updated annually)
- New Health Inventory Form w/Lead Addendum
- Enrollment/Liability Release (online)
- Immunization Record (doctor signed)
- Swim Permission Slip (if applicable)
- IEP/IFSP (if applicable)
- Payment for two weeks of program
- Registration Agreement (online)
- Financial Issues Statement (online)
- Allergy Alert w/Medications (if applicable)
- Special Medical Plan (if applicable)
- Please provide a copy of an IEP or IFSP for children receiving special services prior to the first day. This will assist teachers and administration in creating a strong foundation for your child.

On your child's first day, please bring the following items, each labeled with your child's name:

- Quiet time bedding (crib-sized sheet, travel-size pillow, small blanket – stored in a pillowcase, drawstring duffel or backpack)**
- Diapers and wipes (if child is not potty-trained)
- Sweater-sized plastic box/lid or Ziploc bag with a complete change of clothing and extra pair of shoes
- A nutritious packed lunch, if applicable*
- 3 family photos**

***Not applicable at Y Chipmunks Preschool in Finksburg*

***Please do not pack any foods that requires heating as it is not available.**

Continual Enrollment

To keep your child's spot each year, families must complete re-registration forms and pay the annual fee online. Enrollment for the new school year is offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

Y Family Membership

Membership is the unifying hub of Y community life. All families enrolled in Y Preschool receive a Y family membership as part of program enrollment, a membership benefit that expands your family's engagement with the Y community!

Y family membership continues all year at no additional cost, even during school holidays and summer months, as long as your child is enrolled in Y Preschool.*
(Membership is activated with the first tuition payment)

Your Y family membership includes:

- Unlimited access to all 12 Y family centers in Central Maryland: Baltimore City

and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties (see page 27 for a list of locations)

- Free Stay & Play for your little ones while you use the Y
- State-of-the-art fitness centers, lap pools, family fun pools, rock walls, gymnasiums, and more
- Group exercise classes and water exercise classes
- Family game rooms, Familyhood and Funshop activities, family events, Parents' Night Out (i.e. "Date Night")
- Exclusive member-only access to swim lessons, fun days, youth sports, Y Day Camp, and more
- Volunteer and mentoring opportunities and many other ways to get involved in your community. Be sure to take advantage of your Y family membership benefits all year long!

*"*Participants in the Betty Sterner Y Preschool School-age Enrichment Program or Y Chipmunks Preschool must re-register for the following school year by June 1st of each year to maintain their Y family membership at no additional cost."*

Child Custody

Unless otherwise specified by legal documentation, we assume both parents have equal rights to drop off, pick up, visit, or request information about their child. If custody or visitation rights differ, it is the enrolling parent's responsibility to provide current, official court documents. Without these documents, we cannot restrict a parent's access to their child.

Please provide your director with any necessary documentation. They will let you know if additional information is required. We kindly ask that families keep staff, other children, and the preschool community separate from personal legal or custodial matters. Parents are expected to communicate respectfully and in the best interest of their child.

Failure to follow these policies may result in termination from the program.

The parent/guardian who registers the child is solely responsible for all childcare fees. We cannot split payments or create multiple accounts.

New Student Orientation

We provide extra support to help new students feel comfortable as they transition into their classroom. Each child may be paired with a classroom "buddy" to guide them through daily routines and activities. Teachers also give clear instructions during transition times and offer extra attention to ensure every new student feels welcomed, supported, and ready to settle into their new environment.

Tuition

The Y in Central Maryland is a non-profit organization, and all revenue goes directly toward the operation of our programs. We strive to maintain affordable tuition rates for our families, however, changes in tuition may occur. Written notice will be given in advance regarding any change.

Registration Fees

Registration fees are paid online at the time of registration, are due annually, and are non-refundable.

Sibling Discounts

The Y offers a 10% sibling discount to families enrolling multiple children from the same household for the same session. The full rate must be paid for the child with the highest tuition rate.

Y Open Doors Savings

The Y is a community hub where everyone is welcome. That's why we are committed to making our programs and services as affordable as possible to all who want to be a part of our Y community. One way we do this is through Y Open Doors Savings. We work hard to raise funds year-round to offset and lower costs to help make Y Preschool and other programs and services more accessible.

Y Open Doors Savings may help reduce the cost of Y Preschool by up to 75%. Learn more and apply online at ymaryland.org/opendoors or by contacting our Customer Service team at customerservice@ymaryland.org. Any information you provide is confidential.

Outside Financial Assistance

The Y also accepts Child Care Subsidy vouchers from the State of Maryland. For additional assistance with payments, families should contact their local Department of Social Services office.

In addition, some locations participate in fee assistance from the following programs:

- AmeriCorps
- Military Fee Assistance through Child Care Aware of America (where applicable)
- Corporate Partnerships

Additional Program Fees

Special activities outside of the general curriculum (including summer activities and others) may require additional fees. Advance notification of any fees and due dates will be provided. Please note, we do not accept cash. Payment can be made by check, money order or credit card.

Vacation Credits

A vacation credit of one week per year (September-August) may be used if your child is absent for five consecutive days (Monday-Friday) for a family vacation. This credit only applies to full-time children that have been enrolled in the program full-time for at least six months. Written notice must be given at least two weeks in advance to use this credit. Written notice should be given directly to the preschool director for approval and delivery to the Y Customer Service office. A Vacation Credit Request Form can be found on the Y Family Preschool Resource website.

*Not applicable for Betty Sterner Y Preschool School-age Enrichment Program or Y Chipmunks Preschool.

Absences & Closings

Please notify your preschool director by email, Tadpoles, written note, or phone if your child will be absent, delayed, or arriving later than 9:30 a.m.

For families in the Y Before & After School Enrichment program at the Betty Sterner Y Preschool in Catonsville: Please also let the preschool director know if your school-age child will be leaving public school early or going home with someone else.

Tuition is not reduced for holidays, absences, or unexpected site closures beyond our control. Families are responsible for payment on all scheduled days, regardless of attendance.

Payment Policies

Payment can be made by check, money order, or credit card to Y Customer Service or a Y Family Center location (see page 35 for locations).

All credit card payments will be subject to a 2.72% service fee. This fee covers the cost we incur for credit card transactions. No service fee is applied to ACH payments (automatic checking account withdrawals). If you wish, you may change your form of payment to ACH at any time in your Y account. [Click here for instructions.](#)

When paying by check or money order, please put your child's name on the payment. Make checks or money orders payable to the Y in Central Maryland. You may mail your payment to the Y Customer Service Office at 303 W Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204, or make payment at your local Y Family Center ([see page 35 for locations](#)).

Payments are not accepted at Y Preschool Centers. Receipts can be accessed by logging into your account. Automatic weekly billing can be set at any time via our website, www.ymaryland.org. Weekly payments via credit card or checking account can be made via your online account at any time.

Late Payments

A late charge of \$25 will be applied to any account not paid in full by the due date. Families will receive an email and/or phone call concerning late payments and date for termination of services if payment is not received. To avoid disruption of service, payment in full must be made prior to final termination date. Receipt of payment must be presented to the center director or opening teacher before your child is admitted into care. Accounts with repeat late payments will be held to the conditions of a modified late payment policy.

Returned Checks

Checks returned for non-payment will not be re-deposited; an additional charge of \$25.00 will be charged for any returned checks. You will be notified via email of a Non-Sufficient Funds occurrence, and the \$25.00 fee will be added to your next payment. Multiple returned checks may result in non-acceptance of personal checks for future payments.

Late Pick-Up Charge

We understand that traffic or unexpected delays may occasionally cause a late pick-up. If you know you will be late, please call the center as soon as possible. Two teachers must remain until every child has been picked up, and we appreciate your cooperation in respecting our staff and program hours.

Late Fees begin when the program ends:

- \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes
- \$5.00 for each additional 5-minute period (or part thereof)

Parents arriving late will receive a Late Charge Slip to review and sign. Payment is due by the end of the next business day.

If a child is not picked up within 10 minutes of closing, emergency contacts will be called. If neither you nor your contacts can be reached by 6:15 p.m., authorities will be contacted to ensure your child's safety.

Families are permitted up to six late pick-ups per school year. Repeated late pick-ups may result in a review of continued enrollment in Y Preschool.

Withdrawal/Changes in Care

All changes to your child's scheduled care must be submitted in writing (email or Change in Care Form) at least two weeks in advance. This includes requests for vacation credits. Verbal requests for schedule changes or withdrawals cannot be accepted.

If you plan to withdraw your child from the program, a written two-week notice must be provided to your Preschool Site Director.

Education at Y Preschool

You can rest assured your child is receiving a quality education at the Y. Our Learn Through Play curriculum incorporates character values and cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language experiences that lay the foundation for your child's educational future. Our preschools are committed to providing each child with an experience that will last a lifetime.

Our Curriculum

Y Preschool curriculum choices are made using best practices that include:

- Individual needs of students
- Developmentally appropriate practices
- Reliable and valid assessments (completed three times a year)
- Teacher's input
- Developmental age of the students
- Special needs of students
- Cultural sensitivity
- Daily progress reports
- Social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical development domains
- Health and safety

The activities we plan, organization of the environment, selected toys and materials, daily schedules, and talks with children are all designed to accomplish the goals of our curriculum and give your child a successful start in kindergarten and beyond. Our curriculum identifies goals in all areas of development.

- **Language:** To help children gain literacy skills and oral language skills.
- **Social:** To help children feel comfortable in school, trust their new environment, make friends, and feel they are part of the group.
- **Cognitive:** To help children become confident learners by letting them try out their own ideas and experience success, and by helping them acquire learning skills such as problem solving, asking questions, and using words to describe their ideas, observations, and feelings.
- **Emotional:** To help children experience pride and self-confidence, develop independence and self-control, and have a positive attitude towards life.
- **Physical:** To help children increase their large and small muscle skills and feel confident about their bodies.

The Y in Central Maryland has implemented a Maryland State Department of Education Approved Preschool Curriculum into our Y Preschool programs, resources that promote

development of the whole child – socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Our curriculum consists of skills and activities that provide children with solid, coherent foundations for later learning in kindergarten and beyond.

The most important goal of our curriculum is to help children become enthusiastic learners. This means encouraging children to be active and creative explorers who are not afraid to try out their ideas and think their own thoughts. Our goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive learners.

We're teaching children how to learn, not just in these early years, but throughout their lives. We're allowing them to learn at their own pace, in ways that are best for them. We're instilling good habits and attitudes, particularly a positive sense of self, which will benefit them throughout their lives.

Learn Through Play

Children learn best when they are having fun and enjoying what they are doing. This makes play a very natural avenue in teaching young children. Through play, children can "try on" different roles. They can learn cause and effect. They develop confidence while doing things they know they can do. They learn to work as a team and to solve problems by thinking them through. A child's self-concept is built by being successful in a variety of experiences. Discovery, learning, and play help them do that in terms they can understand.

Character Development

We work to provide the best program possible for your child. At the Y, this means more than just providing activities. We believe character development is an important part of what we do. Y Character Development challenges all of us to demonstrate positive values of Honesty, Caring, Respect, and Responsibility.

Character Development is the basis of the social-emotional development element of our curriculum. The individuality of each child is both respected and encouraged. Strengths are recognized and each child encouraged to move at their own pace.

Cognitive Development

Learning centers in each classroom are purposefully designed to encourage cognitive development. Areas such as Dramatic Play, Art, Music, Science, Blocks, and Manipulatives provide endless opportunities for your child to grow intellectually. Language and listening skills are developed through group reading, language games, and discussion. Opportunities for literacy and numeric skill development are intentionally woven into daily activities and transition periods.

Physical Development

Your child's physical development is as important as any other area of our program. The Y offers daily opportunities for vigorous play, both indoors and out. Opportunities to develop motor skills with movement education, simple games, and tumbling activities; nutritious and varied snacks; rest periods designed to meet developmental needs; and health and safety education are all infused into our curriculum.

The Y also provides a physical education curriculum that focuses on nutrition and physical fitness and provides age-appropriate guidelines to children through songs and simple activities.

Portfolio Content

We maintain a portfolio for each child containing date-stamped work samples from a variety of domains. Work samples demonstrate the child's progress throughout the school year. Developmental screenings and assessments are part of each student's portfolio.

Lesson Plans

Classroom teachers create weekly lesson plans based on our MSDE-approved unit plans. Curriculum and unit plans developed by Y curriculum specialists are reviewed annually by the teaching teams, giving the opportunity to provide ongoing feedback. Lesson plan activities are designed to meet age-appropriate goals and objectives. Lessons are individualized to meet the developmental needs of each student, to the best of our ability. For students on an IEP or an IFSP, the school will work in partnership with the local school district, Infants and Toddlers, Project Act and/or Child Find to provide services available to them. Reasonable accommodation and modification will be provided for students in need of services.

A curriculum overview is posted on the family communication board in the main lobby of each center.

Student Observations and Assessments

The Y utilizes the Frog Street Assess, Instruct and Monitor (AIM) tool. AIM outlines intentional opportunities for teacher observations throughout the course of the instructional day. Areas of Assessment align with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Maryland Model for School Readiness.

At the beginning of each school year, teachers conduct an initial assessment to create a foundational learning plan for all children. Teachers observe and assess students on a regular basis to adapt lessons and activities to meet each child's needs. Our teachers conduct formal assessments three times a year and share results with parents during parent-teacher conferences in Fall, Winter, and Spring either virtually or in-person.

Students can be assessed up to three times a year. Students with significantly lower scores on this assessment will be referred to their pediatrician, Infants and Toddlers program, Project Act or local Child Find for formal testing and screenings. Any referrals will be facilitated in partnership with the student's parents/guardians to ensure children obtain their assessments in a timely manner.

Our teachers also conduct ongoing observations, including anecdotal notes and use of developmental checklists. In addition to in-house assessments, the Y partners with the local health department to provide on-site speech/language, vision, and hearing testing by health department professionals.

Classroom Environment

Our preschool centers are designed to be safe, welcoming, and developmentally appropriate for young learners. Child-sized furniture, equipment, sinks, and toilets help children build independence in caring for their own needs. Supplies and materials are placed within easy reach, encouraging exploration and self-directed learning.

Each classroom includes a variety of learning centers equipped with carefully chosen educational toys and materials to support motor, social, and cognitive development. For example:

- **Two-year-old rooms** feature large trucks, bigger crayons and paintbrushes, and

low, labeled shelves with age-appropriate materials.

- **Three and four-year-old rooms** offer writing tools, manipulatives that foster problem-solving, and smaller art supplies to strengthen fine motor skills.

We use the ITERS (Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale) and ECERS (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale) guidelines to help us select quality materials.

To reflect and celebrate our uniqueness, each classroom includes puzzles, dolls, books, and posters that highlight different cultures, abilities, and traditions. We invite families to share their own cultural backgrounds and unique experiences with our teachers and students. All classrooms are ADA-compliant and designed to be accessible for every child.

Daily routines provide a balance of teacher-guided small- and large-group activities as well as child-led exploration. Teachers collaborate on lesson planning and regularly refresh materials—such as themed “prop boxes” (holidays, occupations, community helpers, etc.)—to keep learning environments engaging and aligned with children’s growth and interests.

Respecting Our Differences

Children’s attitudes toward others develop as they observe and interpret the actions of those around them. While young children may be free of adult prejudices and stereotypes, they are not insensitive to the subtle attitudes displayed by the adults around them. As such, we recognize the importance of:

- Introducing different cultures through stories, in-house field trips and guests, songs, dance, art, and food experiences
- Including a variety of different props and learning materials throughout the classroom
- Acknowledging and sharing information about holidays and celebrations from other cultures
- Encouraging families to share their traditions with children and teachers
- Acceptance of various family structures, abilities, and other differences that are part of our society

Classroom Transitions

A positive transition from home to school is important for your child each day. Drop-off should be a positive experience for your child – it should not be rushed, nor should it leave either you or your child feeling anxious. We encourage you to spend time in your child’s classroom, talk to them about their projects on display, their teachers, and their friends. Talking about their day at school will help your child feel more secure.

Your child will have an assigned cubby and/or mailbox. At drop-off, please sign your child in via Tadpoles, place their belongings in the assigned cubby, and escort them to their classroom. When you pick your child up, please sign them out, collect items from their cubby, and check their mailbox for information/projects to be sent home.

The center director will contact you as needed if your child is ready to move into a new classroom. The decision to move a child up to a new classroom is based on age, birth date, available classroom space, and assessment results. We make every effort to make this transition a smooth one, allowing your child to spend brief periods of time in the new classroom before making a full transition.

Teacher Qualifications & Training

At the Y we understand that leaving your child with an unfamiliar adult can be difficult. To ease your mind, we have requirements in place for all our teachers, some that go beyond those mandated by the State of Maryland. Enabling teachers and aides to provide comprehensive services for children and families and assist in ongoing evaluation and improvement of the program is critical. Strongly committed to providing quality preschool programs, we offer Y teachers the opportunity to grow, both personally and professionally, through ongoing teacher development and training. Y teachers are required to obtain MSDE credentialing and further their formal education to increase credential level.

Qualifications

The protection and safety of children is top priority. All Y Preschool teachers meet the specified requirements by the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care.

While these are just the minimum requirements, many of our teachers also have an Associate or Bachelor's degree in the field of Early Childhood Education.

Pre-Employment Screenings

Prior to employment, Y Preschool teachers undergo criminal background checks, reference checks, and medical examinations. Additionally, they must agree to random drug and alcohol testing. Each preschool teacher is provided a Teacher Handbook which covers policies and procedures including specific policies on Child Abuse Prevention.

Training

During monthly meetings, Y Preschool teachers receive training on the newest information in the field of Early Childhood Education. Additionally, they receive ongoing feedback through mid-year performance reviews, annual performance reviews, ongoing observations from center directors, and annual individual development plans.

To meet licensing requirements, all teachers must participate in a minimum number of continuing education trainings per year:

- 12 continuing education hours for lead teachers
- 6 continuing education hours for assistant teachers

Additionally, any teacher at our NECPA accredited preschool locations must meet the following requirements:

- 30 hours of training during their first year of employment
- 24 hours of training during every subsequent year of employment

Y Associates	MSDE Office of Child Care	Y Lead Teachers	Y Assistant Teachers & Substitutes
Bloodborne Pathogens	First Aid	MSDE 45 hour Curriculum Certificate	MSDE Aide Orientation
Preschool Orientation	CPR (Basic Life Support)	MSDE 45 hour Preschool Certificate or	
Child Abuse Prevention	ADA	MSDE 45 hour Infant/Toddler Certificate or	
Strategy and Innovation	Health & Safety	MSDE 45 hour School-Age Certificate	
Curriculum Training	Medication Administration	1 year of experience in a center	
	Emergency Preparedness	9 hour Communication Course	
	Breastfeeding		

Family Engagement

Each family member who walks through the front door of our preschool is part of our Y family. For your child to get the most from their preschool experience, it is critical that you play an active role in their education.

Family Code of Conduct

Maintaining a warm, nurturing environment for children, parents, and teachers is a mutual effort. We expect both teachers and parents to keep honest and respectful lines of communication open.

Just as there are expectations concerning appropriate teacher conduct, there are also expectations for appropriate parent conduct. The following behaviors are not acceptable:

- Cursing or swearing when speaking with teachers, children, or other parents
- Using violence or acting in any way that causes teachers, children, or other parents to feel threatened
- Arguing with parents or teachers
- Interfering with a teacher's ability to do their job
- Violation of our Confidentiality Policy (pg 4)
- Physical or verbal punishment of your child(ren) or other children while in the program
- Smoking or vaping on premises

We have the right to exclude any parent(s)/guardian(s) in violation of this policy from participating in the program or entering the program.

Inappropriate behavior or failure to meet expectations as explained herein may result in immediate termination of care and/or expulsion from all Y programs and properties.

Parent Participation

The Y believes strongly that parent participation is a key ingredient in a quality preschool program. We encourage you to visit our program whenever possible throughout the school year, to discuss any concerns or ideas with the center director, including home situations, scheduled events, or happenings in the center. This gives you the chance to see how your child spends time with other children and their teacher and will assist us in more fully meeting the needs of your family.

Parents are encouraged to support teachers in their efforts to enhance program development and extended family services through social activities, center improvements, etc.

Families are also encouraged to participate in our Parent Committee known as FISH (Family Involvement Starts Here). The FISH Group meets to plan upcoming events, and to discuss a variety of projects. Projects include family activities, parent workshops and community outreach. Notice of opportunities to participate will be provided on our preschool family website.

Your feedback helps us grow! While the Y sends out formal evaluation forms every year, we welcome your input all year round. Every survey is carefully reviewed by our preschool teams and the Association Office to help us improve. Please feel free to reach out to your Preschool Director at any time to share how we can make your family's experience even better.

Our Doors Are Open

You are always welcome to stop in, visit your child, and join us for activities. We seek your active involvement in our program to help us make improvements and to help us meet both the needs of your child and the needs of your family.

We do ask that you refrain from using your cell phone when in our building. We also ask that you remember to wash/sanitize your hands upon entry to our facilities to assist us in promoting a clean, healthy environment, and to assist in reducing the spread of illness.

Communication

Through frequent, effective communication, together we can provide security and continuity for your child. We utilize Tadpoles, our online communications portal, to provide information on your child's activities throughout the day. To view your Tadpoles account, log in with the email address provided to the Y.

We also frequently communicate through email and/or text alerts. Please ensure the center director has your current email address and that you are signed up for cell phone text alerts.

Parents are encouraged to call the preschool center (at rest time, if possible) should you have any questions or concerns. If a conversation is one that will divert the teacher's attention away from the children, we ask that you schedule a conference with teachers and the leadership team. We offer parent-teacher conferences three times a year*, Fall, Winter, and Spring to go over developmental milestones and areas of growth. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you need to meet more frequently to address any concerns or questions you may have. **Y Chipmunks Preschool offers parent-teach conferences two times a year.*

Classroom and lobby bulletin boards are important – we use these to communicate things such as menus, lesson plans, monthly newsletters, calendar of events, and messages important to you and your child. Please take some time to browse these areas to stay informed.

We also provide information on local community resources, including public schools, the library, doctor's offices, dentists, and more. See your preschool center director for information on specific resources.

Program Quality

At the Y, we strive to provide the best curriculum-based quality care for all children. We continually assess our programs through:

- Internal quality audits performed by our Executive Director of Early Childhood Development and VP of Quality and Risk Management
- Parent surveys distributed three times annually
- Ongoing classroom observations performed by preschool directors
- Voluntary participation in state quality standard initiatives (EXCELS) and both state and nationally recognized accreditation programs (MSDE and NECPA)
- Consistent adherence to regulations set by the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care (OCC)

The Y in Central Maryland preschool program is licensed and regulated by the OCC. As such, we adhere to strict standards and guidelines regarding facilities, teachers, paperwork, health and safety procedures, curriculum, and supervision of children.

Each preschool location is inspected periodically by state, county/city health, fire, and licensing officials.

Maryland EXCELS is a voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that awards ratings to family providers, center-based and public school child care programs, and school age before- and after-school programs that meet increasingly higher quality standards in key areas including licensing, learning environments, teachers and professional development, developmentally appropriate learning and program practices, child assessment, program administration and policies, and accreditation. Each of our preschool programs voluntarily participates in the Maryland EXCELS rating system and some have achieved the highest quality EXCELS rating.

Accreditation

Maryland State Department of Education (MDSE) Accreditation incorporates program standards, indicators, and descriptions of best practices for pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, center-based childcare, and Head Start Programs. Accreditation focuses on administration, operation, and family/community partnerships of classroom-based programs. By pursuing and successfully completing MSDE Accreditation, programs demonstrate commitment to improving the performance of services and to providing the highest quality programs to children. The Y Chipmunks Preschool program achieved and has maintained MSDE accreditation for several years now.

Our other preschool programs have achieved or are currently in the process of achieving National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA). NECPA is a nationally recognized accreditation program with exceptionally high standards based on research from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and National Health and Safety Performance Standards developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Public Health Association (APHA). These standards assess quality in areas of adult and child interaction, teacher framing, health and safety, physical environment, administration, and parent and community relationships.

Our goal is to achieve and maintain accreditation for all of our centers, ensuring our programs meet and maintain the highest standards of excellence. Further, our preschool leadership team works closely with an array of volunteers including professors, researchers, school officials, and other specialists in the field of education to review program outcomes and discuss the newest trends in educational research.

Program Operations

Meals

The Y provides a morning snack and afternoon snack consisting of either fruits or vegetables at least twice a week (not applicable at Y Chipmunks Preschool). A monthly menu based on USDA guidelines is prepared and posted on the lobby bulletin boards for your review. At centers where lunch is not provided, parents should provide a “bagged” lunch that includes a balanced meal. We suggest whole grains, fresh fruits or vegetables, and food with lower fat, sugar, and/or salt content.

We cannot serve soda or candy at lunch; please do not send these items with your child. Also, please do not send items that require heating. We do not heat lunch items as we cannot guarantee food temperature or remove teachers from the classroom to do so. The Office of Child Care requires teachers to review meals brought from home to ensure nutritional value. We often send “tips” or ideas for lunch

to parents. If a healthy meal is not provided, then we will provide a supplement to meet the basic nutritional needs as outlined and set forth by the OCC.

Mealtime is important, and not time to be rushed. Whenever possible, we implement Family Style Dining – serving food to children seated at a table. Main and side dishes brought to the table in serving bowls or on platters are passed among the children. Each child takes what he/she wants and transfers the food selections to their own plates. Y teachers join the children to facilitate conversation and table manners. Young children are assisted with their meal and encouraged to eat.

We provide only 1% milk when served. (If at a site with infants/toddlers, whole milk is provided to those respective age groups.) Water is offered at mealtimes and readily available throughout the day. OCC licensing regulations require physician's documentation for each child on a special diet due to medical reasons. Documentation must include food items excluded from the child's diet. If a child is on a special diet due to religious or cultural traditions, a signed note from the parent/guardian must be on file noting foods to be excluded and reasons for exclusion.

Infants and toddlers are fed in accordance with the Infant and Toddler Care Plan provided by the parent/guardian. Care plans are updated every three months, or as needed, by the parent/guardian. During feedings, teachers promote social development through conversational interactions with the child. (See INFANT AND TODDLER CARE Section of this Handbook for more details.)

Nut-Free Environment Policy

The safety and well-being of every child in our care is our highest priority. Because food allergies can result in serious, life-threatening reactions, our preschool is committed to maintaining a nut-free environment to reduce the risk of exposure to peanuts and tree nuts. **This policy requires the cooperation of all families, associates, volunteers, and visitors to help provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for every child.**

To protect children with severe food allergies, peanuts, tree nuts, and foods containing nut ingredients are not permitted in the preschool.

Examples of prohibited items include, but are not limited to:

- Peanuts
- Peanut butter
- Mixed nuts
- Almonds
- Cashews
- Walnuts
- Pecans
- Pistachios
- Hazelnuts
- Macadamia nuts
- Brazil nuts
- Nut butters and nut spreads
- Foods containing peanuts or tree nuts

Families are asked to carefully review ingredient labels before sending any food to the preschool.

Please do not send foods labeled with statements such as:

- "Contains peanuts or tree nuts"

- “May contain peanuts or tree nuts”
- “Processed in a facility that also processes peanuts or tree nuts”
- “Manufactured on shared equipment with peanuts or tree nuts”

When in doubt, please choose another product or contact the preschool before sending the item.

Meals, Snacks, and Classroom Celebrations

Meals and snacks provided by the preschool will be planned to avoid peanut and tree nut ingredients whenever possible. For birthdays and special celebrations:

- Food items must be commercially packaged with a complete ingredient label.
- Homemade foods are not permitted.
- Families should receive approval from the preschool before bringing treats or snacks.
- Non-food celebrations are encouraged whenever possible.

Classroom Procedures

To reduce the risk of accidental exposure, staff will:

- Supervise all meals and snacks.
- Prevent children from sharing food, drinks, or utensils.
- Wash children’s hands before and after eating.
- Clean and sanitize tables and eating areas before and after meals.
- Inspect food items when necessary to ensure compliance with this policy.
- Maintain allergy-aware classrooms and common areas.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents and guardians are expected to:

- Follow the preschool’s nut-free policy.
- Inform the preschool of any food allergies upon enrollment and whenever changes occur.
- Provide current medical documentation and any required emergency medications for children with diagnosed allergies.
- Review all food labels before sending food to school.

Associates Responsibilities

All staff members will:

- Participate in annual food allergy awareness and emergency response training.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Follow each child’s Individual Health Care Plan or Emergency Action Plan.
- Administer emergency medication, when authorized and trained.
- Contact emergency medical services (911) immediately in the event of a suspected severe allergic reaction.
- Notify the child’s parent or guardian as soon as possible.

Visitors and Volunteers

Visitors, volunteers, and contractors are expected to support this policy by not bringing peanut or tree nut products into the preschool and by following all food safety procedures while on site.

Special Occasions

According to the Centers for Disease Control, allergies have increased more than 20 percent among American children since the mid 1990’s. Sending a food treat to the classroom to celebrate a birthday or holiday can exclude those children who have food allergies, diabetes, or other dietary restrictions. Further, in a classroom of twenty children, if each parent were to bring a food item to celebrate, we could have sugary

food several times a month. **As such, we do not permit outside food for holiday events and birthday celebrations.** We are happy to recognize your child's birthday and holidays with non-food items and invite you to bring stickers, pencils, mini notepads, playdough, and mini-Frisbees for such celebrations.

Please contact your Center Director to discuss what you'd like to bring and to ensure the item is age appropriate.

Rest Time

After-lunch rest periods are designed to meet your child's developmental needs. Length of rest time is based on recommendations from the OCC and may change as students prepare for transition to kindergarten. Children who do not nap during rest time will be offered quiet cot activities.

Your child's comfort during rest time is important to us; individual child-sized cots are provided. A small blanket and crib-sized sheet is required, per the OCC. If a crib-sized sheet is not provided by the family, a child may be sent home. Bedding should be stored in a closeable bag (i.e., drawstring, duffel, backpack, etc.; plastic bags are not accepted). The blanket and sheet will be sent home each weekend for laundering.

**May vary for Y Chipmunks Preschool due to program hours.*

Field Trips and Special Guests

Most Y Preschools do not offer off-site field trips; rather, special guests are invited to visit and enrich our preschool programs. Guests include storytellers, magicians, puppeteers, musicians, etc. Parents/guardians will be notified in advance of event details. Additional fees may apply; however, we strive to keep such fees to a minimum.

**Y Chipmunks Preschool Field Trips are sponsored by their FISH committee*

Items from Home

Please do not allow your child to bring toys, money, books, jewelry, candy, electronics, or other items to the center. These items can be lost or misplaced; more importantly, some can pose a health risk for children (i.e., choking hazard).

The teachers plan curriculum-based show-and-share days each week. You will be notified of these days through the Preschool Family Connection, which will be sent to you via email and also posted on our preschool family website. Only in these instances will a child be permitted to bring an item from home directly related to the curriculum theme, as specified. **Show-and-share participation varies by location*

The Y in Central Maryland is not responsible for lost, misplaced, or stolen items.

Screen Time Policy

Our preschool programs follow the OCC regulations regarding technology use in the classroom. We utilize 'interactive technology' which is defined as "educational and age-appropriate technology designed to facilitate active and creative use and to encourage social engagement with other children and adults, including programs, applications (apps), noncommercial television programming, videos, streaming media, and e-books." The use of interactive technology is limited to no more than 30 minutes per week for children ages 2 and up. Any children under age two are excluded from use of technology at our centers as outlined in our curriculum. **Children are not permitted to use cell phones or tablets from home at our preschool centers.**

Outdoor Play

The Maryland OCC requires that children are offered an opportunity to participate in

outdoor activities daily, weather permitting. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather and active play (ie. rain boots, rain/snow protection, etc.). Unfortunately, to maintain child to teacher ratios, we cannot keep one child inside while the remainder are outside. We are mindful of heat codes and air quality and will adjust our outdoor schedule accordingly.

Clothing/Shoes

For safety reasons, shoes must be sturdy and cover the entire foot. Flip flops, sandals, and clogs are not safe for running, climbing, and biking. We sometimes get messy with special projects, including those that involve water-based paint and markers that can leave stains. Please dress your child in clothing that is play-friendly.

Toileting accidents do happen. Please keep a seasonally appropriate change of clothing (including socks, shoes, and underwear) in your child's cubby.

Lastly, as many children wear similar outfits in the same sizes, please ensure all your child's clothing and belongings are labeled with your child's name.

Restroom Policy

Our teachers are not permitted to accompany your child one-on-one into the restroom. As such, it is important to understand that your child must be able to use the restroom independently, including wiping. Children ages 2 and under are exempt from this policy. Students will always be supervised by teachers during bathroom breaks, but never one-on-one. This policy is designed to protect children and teachers from child abuse and/or false allegations.

Scheduled and Unscheduled Closings

At the beginning of each school year, you will receive a calendar of the Y's scheduled closings and inclement weather policy. We recognize the needs of working parents and make every effort to open during inclement weather. Please see your Center-specific plan for additional information on policies regarding inclement weather closings and delays. For questions regarding tuition during these instances, please refer to the Tuition section of this Handbook.

Behavior Intervention Practices

For many, discipline has only negative connotations. Some may regard it as punishment. In looking at the source of the word "discipline," however, we find it has a positive meaning. To discipline means "to teach." It is a learning experience – something we do with children, not to children. Taking care of themselves and living in a world with other people is a learning process for children. Through discipline, we teach self-control and responsibility. Teaching discipline is one of our most important jobs.

Our qualified, trained teachers are knowledgeable about the traits and needs of preschool children. They effectively diminish disruptive behaviors by:

- Using redirection
- Implementing preventative management techniques and encouraging self-discipline
- Stressing positive behaviors
- Providing an enriching environment to diminish disruptive behavior
- Offering a selection of interesting activities and giving choices
- Changing environments
- Facilitating the settlement of disputes versus intervening
- Letting children experience the consequences of their actions when appropriate
- Using "calm down spaces" (if necessary) – encouraging the child to take time

- away from a group activity for a short period to regain self-control
- Developing “classroom commitments” with the children
- Establishing mutual respect

We ask parents to let us know if anything exceptional or unusual is happening at home or in other aspects of the child’s life. This information will help us in working with your child. Y Preschool administration will reach out if additional support is necessary.

Y Preschool Approach to Discipline

1. Discussion and Redirection

- We will allow the child the opportunity to calm down and talk about what has happened. We will help the child verbalize feelings of anger, fear, etc.
- Through encouragement and demonstration, children will be shown how to problem-solve. Teachers will discuss why the behavior is inappropriate and help the child develop different ways to handle their frustration or anger.
- Positive reinforcement will be given when the appropriate behavior is displayed.
- Children are not forced to apologize or explain their actions. The teacher will help the child understand how their actions or words have made the other child/adult feel. They will also explain the consequences of their actions.
- If a teacher is having difficulty relating to a child or handling a situation, another teacher may be asked to assist.
- Teachers are to redirect the child to another activity. If the child is having trouble choosing, then teachers will offer alternative choices.

2. Calm Down Spaces

- Occasionally, it may be necessary to remove a child from an activity or from the group if the behavior is too disruptive or harmful to others. This allows the child to gain their composure.
- In the case that a child needs to be removed, the child will not be removed for more than one minute for each year of age (i.e., three minutes for a 3-year-old child).
- The child will remain in the classroom in a designated ‘calm down space’ within sight and sound of a teacher at all times.
- After the allotted time and when the child has regained his/her composure, a teacher member will discuss the behavior with the child.
- Physical restraint will only be used in instances when necessary to prevent a child from injuring himself/herself or others.

3. Separation from the Classroom

- If a child’s behavior is uncontrollable or consistently disruptive, the teacher will seek assistance from the assistant director or the director.
- If a child’s behavior is too disruptive or poses a safety risk to himself or others and the child cannot be calmed down through discussion, redirection, or separation from the group, the parent/guardian will be called and asked to pick up their child for remainder of the day. **This pick-up will need to occur within one hour.**

Severe behavior concerns include:

- Deliberately destroying Y or personal property
- Running out of the classroom or away from the program site or group
- Consistently aggressive behavior (hitting, biting, kicking, throwing)

Behavior Communication Report

Any child who displays inappropriate behavior at school will receive a Behavior

Communication Report, a detailed description of the incident, classroom intervention strategies, and parent/ guardian action steps. The report will be presented to parents/ guardians for their review and signature.

The purpose of this form is to ensure that parents are informed of their child's behavior and that we are working together in helping your child be successful in our program. Maintaining the reports in the child's file will help teachers assess whether a pattern of unacceptable behavior is developing. If a pattern of unacceptable behavior is evident, teachers will request a conference with the center director and the parents/guardians. A lack of parent/ guardian participation and cooperation toward a resolution may result in the child's termination from the program.

Behavior Plan

If the teacher has continued concerns about a child's classroom behavior, the parent/ guardian will be notified and a conference will be scheduled to discuss concerns, develop strategies, and create a Behavior Plan.

Parents/guardians are expected to work with the teachers under guidance from the director in finding effective solutions for the behavior concerns. Appropriate referrals may be made for professional assistance or outside specialists. Parents will be given a deadline for contacting outside agencies for assistance and submitting required paperwork (i.e., Project Act, Child Find, Infants and Toddlers).

If the child's behavior does not improve after implementing the strategies as described in the Behavior Plan, or if his/her behavior threatens his/her own safety or the health and safety of others in the center, this may be grounds for termination from the program.

Infant and Toddler Care

Some of our preschools provide infant and toddler care. At centers where infant and toddler care is provided, the parent/guardian is required to provide the following items, each labeled with the child's name:

- Prepared and labeled formula or breast milk to be provided daily (no glass bottles)
- Pureed food and cereal (daily)
- Diapers
- Wipes
- Ointments (as applicable)
- Crib sheets
- Extra sets of clothing

Infants are fed, changed, and placed in a crib on their back to sleep according to individual schedules and needs. Infants are held while being bottle fed and placed in cribs only to sleep. During waking hours, infants are removed from cribs and receive interaction, nurturing, verbalization, singing, and playtime.

All bottles must be taken home each day to be cleaned and sanitized. Please do not leave any bottles, open food, or formula at the school at the end of the day. Any open food items that remain at the end of the day will be discarded.

For those centers providing infant care, a designated space is provided for mothers to breastfeed. Please contact your director for details.

You will be notified when your child needs diapers and wipes. Please replenish these items immediately as we do not have them in stock. Hands are washed before and after diapering and mealtimes, and gloves are worn as a precaution against the spread of illness. If your child requires ointment, please alert the director and complete any necessary paperwork.

Health and Medical Information

Injury

The Y makes it a priority to implement best practices and procedures to ensure the safety of every student. However, even with the best policies in place, accidents do occur. If your child incurs an injury while in our care, you will receive a Family Communication Form. This form will provide details of the injury and a description of the first aid provided. The form should be reviewed and signed by the center director or assistant director and the parent/guardian.

If you take your child to a doctor's office or emergency room as the result of an accident/injury that occurred at our center, please inform the preschool director as soon as possible.

Parents/guardians will be notified immediately of any injury to the neck and up, if their child is bitten by another child, or of any injury requiring immediate medical attention. As such, parents/guardians must be available by phone. Contact information on the emergency card must remain up to date. Doctors and hospitals will not treat a child (except in life threatening cases) without the parent's presence or permission.

In case of an injury requiring emergency medical attention, teachers are required to:

- Administer First Aid
- Call for an ambulance
- Make the child comfortable
- Notify the parent
- Notify the Regional Office of Child Care (OCC)
- Leadership will accompany the child to the hospital
- Inform parent/guardian of need to meet the child at the hospital

In case of injury not requiring emergency care, the teacher will:

- Administer appropriate first aid
- Notify parent
- Observe and monitor the child's activity throughout the day

When treatment is questionable, parents must assume responsibility for picking up their child and determining whether further medical attention is necessary. Parents should ensure that their child has personal medical coverage and accident insurance. The Y does not provide this kind of coverage.

Immunizations and Other Medical Information

Before enrollment, the OCC requires a completed OCC Health Inventory and a Maryland Immunization Certificate for all children. For children under the age of 6, the Health Inventory must indicate if a Lead Screening was necessary, and a lead test must be completed for all children ages 1 and older. The only exception to these requirements is a verified religious exemption.

Child Health Services

Families may contact their local health department for help with routine wellness care, vision screening, hearing screenings, etc.

Health Consultants

Utilizing health care consultants can help achieve the goal of providing safe, healthy and developmentally appropriate environments for our children. Our health care consultants have an interest in and experience with children, have knowledge of resources and regulations, and are comfortable linking health resources with our centers. We contact them for a variety of reasons, including developing a care plan for children with special medical conditions, or responding to an infectious disease outbreak.

Exposure Control Plan

Our preschool centers are committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children and teachers. We implement various methods of exposure control, including:

- Universal precautions
- Work practice controls
- Housekeeping and sanitary cleaning guidelines per the Office of Child Care
- Bloodborne Pathogens training.

Guidelines for Exclusion of Care

Certain symptoms in children may suggest the presence of a communicable disease. Children who have the symptoms of a communicable disease should be excluded from the center until: (1) a physician has certified the symptoms are not associated with an infectious agent or they are no longer a threat to the health of other children at the center or (2) the symptoms have subsided. The Maryland OCC does not permit children to remain in the center if they show symptoms of a communicable disease.

If your child is sent home with a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea, he/she must be symptom-free for at least 24 hours before returning to the center. **A child who is sent home for any potential communicable disease must remain home the following day unless a doctor's note is provided stating the child is cleared to return to the program.** The Y reserves the right to confirm doctor notes.

Children who have been sent home with head lice must have had at least one treatment of medicated shampoo and have all live lice and nits removed from the hair before returning to the center.

Samples of Exclusions from Care

- Fever (temperature of 100° F or greater)
- Lice, Nits
- Vomiting
- Sore throat (especially accompanied by fever or swollen glands)
- Jaundice (yellowing of eyes or skin)
- Thick mucus or pus draining from the eyes or nose (green or yellow)
 - Including allergy related symptoms
- Respiratory symptoms (difficult or rapid breathing, severe cough: child makes high-pitch croupy sounds, child is unable to lie comfortably due to continuous cough)
- Rash, skin irritation (persistent itching or scratching of body or scalp)
- Infected sores (sores with crusty, yellow or green drainage, which cannot be covered by clothing or bandages)
- Child looks or acts differently (unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused,

- irritable, difficult to awaken)
- Not able to participate in daily activities
- Diarrhea (two occurrences of loose stools in one day)
- Gray or white stool
- Dark or tea colored urine

Sick Children

Before your child is enrolled in a Y preschool center, an emergency plan for alternate care in case of illness must be developed. Updated emergency cards allow us to notify you or your emergency contact in case of illness or serious injury.

Children should be well enough to participate in the regularly scheduled activities of the classroom, including going outdoors. Our centers are not equipped or staffed accordingly to isolate sick children.

In case your child should become ill during the program hours, we will call you to pick up your child. Updated emergency cards allow us to notify you or your emergency contact when illness occurs. You or your emergency backup person must be able to reach the center within one hour of the phone call. If you are unable to get here in one hour we will continue contacting, in order, those listed on the emergency card. **Parents are required to report any case of illness to the center director.**

Reporting Communicable Diseases

Our preschool centers are required by law to immediately provide the name and address of any child or teacher member who appears to be infected with a reportable communicable disease or has been exposed to a reportable communicable disease.

The director will post a sign informing parents of an outbreak of contagious illnesses such as pink eye, strep throat, impetigo, head lice, chicken pox, etc., identifying the illness but not the specific child for purposes of confidentiality.

Our preschools may not knowingly admit any child or teacher member to the center during the period of communicability, unless the child or teacher member receives a written approval by a licensed health care practitioner. A preschool may not knowingly admit any child or teacher member if they have been identified as a carrier of a reportable communicable disease approval by the local health department.

Medications

No child will be permitted in care without proper medication(s) and Office of Child Care form(s) as indicated by a physician. Maryland childcare regulations will not allow our preschool teachers or center directors to administer any prescription, non-prescription, or homeopathic medication without a completed medication administration authorization form. This form must accompany each medication and must be signed by both a physician and the parent/guardian. The form must be reviewed and approved by the center director before any medication can be administered.

Please see your center director for the OCC medication administration authorization forms. The first dose of any medication (with the exception of Epi-pens) must be given to the child at home. This is for the child's safety in the event of an allergic reaction.

Please do not send medication with your child. Any medications should be given directly to the preschool director. Emergency medications are kept with your child's teacher in the classroom. Only teachers who have completed Medication Administration Training can administer medications to students; each time medication is administered, it will be logged accordingly. Other medications are secured in a central location at the school.

All prescription medication must be in the original pharmacy container and labeled with the name of the medication, current date, dosage, name of the child, physician's name, and any special instructions if applicable. Center leadership will alert you when the prescription is close to expiration. It is the parent/guardians responsibility obtain up to date prescriptions; children cannot be in attendance with expired medication.

Topical medications such as sunscreen, diaper rash cream, etc., may be administered repeatedly with written parental permission as indicated on a Medication Administration Authorization Form and/or permission slip.

Children with Asthma and/or Allergies

Students with asthma and/or allergies are required to have medical paperwork completed by their physician prior to starting our program. These forms must be provided to the director along with proper medication in its original container with the prescription label.

Please note, all Y preschools are nut-free. (see policy on pg. 18)

Asthma

If your child has asthma, then you will be required to complete an Office of Child Care Asthma Action Plan. The plan should be completed by your child's physician and signed by both the physician and the parent/guardian. If the plan indicates your child requires an inhaler (Ventolin, Albuterol, etc.), the medication must be on-site at the preschool.

Allergies

If your child has an allergy requiring emergency medication to be administered on-site (Benadryl, Epi-pen, etc.), you will be required to complete an Office of Child Care Allergy Alert Plan. The plan should be completed by your child's physician and signed by both the physician and the parent/guardian.

Smoking Policy

Smoking of any substance is not permitted on Y Preschool property, including playgrounds and parking lots (signage is posted), or at any other Y in Central Maryland location, event, or program.

Safety and Security

The Y in Central Maryland has more than 2,000 trained teachers and volunteers working with children and youth in the many programs we offer.

Teachers

To ensure the safety of children in our programs, we undertake an intensive screening of employees and volunteers that includes:

- Detailed application forms
- A comprehensive interview process
- Reference checks
- Criminal background record checks
- Fingerprinting for all licensed childcare providers

In addition to extensive training requirements, all Y preschool teachers receive training on Prevention and Identification of Child Abuse.

As stated in the Maryland State Board of Education Child and Family Daycare Center Licensing Regulations, childcare providers are required to report any suspected cases of

child abuse and/or neglect to Child Protective Services. We are mandated reporters by law; thus, we are required to report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect.

Volunteers

The Y uses Volunteer Matters for all volunteer opportunities. Those interested in volunteering in Y Preschools must sign up using Volunteer Matters.

To ensure individuals performing volunteer activities do not have a history of criminal or child abuse convictions that may impede ability to perform their job responsibilities or potentially cause harm, the Y conducts a background investigation on all applicable volunteers before they begin their assignment, and periodically thereafter.

Babysitting

Y members and families often ask Y employees to provide babysitting and other services on their own time. The Y in Central Maryland does NOT permit employees to provide babysitting or other services to families or children they meet in Y programs. In addition, teachers should not provide transportation in a personal vehicle or be in contact with your child outside of Y programs.

Families are prohibited from contacting teachers outside of the preschool including email, social media, texting, letters, etc. Such policies are designed to protect children and teachers from child abuse and/or false allegations.

Child Abuse Prevention

Trust your instincts and watch for signs of abuse:

- Unexplainable bruising or other physical markings
- Disturbed sleeping or eating patterns
- Abrupt changes in behavior – anxiety, clinging, aggressiveness, withdrawal, depression
- Fear of certain person or place
- Discomfort with physical contact
- A child who abuses other children

Listen and watch for signs of your child receiving special attention that other children or teens are not receiving, including favors, treats, gifts, rides, increasing affection or time alone, particularly outside the activities of school, childcare, or other activities.

On occasion, ask your child these questions:

- Is anyone scaring or threatening you?
- Is anyone asking you to keep secrets?
- Has anyone said anything to you that made you feel bad?
- Is anyone touching you in a way that you don't like?

Encourage your child to tell you or another trusted adult if anything happens to them. At the Y, we want every child to be safe. Unfortunately, child abuse does exist and takes many different forms:

Emotional – Threatening a child or using words that can hurt a child's feelings and self-esteem; withholding love and support from a child

Physical – Causing injuries to a child on purpose, such as bruises, burns, scars, or broken bones

Sexual – Having sexual contact in any form with a child, including exposing, fondling, intercourse, pornography, or internet solicitation

Neglect – Not providing children with enough food, clothing, shelter, medical care, hygiene, or supervision

Child abusers can be parents, caretakers, friends, neighbors – anyone who comes in contact with a child, even other youth. Talk to your child about their experiences in Y programs, school, sports, and other activities. It takes everyone's assistance to stop the cycle of abuse. If you think your child is physically injured, seek appropriate medical attention. If you see signs of distress, withdrawal, or acting out, consider counseling for your child. Talk to your Y preschool director for assistance. Call Child Protective Services (CPS) or the police to report any abuse. All Y associates are mandated reporters.

We also offer a Y Child Safe hotline: 443-322-8086.

Supervision and Ratios

Our preschool centers will always maintain the appropriate teacher-to-child ratios, required by the OCC as follows:

- **Infants – 24 months:** 1 teacher for every 3 children
- **Two-year-olds:** 1 teacher for every 6 children
- **Three to five-year-olds:** 1 teacher for every 10 children
- **School-age children:** 1 teacher for every 15 children

In the absence of a teacher, we maintain proper ratios through coverage by a qualified substitute teacher. At no time will children be unattended. Children will always be within sight and sound of our teachers.

Fire and Emergency Preparedness/Evacuation Drills

We conduct fire and emergency drills every month and have bi-annual emergency preparedness and evacuation drills. Parents, teachers, and children are not notified of drill dates and times in advance.

During a fire and/or emergency evacuation drill, parents may not sign children into or out of the school. We ask that you wait until the drill is complete and the children have returned to the building.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, the director will provide the teacher with specific instructions according to our emergency preparedness plans. All licensed preschool centers in the State of Maryland are required to have an emergency preparedness plan. Our plans provide clear guidance to teachers to ensure the safety of everyone in the event of an emergency. If it becomes necessary to remove the children from school property, each preschool has a designated local emergency evacuation site. Parents will be notified of an emergency as soon possible to do so without interfering with the safety of children and teachers.

Emergency Contacts

Because the unexpected sometimes happens, a backup plan should be established should you be unable to pick up your child in the event of illness or an emergency. The Maryland OCC requires at least one alternate/ emergency pick-up person. Any changes in contact information should be given to the center director immediately.

You are responsible for alerting teachers to your alternative plan in writing. Teachers should review the plan with you. All children's records must be updated each year. *Each center will have an emergency car seat.*

Drop-off and Pick-up

For the safety of the children, families must always accompany their child. In addition,

per MSDE OCC regulations, children must be signed in and out daily by an adult 18 years of age or older. Children will only be released to authorized adults. Adults will be required to show photo ID.

Should we have cause for concern regarding the safety of a child's release to a parent or other adult, we may call the police. Cause for this course of action includes:

- Parent/adult suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Parent/adult is abusive or threatening to the child

If the center has a key-coded entry, families are not permitted to share the code with any other adult or child.

Parking Lot

Per Maryland State law, children are not to be left in a vehicle unattended. Failure to comply with this law will result in a formal police report.

Vehicles in the parking lot should never be left running.

Firearms and Weapons

Firearms or weapons of any kind are not allowed on Y property. For those authorized to carry concealed weapons, we ask that you leave any weapons in your vehicle before entering our centers.

Cell Phone Policy

Transitioning into and out of the center can be both overwhelming and exciting for your child. As such, we ask that you put your cell phone aside and provide your child with your full attention while in our center. Your child's teacher may have important information to discuss with you and will need to know that you're available to talk without the distraction of a cell phone. For the safety and privacy of other children in our program, Y preschool centers are No Cell Phone Zones.

Cleaning Products

The Y Preschool centers follow OCC licensing guidelines regarding cleaning and sanitizing the toys, equipment, etc. in the center. We utilize a solution of hydrogen peroxide for disinfecting and soapy water for sanitizing, as required by the OCC. We also strive to utilize environmentally safe cleaning products to the extent possible and ensure that all cleaning products are stored in a safe manner.

Our preschools are continuously spot cleaned throughout the day using CDC-approved disinfectant, cleaning supplies, and practices. We also use an EPA-approved disinfectant for all bathrooms and floors and a hydrogen peroxide or PH7Q water mixture for all solid surfaces and toys. The preschools are thoroughly cleaned between each shift.

NOTICE: To protect the health and safety of all children, parents, and Y associates, all Y Preschool sites are strictly adhering to all health and safety protocols recommended by the Maryland State Department of Health and local officials. Policies and procedures may change accordingly. For more information, please contact your Preschool Director.

Y Preschool Locations

Baltimore City

Sherman Early Childhood Center

900 E 33rd St A, Baltimore, MD 21218

443-835-3821

Monday-Friday, 7am - 6pm

Full-day program serving children ages 6 wks -5 yrs

Baltimore County

Carlozzi Family Y Preschool in Towson

301 W Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204

410-494-7778

Monday-Friday, 7am - 6pm

Full-day program serving children ages 6 wks -5 yrs

Betty Sterner Y Preschool in Catonsville

850 S Rolling Rd, Catonsville, MD 21228

410-747-4951

Monday-Friday, 7am - 6pm

Full-day and half-day programs serving children ages 2-5 yrs

(A before & after school school-age enrichment program is available for some local elementary schools)

Y Preschool at UMBC

1000 Hilltop Cir, Baltimore, MD 21228

410-455-6830

Monday-Friday, 7am - 6pm

Full-day program serving children ages 2-5 yrs

Serving the community and UMBC faculty, staff, and students.

Carroll County

Y Chipmunks Preschool

2101 Old Westminster Pike, Finksburg, MD 21048

410-848-2772

Monday-Friday; Hours vary by class

Half week and half day program serving children ages 2-4 yrs

Howard County

Y Preschool in Columbia

7115 Columbia Gateway Drive, Columbia, MD 21046

667-351-5160

Monday-Friday, 7am - 6pm

Full-day program serving children ages 6 wks -5 yrs

Y Family Center Locations

Anne Arundel County

The Greater Annapolis Y in Arnold

1209 Richie Highway
Arnold, MD 21012
410-544-2525

The Y in Pasadena

26 Magothy Beach Road
Pasadena, MD 21122
410-437-4242

Baltimore County

The Orokawa Y in Towson

600 W. Chesapeake Avenue
Towson, MD 21204
410-823-8870

The Y in Catonsville

850 S. Rolling Road
Catonsville, MD 21228
Off Season: 410-747-9622

The Y in Parkville

8910 Waltham Woods Rd #2404
Parkville, MD 21234
Off Season: 410-663-1300

Harford County

The Ward Y in Abingdon

101 Walter Ward Boulevard
Abingdon, MD 21009
410-679-9622

Baltimore City

The Weinberg Y in Waverly

900 E. 33rd Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-889-9622

The Y in Druid Hill

1609 Druid Hill Ave
Baltimore, MD 21217
410-728-1600

Carroll County

The Hill Y in Westminster

1719 Sykesville Road
Westminster, MD 21157
410-848-3660

Howard County

The Dancel Y in Ellicott City

4331 Montgomery Road
Ellicott City, MD 21043
410-465-4334

The Y in Central Maryland Association Office

303 W Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204
Main Office: 443-322-9622
Customer Service Office: 443-322-8000

2026/2027 Y Preschool Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form

My signature below indicates that I understand and agree to the acknowledgement of risk and liability release. I also understand that the center has available information about the Infants and Toddlers program. Upon completion of this form please return the acknowledgement form to the center director.

Parent Full Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Parent Signature: _____

Child's Full Name: _____

School: _____

Photos/Videos/Audio/Testimonials Release

I do hereby consent, without compensation now or in the future, to the making, editing, reproduction, broadcasting and unrestricted perpetual use of photographs, video film or footage, sound track recordings, and any narrative account or testimonial of my child's experience, with or without inclusion of their name, by The Y in Central Maryland ("The Y") and YMCA of the USA for any lawful purpose, including for publication, display, sale or exhibition in promotions, advertising, education, and commercial uses. Use includes reproductions, adaptations or revisions in any form and media currently existing or later conceived. I further agree that all works shall belong to The Y in Central Maryland and YMCA of the USA, and I hereby release and discharge The Y, YMCA of the USA, and collaborating third parties from any and all claims, actions, lawsuits or demands arising out of my consent to the use of any works or materials referenced herein.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the Y Preschool Family Handbook in its entirety and will comply with all policies and procedures stated within. I understand that failure to adhere to these policies may result in termination from the program. I certify that my child is fully able to participate in this program. In case of voluntary withdrawal, or if my child is removed from care, I understand there will be no refund of tuition fees for the period covered. I further acknowledge and agree to the above Publicity Release/ Permission to Use Photos/Videos/Audio/Testimonials, Membership Agreement, Emergency Care Plan, Medical and Emergency information, and In-Service Days/ School's Out Days.

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____