



LEARN GROW THRIVE

YMCA CHILDREN'S LEARNING CENTER
PARENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

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WELCOME

Dear Children's Learning Center Families,

Welcome to the YMCA Children's Learning Center! We are so glad you are here and would like to take a moment to tell you about our program. We know that one of the most important decisions that a new parent can make is about who will care for their children when they are working. We are honored that you have chosen the YMCA CLC.

The YMCA CLC recognizes the special qualities that make each child and each family a unique part of our community with individual goals, values and needs. We strive to create and maintain a safe and supportive environment that promotes each child's self-confidence, curiosity, cooperation and creativity. Each child is given the opportunity to grow socially, intellectually, and physically in an atmosphere of learning and discovery through hands-on experiences and age-appropriate activities.

The YMCA CLC recognizes the pivotal role of consistent, qualified, professional caregivers who respect the rights, heritage and individuality of each child. Through nurturing, supportive interaction with caregivers and positive experiences with other children, we believe a capable and emotionally secure individual will develop.

In this handbook, you will find all of our policies and procedures which align with the State of Illinois' Department of Children and Families Services licensing regulations. The items outlined are vital for safe and consistent operations of our programming. Please read this handbook carefully and keep it for future reference.

Sincerely,

Administration Team
YMCA Children's Learning Center





Hours and Holidays

Hours of operation:

Monday–Friday | 6:30am–6:00pm

(Closed Saturday & Sunday)

The YMCA observes the following holiday and will be closed:



New Year's Day

Good Friday

Memorial Day

Juneteenth

Independence Day

Labor Day

Thanksgiving

Day After Thanksgiving

Christmas Eve

Christmas Day

New Year's Eve

(CLOSE @ 12:30)



The YMCA CLC will also be closed for two Professional Development Days which vary from year to year.



Enrollment and Forms

The YMCA CLC prides itself on being a DCFS Licensed childcare and preschool program. Staff and parents are responsible for being aware of and following licensing standards. The following are some of the requirements that are parent responsibilities upon enrollment and must be maintained to continue enrollment:

Physicals & Immunizations

Upon Enrollment, parents are required to submit an up-to-date physical for each child enrolled, on a DHS form. Physicals are required to be updated every 2 years.

Parents/guardians are also required to keep all physician and DCFS required immunization up-to-date and submit documentation to the YMCA CLC when a child receives new immunizations.

Religious immunization exemptions require documentation by a physician on the proper form.



Medications

All necessary medications must be checked-in at the front office and a parent/guardian must fill out a Medication Authorization Form, DAILY, in order for the designated staff member to administer appropriate medication to a child.

All prescription medication must be in its **ORIGINAL CONTAINER WITH THE ORIGINAL PRESCRIPTION LABEL.**

All Over-the-Counter medication must be labeled with the child's name, in its original packaging and must be accompanied by a note from the child's physician indicating medication's name, dosage instructions and must be updated annually.

Birth Certificates

DCFS requires the parent/guardian to submit a certified birth certificate, or foster placement paperwork to be kept on file at the YMCA CLC.

Parent/Guardians must submit proper documentation of birth or child placement within 30 days of enrollment, failure to do so will require YMCA CLC staff to contact the police department and DCFS to verify legal child guardianship/custody.





Illness and Program Exclusions

In accordance to DCFS licensing, and for the safety of each child in YMCA CLC programming, any child exhibiting symptoms associated with the following illness will be required to isolate and can not participate in YMCA CLC programming until symptom free for a minimum of 48 hours:

- Symptoms of illness which prevent the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- Illness which calls for greater care than the staff can reasonably provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- Any unexplained rash must be checked by a physician, child may return to care with a physicians note indicating rash is not contagious.
- Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or other possible severe illness.
- Diarrhea: frequent liquid stools not contained in toilet or diaper, or more than 2 within an hour.
- Intestinal disturbances accompanied by vomiting
- Mouth sores associated with the child's inability to control his/her saliva, until the child's physician, or local health department states the child is non-infectious.
- Purulent Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye), recommended return 24 hours after treatment has been initiated, however may return after receiving two doses of antibiotic drops.
- Impetigo, until 48 hours after treatment has been initiated.
- Strep Throat (streptococcal pharyngitis) until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
- Chicken Pox (varicella), when all blisters have scabbed over (usually 6 days after initial rash onset).
- Fever over 100 degrees F must be excluded for a minimum of 48 hours, and must be fever free WITHOUT fever reducing medication for 48 hours in order to return.
- Ear Infections: May return next day with release from physician and must be fever free.
- **THE STAFF OF THE YMCA CLC RESERVE THE RIGHT TO EXCLUDE ANY CHILD FROM PROGRAMMING WHO MAY EXHIBIT SIGNS OF ILLNESS INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO THOSE LISTED ABOVE.**



Allergies and Accommodations

Food Allergies:

- Children who have diagnosed food allergies must have a physician's note on file in the front office indicating what items they are allergic to, as well as any symptoms they may exhibit if exposed.
- Food substitutions may be made if necessary. The YMCA CLC will take reasonable measures to provide substitutions, if a child is allergic to an item on the pre-determined menus.
- A parent is allowed to bring substitutions if the YMCA CLC is unable to find a suitable substitution. The substituted item must fulfill the nutritional requirement of the item being substituted (i.e. grain for a grain, protein for a protein, etc.)

Reactions, Anaphylaxis and Treatment:

- All staff have received training on how to respond to allergic reactions including Anaphylaxis.
- Any child that has been prescribed an epi-pen must keep one on site with the front office, in order to participate in YMCA programming.
- A **Medical Action Plan Form** must be kept on file at the YMCA CLC for any child diagnosed with an allergy. This action plan will indicate specific actions to be taken if a child should have an allergic reaction.
- Any unexplained or undiagnosed reactions will require a child to be sent home from the YMCA CLC and will require a doctor's note in order to return. (This includes rashes, hives, swelling, etc.)
- A parent will be notified via the communication AP, or phone call if action plan steps need to be taken, or if emergency medical care is needed. (*see injuries/medical emergency policy)



Collaboration and Communication

Parents and Guardians are a child's first and most influential teacher throughout their formative years, so we approach the care and early education as a collaboration with our families. A critical key to a successful partnership is communication, so we make communication a priority throughout our programming, because building a trusting relationship is critical for learning success. This is done in a number of ways:

- Daily upon drop-off/pick-up, face-to-face conversation
- Parent Bulletin Boards which include: Classroom Schedules, Calendars, lesson plans, menus, and other important announcements.
- Communication App. usage:
 - Checking in/out upon arrival/pick-up
 - parent/teacher messaging
 - picture/video uploads
 - incident/accident reports
 - For infants/toddlers/twos, record of daily activities including
 - diaper changes
 - meals/snacks
 - naps
 - medications
 - special event announcements
- Parent Teacher Conferences offered two times per year, and when requested by either a parent or teacher.
- Email, phone, flyers, etc.

Mandated Reporting:

All YMCA CLC staff are Mandated Reporters, and by law, are required to communicate any suspected abuse or neglect of a child to the Department of Children and Family Services. Staff receive training on how to identify abuse or neglect annually, and will assess a child's well being each day upon arrival.

Arrivals and Departures

- Access to the YMCA Children's Learning Center is only available through the front entrance. As a policy, the facility is to remain locked at all times. Parents/Guardians will be given an access code upon enrollment and are asked to keep this code **CONFIDENTIAL** to protect the safety of our children, staff, and facility. All other visitors must push the call button and be buzzed in and then must sign-in as a visitor, upon entry to the facility.
- All children are to be escorted by a parent/guardian to and from their classrooms, and be checked in on our attendance app by the Lead Teacher/Assistant Teacher. Also, please come into the classroom when dropping off/picking up to ensure staff are aware that you have dropped-off/picked-up your child.
- **All children are to be dropped off by 9a.m.** unless they have a doctor's appointment, or previous arrangements have been made with the office staff. Absolutely no drop-off after 12pm. Staff/child ratios are scheduled based on child attendance, and if your child is not checked in by 9am, you may have to forfeit the spot for the day.
- **All children must be picked up by 6pm**, the end of our licensed operating day. Any child not picked up by 6pm will be charged an additional fee, to be paid before drop-off the next day.
- Emergency contacts will be called if a parent is not reachable and a child hasn't been picked up by 6pm. DCFS and the Rockford Police Department will be notified if a child isn't picked up within an hour of closing.

Safe Child Release Policy & Confidentiality

- Staff of the YMCA CLC reserve the right to refuse the release of a child from the center when a clear and present danger exists including, but not limited to: intoxicated or impaired parent/guardian, severe weather warning, or other external environmental dangers.
- In the event of parent impairment, the parent will be informed of the specific reason and another parent/emergency contact will be called to pick up the child or provide an alternative form of transportation.
- In the event that there may be a custody arrangement or order of protection in place, the YMCA CLC must be provided with a clear, legible copy of all relevant court documentation indicating the custodial parent, and to whom all affected children may be released.
- Information regarding children and families enrolled at the YMCA CLC will NOT be released to any outside organizations or persons without prior written parental consent.
- When an unfamiliar adult comes to pick-up, there must be **written** authorization for the child to be released to that individual, that individual must stop at the front desk and present a photo ID to either office staff or classroom staff.



Routines and Expectations

Clothing and Personal Belongings:

- Children should come dressed in clothes that are comfortable, allow for free movement, and that you aren't afraid to get dirty. Our program is designed for experiential learning, which means that your child will use all five senses to explore their world. Your child will play hard, get dirty and have fun!!
- Bring an extra set of weather appropriate clothing to be kept in your child's cubby and check regularly to make sure they will still fit your child. **LABEL EVERYTHING WITH YOUR CHILD'S FIRST AND LAST NAME.**
- Sturdy closed-toe shoes should be worn to the YMCA CLC, for safety, as active outdoor/indoor play is part of the daily schedule.
- Outdoor play is a part of the YMCA CLC's daily curriculum, please make sure that your child comes with appropriate outer wear, i.e. coats, jackets, boots, hats, etc.

A NOTE ON DIAPERS:

- Parents/Guardians are to provide diapers until a child is consistently potty trained.
- Expect your child to use between 4-6 diapers daily for a full day of care.
- Label all packages with your child's name. Diapers will be stored in the child's classroom.
- Staff will notify parents/guardians via Brightwheel when a child is running low on Diapers.
- Failure to bring diapers when needed will result in exclusion from programming.

The YMCA CLC is **NOT** responsible for lost or broken toys/items brought from home.

What **NOT** to bring:

- Food
- Candy
- Money (w/ the child)
- Toys from home (unless for a special show-and-tell, or special circumstances approved by the teacher)



Routines and Expectations

Daily Nutrition

Menus:

Menus are created by the Nutrition Services team based on the guidelines of the Federal Food Program, and are posted directly outside the main office, as well as on the parent boards of each classroom.

Meal Schedule:

Breakfast	7:30a-8:30a
AM Snack	9:30a-10:30a
Lunch	11:30a-1:30p
PM Snack	2:30p-3:30p



Special Dietary Needs:

Children with special dietary needs or who have food allergies must submit a physician's note to be kept on file in the front office. Parents/Guardians are required to provide substitutions when necessary, if the YMCA CLC is not able to provide a comparable item.

*All special treats/snacks provided by parents/guardians must be store bought, in original unopened packaging and must be nut free.

Napping/Rest Time

Nap/Rest time is an important part of a child's health and development. Nap time for 15 months-5 years old is offered from 12:30p-2:30p daily. Children are encouraged to rest for at least an hour, but will be offered alternative quiet activities if they don't wish to sleep.

Safe-sleep practices will be followed for infants, which include: placing on back in cribs to sleep and no blankets/loose items in cribs. Bottles and food are not to be offered in cribs. Infants will nap based on each child's individual needs and cues.

Each child will have an individually labeled cot or crib and sheets will be laundered regularly.



Curriculum, Assessment and Behavior Management

Creative Curriculum

Creative Curriculum is designed for play-based learning, where the teacher develops experiences in the classroom based on the children's interests. The classroom activities are designed to give each child a comprehensive learning experience through play and interaction with teachers and other children. Learning environments are built to give each child the opportunity to be challenged and develop skills in physical, cognitive, language and social/emotional domains.

Teaching Strategies Gold Assessment

Learning assessments are conducted four times throughout the year to assess how children are learning and developing in the classroom. These assessments are used to track a child's development and are used by the teaching staff to inform and guide lesson planning and curriculum for each individual child throughout the year.

Developmental Screenings

Developmental Screenings are conducted by staff, in partnership with parents/guardians, upon enrollment and then two times per calendar year. Screenings help to determine if a child may need any additional learning supports in and out of the classroom (i.e. speech, OT, PT). Results of developmental screenings will be discussed during regular parent/teacher conferences (twice per calendar year), where additional resources will be discussed and offered if needed.

A Word on Behavior Management :

YMCA CLC Staff will use a positive approach to behavior management. This encourages self-control, self-direction, empathy, and self-esteem. Children are informed of inappropriate behaviors and are redirected to more constructive activities or allowed to spend quiet time away from the group to reflect on decisions, or regulate emotions.

Consistent aggressive and/or destructive behaviors creating a safety risk for the child, other children or staff, will be documented and addressed with parents/guardians on an individual basis. It is our goal to give every child the tools they need to be successful in a group learning environment.



Other Important Information

Incident/Accident Reports:

In the event of an accident/incident resulting in injury, the YMCA CLC staff will document the event on an accident/incident report form, and will also notify the parent/guardian of the child(ren) involved through the communication app. Parents will be given all relevant information, including the who, what, where, and how of the situation, as well as how the staff addressed the situation. (*Due to confidentiality, staff are not able to share information about a child with anyone other than the child's own parent/guardian, and can not share the names of other children who may be involved in an incident.)

Injuries/Medical Emergencies:

In the event of an injury that requires more than basic first aid, a child's parent will be contacted through the communication app and a phone call, and staff will indicate if the child needs to be seen by a physician.

In the event of a life threatening situation, the YMCA CLC will call 911 first and will then contact the parent/guardian by phone. A designated staff member and administrator (if available) will accompany the child to the Emergency Room and wait with the child until a parent/guardian arrives. Documentation and incident reporting will be completed once the child's medical needs have been met.

Cleaning and Sanitation Practices:

Classrooms and equipment are cleaned and sanitized on a regular daily schedule, as well as when deemed necessary. All cleaning products are approved to be safely used in a childcare environment. Harsh cleaning products will not be used while children are present.

Cleaning and Sanitation are also a part of our integrated pest management system, along with monthly monitoring through a third party pest management company. The exterior of the building is treated annually to environmental prevent pests in classrooms and other care areas. A notice will be posted 72 hours prior to the application of any treatments to the exterior of the building.



Parent Code of Conduct

Our families are our partners and we believe every family is entitled to a safe, inclusive environment. Parents must be mindful of their actions towards staff, members and other participants.

The following guidelines uplift the Character Development Policy:

- Please communicate with the staff daily, if possible.
- We know that you know your child(ren) best. Please share any information that will allow us to best support your child(ren) and family.
- Parents and guardians are always welcome during program hours to contact their child(ren), evaluate the care or service provided, or evaluate our facilities. When you arrive at the site, please notify staff. All visitors will need to sign a visitor log and be accompanied by a staff member while on YMCA property and program areas.
- Please give detailed information to the Program Coordinator/Director if custody situations arise.
- People whose behavior and/or health status pose an immediate threat or danger to the health and safety of the children must not be present when children are in care.
- Do not confront any child in a threatening manner, or confront children from other families.
- Use caring words. Profanity is not allowed.
- Consumption, and/or possession of alcohol in any form is strictly prohibited by the YMCA of Rock River Valley. Controlled substances/ medications must be accompanied by a written doctor's prescription when used during the program, during transportation, or on field trips. People must not be under the influence of or impaired by alcohol or controlled substances in the program, during transportation, or on field trips.
- People must not smoke or use tobacco products at any YMCA property or partner property, on the playground, in transportation vehicles or during field trips.
- Staff cannot and will not give out participant or employee personal information.
- We respect the privacy of our youngest members and their families. Join us when capturing moments with pictures and video by including only those on your membership and family.
- If at any time you are concerned about the physical or emotional health of your child, please do not hesitate to speak to a staff member or call the Program Coordinator or Director.

CODE OF CONDUCT VIOLATIONS

Any adult misconduct will result in a warning and documentation of the incident. Should an incident or series of incidents reach a critical level it may result in the parent's removal from the building, police being contacted, or the child's removal from our program. If a parent/guardian, or authorized pick-up, threatens, intimidates, abuses, harms or speaks inappropriately toward a staff member, parent, guardian or participant, they risk suspension and or removal from the program.