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CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

PARENT HANDBOOK



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DECATUR FAMILY YMCA

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CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER PARENT HANDBOOK

Revised July 2025

Decatur Family YMCA welcomes you and your child to the Child Development Center. We are so pleased to have your child in our program. We offer a creative, child-centered readiness program designed to provide social, mental, and emotional development as well as physical fitness for your child. We believe that children learn best in a positive environment that offers opportunities for experimentation. We allow children to explore diverse art media, cooking, science, music, dramatic play, gym, swimming, and creative movement.

The YMCA Child Development Center is not a substitute for a healthy, stimulative home life, but rather a supplement to it. Feel free to discuss your child's progress or any concerns you may have with your child's teacher. Parents and staff working together create a positive environment, which enables your child to reach higher degrees of success.

We have an open-door policy and encourage you to visit at any time!

YMCA MISSION STATEMENT

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

TEACHING STAFF

The YMCA Child Development Center has trained staff that meet DCFS and the state of Illinois licensing standards. Our staff is trained in adult, child, and infant CPR as well as first aid. Staff must attend several early childhood education trainings each year to keep updated and refreshed on techniques used to teach creative and innovative activities to your child.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER GOALS

1. To have a healthy personality. This means an inner happiness that grows out of self-assurance and trust in others which is manifested by self-respect, respect for others, and a feeling of responsibility to the group. It shows in the way a child responds to people and the way he handles the decisions and tasks of daily living.
2. To function effectively in a group. In the early years, home and family are a child's whole world. As play begins with other children, responsibilities are increased, and the foundations of good citizenship are developed.
3. To develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills with hands-on experiences. It is not enough to absorb information; children need to be able to evaluate what they see, hear, touch, and read. This can be learned through hands-on activities which enable children to explore the many aspects of their environment.
4. To work and play creatively, for only then do children express themselves as unique individuals. At first, children imitate what they see and hear. When many different creative activities are supplied and encouraged, children will begin to create their own experiences.
5. To develop a healthy body. Through our swimming and creative movement programs, we aim to improve basic motor skills and fundamental movements as well as to develop body imagery. We help the child to develop strength and cardiovascular fitness. We also help the child to feel secure and comfortable with exposure to the pool and a wide variety of equipment in the gym as well as large motor activities.
6. To develop in spirit as well as body and mind. The YMCA Child Development Center teaches in a Christian environment. Although we will not be teaching doctrine, we will be teaching Christian values including caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. Age-appropriate Christian songs may be used.



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GENERAL INFORMATION

LICENSING COMPLIANCE

The YMCA Child Development Center is a fully licensed facility through the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS). This means that a DCFS licensing agent has inspected the facility and has determined it meets all licensing requirements. Licensed daycare facilities are inspected annually by DCFS.

A copy of the *Illinois Department of Child and Family Services Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers* will be provided to you at the time of registration.

FIREARMS

Illinois prohibits the knowing possession or carrying of any firearm, stun gun, or taser on or about the person in any public or private elementary or secondary school, on the person or in the vehicle on the real property of any school, in any conveyance owned, leased or contracted by a school to transport students to or from school or a school-related activity, or on the person or in a vehicle on any public way within 1,000 feet of the real property comprising a school. The YMCA complies with this law and follows this as policy within its YMCA facilities and program spaces.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

The YMCA offices and Child Development Center will be closed on the following holidays in 2024. Tuition is still due for these days.

January 1 (New Year's Day)
May 27 (Memorial Day)
July 4 (Independence Day)
September 2 (Labor Day)

November 28 (Thanksgiving Day)
November 29 (Day after Thanksgiving)
December 24 (Christmas Eve)
December 25 (Christmas Day)

In addition, the Child Development Center will be closed periodically for Teacher Development Days. This allows our staff the opportunity for training and enrichment programs. A yearly calendar of all preschool closings is available by request.



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INCLEMENT WEATHER STATEMENT

In the event of inclement weather, watch WAND-TV for school closings. When the center is closed due to bad weather, the YMCA is responsible for the tuition. If you are unsure, please call the YMCA at 217-872-9622.

NEWSLETTERS & CALENDARS

Newsletters and calendars will be sent home monthly. Please read them carefully as they will inform you of special days, field trips, themes, and important curriculum information.

CONFERENCES

Requests for parent-teacher conferences are always welcome. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your child, please ask for an appointment. Appointments are necessary to avoid scheduling conflicts. We do not discuss negative or personal concerns in front of the students or parents.

CHILD PROTECTION LAW

Please be aware that the Child Protection Law mandates the YMCA Child Development Center to report to DCFS any “suspected” case of child abuse or neglect. If a “suspected” case of abuse does occur and the offender is thought to be a parent/guardian, a report will be made to DCFS. When there is “suspected” abuse and the offender is thought to be someone other than a parent/guardian, staff will also consult with the parents/guardians of the child. For the child’s sake, we recommend that the child remain enrolled in the program throughout the Protective Service Investigation. This may be their most stable environment during this time.

If parents/guardians have questions or concerns regarding the Child Protection Law and the Program’s reporting requirements, please speak to the Senior Director of Childcare.

RESTRICTED PARENT INFORMATION

In the event of a court-ordered legal custody situation whereby either parent of the enrolled child has visitation restrictions; we must have in the child's file a written and dated statement along with a stamped copy of your legal custody papers that have been signed and dated by a judge.

We must follow the law when it comes to restricting a parent's rights to information and access to their child. Unless we have court-ordered legal papers on file, parents will not be restricted. In the event of a court-ordered legal custody situation whereby a parent is not allowed to pick up the child without the other's consent, we ask that you state in writing that you have legal custody and the person (name and relationship) who does not have a legal right to pick up your child while in our care.

The written and dated statement must be on file in the child center office along with a stamped copy of your legal custody papers, which have been signed by a judge.

PRAISES AND CONCERNS

Although no news usually means good news, it is still great to hear when one of our staff has gone above and beyond the call of duty. Let us know and we'll pass it on. We also want to know if you have any concerns about your child's time in our program. If you have a concern, please contact the Senior Director of Childcare and we will address your concerns quickly.

TUITION POLICY & PROCEDURES

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

1. Children must be at least 2 years old by their enrollment date. To advance into our older rooms, your child should be the age of that room by September 1st and must be completely daytime potty trained.
2. A personal interview and tour are required for new families and their child before registration.
3. A registration fee of \$40.00 per family and the first week's tuition is required to hold your child's spot. Both the registration fee and the first week's tuition are non-refundable. The registration fee may be waived for families returning within 30 days of withdrawal.
4. Each child must have a certified birth certificate, current physical, TB test and results, lead assessment, and up-to-date immunization records on file in the Child Development Center office before your child may attend. To be considered current, the physical and TB test must be within six months of enrollment.
5. All required registration and consent forms must be completed and returned to the Child Development Center office before the first day of enrollment.

TUITION GUIDELINES

1. A non-refundable \$ 40.00 registration fee and the first week's tuition must be paid to secure a place for my child. The stated registration fee is NOT deducted from my child's tuition.
2. Decatur Family YMCA requires payment by bank draft.
3. Tuition is due for all days for which your child is registered, regardless of attendance. Refunds cannot be given for missed time due to illnesses, personal days off, holidays, or vacations.

4. If payments are more than 2 weeks late, your child may be withdrawn from the program until payments are caught up. There will be no credit for days missed due to non-payment for children who return.
5. A \$20.00 return payment fee will be assessed for any checks returned for any reason.
6. One week's written notice is required by the childcare office to withdraw your child(ren) or tuition will be due for that week.
7. Every week, accounts with an outstanding balance will be assessed a service charge of \$5.00.
8. There will be a \$1.00 service charge for every minute your child is picked up past closing (5:30 pm) to be assessed beginning at 5:35.

WITHDRAWAL & REINSTATEMENT REQUIREMENTS

A one-week written notice is required to withdraw your child from our programs. If notice is not given, payment for that week's tuition will be required.

If your child withdraws from the program for 30 days or less and wishes to re-enroll, all missed tuition fees must be paid for reinstatement to take place, and the registration fee will be waived. Reinstatement will be based on space availability.

Our center will make every attempt to make your child feel welcome, safe, and confident. However, it is important to understand that not all children at this age are ready to be part of a large group. If a child indicates through behavior that he/she has individual needs that are not being met in our group setting, we may initiate a parent/teacher conference to create a plan of action, which may include a referral to a third-party consultant or specialist.

If reasonable accommodation cannot be made, the YMCA Child Development Center may make the difficult decision to remove your child from the program. Should that happen, we will make every effort to assist you in finding an alternate placement for your child.

VACATION DAYS

After your child has been enrolled in our program for at least 6 months, you will earn one week of tuition-free days. You may use these days when your child is absent or when the center is closed for a holiday. An additional week will be earned for every 6 months in attendance thereafter. You cannot accrue more than 2 weeks at a time.

FINANCIAL AID GUIDELINES

See the Y Cares Scholarship Application and Financial Assistance Policy for complete details.

CCRS PROGRAM (DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES)

Parents/Guardians applying for assistance through Child Care Resource Services are required to complete a CCRS application and a Y Cares Scholarship application. Both applications must be submitted to the YMCA business office along with required income and education documentation before your child's first day of attendance.

Families applying for government subsidy assistance will be charged the full weekly rate while the contract with the subsidy agency is pending. Once approved, your account will be adjusted accordingly. Parents are responsible for paying all fees not covered by CCRS. Please see the Financial Agreement for details.

DCFS PROGRAM

Parents/Guardians applying for assistance through the Department of Child and Family Services are required to submit to the YMCA a completed DCFS Services Application along with instructions from your caseworker regarding billing procedures. In addition, we require a letter on DCFS letterhead outlining approval of payment. Parents/Guardians may not start bringing their child(ren) until all paperwork is complete and has approval from DCFS.

OTHER SUBSIDY PROGRAMS

The YMCA is willing to work with other subsidy units who will contract with us and make direct payments to us. Families using programs that reimburse

the family directly must follow the same payment procedures as full-paying clients outlined in the Financial Agreement.

PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Parents/Guardians are asked to use the drop-off lane in front of the YMCA Child Development Center door when dropping off and picking up children. This area is reserved for this express purpose and has a 15-minute time limit. If you will be at the center longer than 15 minutes, please use a marked parking space. ***Do not use handicapped parking spaces for drop-off/pickup.***

Please hold your child's hand in the parking lot. This is for your child's protection and safety.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE SAFETY STATEMENT

The safety of all children is our primary concern. Accidents can happen when children are not directly supervised; therefore, we are asking parents and guardians to use the same eyes-on approach our teachers are required to use. Children under the age of 12 must accompany you into the building unless there is another adult in the car. Do not leave children unattended in your car.

AUTHORIZED PICKUP INFORMATION

It is imperative we know who is picking up your child daily. For safety reasons, children must stay under the supervision of the childcare staff until released to an authorized individual. We will only release your child to responsible adults that you have indicated on their pick-up list in writing. If someone other than your child's guardian will be picking up, please notify the Child Center office.

Alternative pick-up persons are required to show a picture ID as proof of identification. In a situation where a person appears incapable of driving and adequately caring for your child, the child will not be released. Staff will contact other authorized persons to pick up the child.

PICKUP POLICY

Our program closes promptly at 5:30 PM. There will be a \$1.00 charge for every minute children are not picked up by 5:30 PM, to be assessed after 5 minutes.

If your child is not picked up within 5 minutes of the site closing, each authorized pickup person will be called. If your child is not picked up within 30 minutes of the site closing, the local police department and the DCFS agency will be called.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

To provide all children in our program the safe, positive, and enjoyable learning environment they deserve, we will be using a discipline plan that utilizes the following steps:

- Step 1:** The teacher(s) will give specific instructions of what the child is to do.
- Step 2:** The child will be given a reminder with a redirection consequence if appropriate behavior is not followed. The consequence will not be a time out, but a move from the current situation to another situation.
- Step 3:** The teacher will follow through by redirecting the child to an alternative activity. If the child continues with inappropriate behavior, he will be placed in a time-out.
- Step 4:** The length of the time-out is determined by the child's age, one minute as per the child's age.
- Step 5:** If the child continues exhibiting inappropriate behavior, the office will intervene.
- Step 6:** If the behavior continues over an extended period, the director will ask the parents/guardians to attend a parent/teacher/director conference, where an action plan will be agreed upon and put into action for the child.

At any time, the Decatur Family YMCA may waive the disciplinary procedure and reserves the right to discharge any student without notice for misconduct.

SWIMMING AND FIELD TRIPS

Due to the nature of these events, appropriate and safe behavior must be always used. Pool time and/or field trip time will be immediately taken away from a child who does not behave appropriately after being reminded of what is expected of him/her. If a child loses pool or trip privileges for a future time, parents/guardians may be asked to make alternate arrangements for their child during these times.

BATHROOM ACCIDENTS AND WITHHOLDING OF FOOD

Children will not be disciplined for bathroom accidents while in our care and the use of the bathroom will not be used as a form of punishment. The withholding of food or treats will not be used as a form of discipline. However, if a child is using inappropriate behavior, they will be moved to a table away from the group.

HEALTH AND ILLNESS

IMPORTANT:

Call the YMCA Child Development Center when your child is ill or will be absent for other reasons. A sick child is to be kept at home, for his or her own sake and that of others. Many communicable diseases begin with cold-like symptoms.

A child is considered ill when he/she has the following:

- An elevated temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Vomiting
- An unidentified rash or a contagious rash
- Diarrhea
- Weepy and red eyes [could be conjunctivitis (pink eye) which is very contagious]
- A communicable disease
- Any evidence of head lice
- Excessive cough and/or nasal discharge
- Mouth sores
- Any other symptoms that prevent your child from participating in the day's activities

The YMCA Child Development Center should be informed about the nature of any illness. If your child has a communicable disease, tell us when it first appeared. To return class, a doctor's release stating that your child is no longer contagious must be presented.

If a child becomes ill while in our care, a staff member will contact the parents/guardians and request that the child be picked up.

Parents/guardians need to come immediately (within 30 minutes). Until the sick child is picked up, the child will be isolated as much as possible.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO THE PROGRAM?

1. The child's temperature has been normal for 24 hours without Tylenol/aspirin/substitutes
2. The child had been diagnosed as having a bacterial infection and has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
3. It has been 24 hours since the last episode of vomiting or diarrhea without medicine.
4. Eyes are no longer discharging, and if pink eye, has been treated with antibiotic for 24 hours.
5. The rash has subsided, or the doctor has determined the rash is not contagious.
6. In the case of lice, children must be completely free of all nits to return. Our center has a nit-free policy. Staff will conduct head checks on all children returning from a bout of head lice before the child may re-enter the program.

Handwashing = A Healthy Center

Children and staff are required to wash their hands upon arriving at the center. Children and staff will also be washing their hands before and after eating, after large motor and/or outside activities, before and after cooking projects, after handling a pet, after using the bathroom, and after wiping or blowing his or her nose.

MEDICATION POLICY

Only prescription medicine in original bottles will be given. Prescription medicines must include the child's name, prescription number, doctor's name, administration quantity, and time. Parents/Guardians must give all medications directly to the childcare staff and fill out a Dispensing Medicine Consent Form. At this time, the medicine will be locked up out of reach of the children. At no time are children permitted to be in possession of medicines.

Medications will only be administered at 11:30am and 2:30pm. Parents should plan accordingly. Medication records will be kept on file in the office.

Non-prescription medications can only be administered by the parent or legal guardian at the Child Development Center. YMCA staff will not administer any over the counter medications.

INJURY POLICY

If your child is injured, the staff will take the steps necessary to administer first aid and/or obtain emergency medical care if needed. A written note will go home for all minor accidents. In case of a medical emergency, the following steps will be taken, which may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Attempts to contact a parent or guardian.
2. Attempts to contact you through any persons listed on emergency information form you completed for us.
3. Administer emergency first aid.
4. Call 911 if necessary. The fee of this is the responsibility of the parent/guardian.
5. Have the child taken to an emergency hospital in the accompaniment of a staff member, if possible.
6. Please complete a change of information form if emergency contacts or primary physician information changes.

Parents understand that participation in any activity involves risk of injury. Parents are responsible for all costs associated with the occurrence of an injury while their child participates in our program.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER ACTIVITIES

The YMCA Child Development Center program will include the following activities that foster learning and prepare your child for kindergarten. Our program provides a wide variety of activities unique to our center. To remain in compliance with DCFS staff-to-child ratio regulations, we cannot place children in another classroom who do not participate in all scheduled activities. Parents understand that alternate arrangements may need to be made if their child cannot participate in a day's activity.

THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM

Our program utilizes The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, a comprehensive, research-based curriculum that features **inquiry**, **exploration**, and **discovery** as the foundation of all learning.

As a content-rich, developmentally appropriate curriculum, it delivers academic rigor alongside social-emotional learning and cognitive development. And it brings meaningful interactions and learning to life in the classroom.

ADVANCEMENT

Students typically advance with the beginning of the new school year and according to their birthdate. Children should be of age of that classroom prior to September 1st. If we feel a child is not developmentally ready to advance at that time or feel a child may be ready to advance sooner, and openings are available, the director and teachers will consult with the parents. Due to the nature of activities in the Grasshopper and Dragonfly classrooms, children are expected to be potty-trained before advancing out of the Bumblebee classroom. (Potty-trained means wearing regular underwear with 1 or less accidents per day for two weeks.)

SWIMMING

Our swim program is offered to three- to five-year-old students at no extra cost. Well-trained aquatic staff will be in the pool to instruct your child. Classroom teachers will be in the pool assisting with the instruction. The children do not need to prior swimming experience to participate. Our swim instructors are experienced in handling both timid and experienced swimmers alike.

For safety reasons, the two-year-old class will not participate in swim lessons, as that age group requires a 1:1 teacher to student ratio.

On swim days, children should bring a swimsuit and a towel in a backpack. Clearly mark your child's name on all items. If your child cannot participate in swim, they may have to remain with their class and sit on the side of the pool during lessons.

LARGE MOTOR SKILLS / OUTDOOR TIME

Classes will experience large motor play at least twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Our outdoor playground will be utilized unless prevented by weather conditions. In cases of inclement weather, we will use one of the multi-purpose rooms or gyms for playtime. We have ample soft large motor equipment and mats to be used when students cannot play outside.

Parents should be aware: we will be going outside unless the air temperature is 30 Degrees or colder, it is actively raining, or the playground is too muddy to use. Your child should be dressed according to weather conditions. On very cold or very hot days, we may limit the amount of time we are outside.

Appropriate outdoor clothing includes:

Summer: Hats to shield the sun from child's face and head

Spring & Fall: Jackets

Winter: Hats, gloves, and winter coats

Everyday: Tennis Shoes/shoes with a back

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips will be part of our scheduled activities. All children, regardless of their age or weight, must be in an approved car seat or booster seat for all trips when YMCA vehicles are used. The center owns booster seats to be used on field trips; 2-year-old students will need to use their own car seats.

For the safety and enjoyment of all, children will be expected to behave in an appropriate manner. If inappropriate behavior persists after 2 warnings, the child may not be allowed to participate in the next field trip. Parents may be requested to secure alternative childcare on these days.

REST TIME

Children will be required to rest on a cot for at least 2 hours each day. The Child Development Center supplies clean, soft blankets and sheets for each student. No outside blankets or toys are allowed.

MOVIES

Movies that are shown will be for special occasions. We will only show appropriate G Rated moves 60 minutes in length or shorter. We will also have available table work activities for children who choose not to watch. During the summer months, children who will be entering kindergarten will be scheduled a special movie day per week which they may watch during rest time.

TOYS AND ITEMS FROM HOME

YMCA Child Development Center provides a wide range of age-appropriate toys for the children to explore. We ask that children leave their personal toys at home unless the classroom teacher has requested an item to be brought in to help reinforce the weekly theme or project. Naptime huggable soft toys are welcome. These items will be stored in your child's cubby until needed.

CLOTHING/DAILY ATTIRE

Children should wear casual play clothes that are comfortable. Gym shoes (Tennis shoes) are the best footwear for daily attire. Children need to wear inexpensive clothing and shoes that enable them to play, experiment, run, and learn safely and freely without worry about getting dirty. We do many hands-on activities that are messy; smocks will be worn during these times to help minimize damage to clothing.

NUTRITIONAL PROGRAM

The daily meal program includes breakfast around 9:00 am, lunch between 11:30 am and 12:30 pm, and an afternoon snack around 3:00 pm. Lunches will be catered to us for immediate serving. Snack and lunch menus may be posted weekly and will follow the nutritional guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and DCFS.

Under these guidelines, we offer children a variety of healthy foods. We believe children should be allowed to eat until full. Knowing that children develop in growth cycles, a child may experience varying levels of hunger/fullness.

Mealtimes allow children to make choices, develop relationships, practice self-help skills, and learn the fine art of conversation. Meals at the Child Development Center have a relaxed atmosphere. Children participate in helping setup for meals. Adults facilitate helping children learn how to eat a variety of foods and achieve various skills by pouring, scooping, buttering, etc.

An adult will be sitting with and supervising children during mealtimes. Adults model good eating habits and encourage conversations between children.

SPECIAL DIETARY NEEDS

Children with special dietary needs, such as those with allergies, will be accommodated. Parents must provide us with a dated and signed letter listing the items your child may not eat and the reason why. Parents are



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responsible for providing appropriate substitutions. If your child's dietary needs change, a new note must be submitted for their file.

SPECIAL TREATS AND FOOD FROM HOME

Occasional treats may be brought in to celebrate a birthday or holiday. These treats must be purchased from a store and remain in its store-sealed container. Check with the childcare staff before bringing in such treats.

Children may not bring food for themselves into the classroom. If your child is eating their breakfast or other food items when they arrive, parents must stay with them in the lobby until they have finished and/or discard the remains.

BIRTHDAYS

We would love to celebrate your child's birthday. You may bring a special snack for birthdays if arrangements are made with your child's teacher. Cupcakes and cookies are acceptable, and must be store bought and in the original, unopened packaging.

Treat bags are not recommended but may be brought in with approval from the Senior Director of Childcare. Hard candy, balloons, nuts, or toys that are rated for children above the class age range are not allowed.



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