



# **BUILDING NEW SKILLS**

**2024-2025 EARLY LEARNING  
PARENT HANDBOOK**

**STRATFORD YMCA**

# Central Connecticut Coast YMCA

## Early Learning Child Care Parent Handbook

**Thank you for registering your child for our Early Learning Child Care Program. We strongly believe that every child needs a safe and fun experience each and every day. Our program is designed to provide an environment where each child can learn and grow through a wide variety of exciting activities that promote youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. We maintain a strong commitment to building character in youth through our four core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.**

This Central Connecticut Coast YMCA 2024-2025 Early Learning Child Care Parent Handbook is the latest version, rendering all previous editions obsolete.

### **EARLY LEARNING CHILD CARE STAFF**

We pride ourselves on maintaining a well-trained and enthusiastic staff. Staff is first aid and CPR certified. In addition, supervisory staff hold medication certifications to assist with providing medications as needs arise. We carefully screen all staff prior to hire and throughout the duration of employment. Character references are called and police/DCF background checks are done. Experience, education and knowledge are considered, as is a person's ability to nurture and respect children. All staff must meet state licensing qualifications and are required to complete external staff development classes each year. The Y strives to provide a safe, happy, playful, nurturing and stable environment.

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Central Connecticut Coast YMCA (CCCY) seeks to put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

The mission of the CCCY Early Learning Centers is to provide open access for children to age appropriate quality learning that promotes the health and safety of children and prepares them for formal schooling.

### **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY**

The CCCY Early Learning Centers will provide curriculum activities and developmentally appropriate programming that will support and build young children's character, particularly the values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. In our Early Learning Centers, children are motivated to explore, manipulate, question, discover and express their ideas through play, group and individual activities. Children are given choices as they interact with other children, teachers and the environment.

### **EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY/Framework Statement**

The CCCY Early Learning Centers' goals are to offer quality care with age appropriate activities by trained, caring and nurturing staff. All staff understand child and family development and will recognize and meet the learning and developmental needs of the children and families we serve. The educational philosophy shapes and supports the curriculum through the Connecticut Early Learning and Developmental Standards. We will strive to continually develop our professionalism and to:

- Provide a safe, supervised, structured environment in which children may choose from a variety of activities which will help them develop socially, intellectually, physically and emotionally in a developmentally appropriate manner.
- Develop gross and fine motor skills.
- Develop and foster language skills and literacy.
- Promote a positive value system by encouraging a child's self-worth and emotional development that will enhance self-esteem.
- Develop healthy habits, i.e.: nutrition, dental care, cleanliness, hygiene, and fitness.
- Develop a partnership with parents, offering support and welcoming them into our program in all facets of involvement, as well as offering parent educational topics and workshop.
- Use the Connecticut Early Learning and Developmental Standards to support curriculum development and planning
- Support the Connecticut Early Learning and Developmental Standards used to observe and monitor each child's progress related to curricular goals and performance standards.

## **General Guidelines**

### **Admissions Policy**

Our Early Learning Centers are open to all children and families regardless of their race, creed, color, religion, natural origin, sex, disability or ethnicity. All information provided to us will be kept confidential.

**Please Note:** We reserve the right to make referrals to other agencies if the need arises. Your enrollment in our program requires you to abide by their policies and procedures. Your participation in our program requires you to attend parent meetings (advanced notice for these meeting will be given) when scheduled.

### **OPEN ACCESS**

The CCCY Early Learning Centers employ an open-door policy for parents/guardians- this means that parents/guardians may make an unannounced visit to any area of the facility at any time during the program's regular hours of operation. Parents/guardians must sign visitor's book if observing/visiting outside of drop-off and pick-up times.

### **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

We welcome children of all abilities. If you or a member of your family requires additional assistance or has a special circumstance, please contact the Y.

The CCCY Early Learning Center will provide programs appropriate for children with special needs within the main stream of the existing programs whenever possible. Referrals to outside agencies will be made with the permission of parents. In conjunction with the public system and/or state agency, an individual educational plan will be designed and implemented with an interdisciplinary approach.

It is required by our state licensing for all participants in our center who have special needs have an individualized care plan on file.

In the event special education services are needed for a child, depending on the services, these services may be conducted on or off site. Accommodations for space and scheduling will be made if services are to be provided on site. The CCCY Early Learning Centers work collaboratively with outside agencies to ensure a consistency, continuity and carryover between special education services and the program.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is practiced all times. Information about children in our programs will not be discussed among staff or other parents or in front of child/children. We hold any information you share with us to enable us to better meet your child/children's needs in the strictest confidence. This applies to information you share in writing or verbally.

Staff and volunteers will be professional and protect the rights and privacy of the children and families in regards to confidential matters.

All financial information will be kept confidential between the program administration and the families. Information verifying your eligibility for our program may be released to funding sources upon their request.

## **LEGAL CUSTODY AND INJUNCTIONS**

Either parent will be allowed to pick up their child unless a copy of the court order restricting a parent is on file. A copy of any court ordered custody decree or injunction must be kept on file at the YMCA.

## **DISCIPLINE**

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop self-control so that he/she may move toward appropriate behavior. Developmentally appropriate methods for resolving conflicts are:

- Positive guidance – When disputes arise among children or between a child and staff, the staff encourage a “talking out” process where the goal is to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using the children’s ideas wherever possible.
- Setting clear limits – Staff will encourage and model positive behavior, positive reinforcement, the use of peer support and clearly defined rules.
- Redirection – A child who may be aggressive or who is disruptive or destructive of other children’s work may be asked to make an activity choice in another area.

Teachers will use firm, but a gentle voice when orally disciplining the children. Appropriate classroom behavior such as hands to oneself, taking turns and walking is discussed frequently.

Staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions.

Staff may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child. Staff shall not be abusive, neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances. No child shall be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety and health of the child or others, using least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

It is the desire of the CCCY to foster acceptable behaviors in all children.

- Respect adults
- Respect peers
- Respect property
- Follow the rules of the program

The CCCY feels that good interpersonal relationships depend on the concept of mutual respect among and between - everyone children and adults alike. To this end, we promote an atmosphere of general caring, sharing and self-control in all areas of the Early Learning Centers.

## **Expulsion**

The guidelines listed below will be followed for any child who behaves inappropriately;

- A staff member will document the inappropriate behavior in the center's daily log book
- A parent will be notified verbally and in writing of inappropriate behaviors and asked to help resolve the situation
- If at any time, a child poses a danger to the safety to themselves, the other children or staff in the program, the Early Learning Center Director will be notified of the problem. The Director can initiate any of the following actions deemed necessary:
  - Conference between parent, staff member, and Director
  - Private conference with Director
  - Suspension from the program
  - Dismissal from the program

## **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

### **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

All CCCY employees are considered mandated reporters and shall make a report to DCF when a situation arises where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, neglected or in imminent risk of abuse. The staff has a responsibility to prevent any child enrolled in the center from being abused or neglected. To help ensure the safety and wellbeing of children, and in compliance with Connecticut General Statutes, the staff shall make a report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), when we learn of a situation where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, neglected or at imminent risk of abuse. No staff member is allowed to have any contact, including, but not limited to, babysitting, phone, or email, with any Y participants under 18 years of age outside of Y programs and activities.

*Note: Mandated reporters must report orally to DCF or Law Enforcement Agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected. Within 48 hours of making the report, the mandated reporter must submit a written report (DCF-136) to DCF.*

### **Parent Behaviors**

**Parents are expected to behave and communicate in a positive manner at all times when in the center.** Many situations can be resolved by speaking with teachers first, and then with the Early Learning Center Director if needed. Use of foul language and/or repeated rude and discourteous behavior toward staff will not be tolerated. Parents may not use inappropriate language, threats, be aggressive (verbally or physically) or speak negatively about staff and/ or the center when on the premises. This behavior will not be tolerated and services to a family will be terminated if a parent is verbally or physically abusive to a staff member.

### **Parent Substance Abuse**

If any of the staff suspects substance abuse on the part of a parent/ guardian, or anyone that is intending on picking up a child, while arriving at the Center, the staff will not allow the parent to sign the child out. If the parent becomes aggressive or threatening, the staff will call the police. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) will be notified of any presumed substance abuse. If the situation occurs more than once, the CCCY Early Learning Center reserves the right to discontinue care for the child(ren) enrolled in the program.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Most problems within an Early Learning Center are non-life threatening and can be resolved by:

1. Discussing the problem with the classroom teacher
2. Discussing the problem with the Program Director
3. If the problem is not resolved, you may contact the Executive Director
4. If the problem is still not resolved, you may contact the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood

*For more information, please see complete policy located on information bulletin board.*

## **REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

Registration is ongoing throughout the year. Applications are accepted and dated according to when they are received. If there are no openings, your name is then added to a waiting list. When an opening becomes available, we go to the waiting list and call according to the date on the application.

## **TUITION**

### **PAYMENTS**

Monthly tuition payments are due and must be paid no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> of the next month. If accounts are not paid by the first of the month, a \$25 late payment fee will be charged. Accounts must be kept current. If payment is not received by the 1<sup>st</sup> of every month you may not leave your child at the center. If payment is not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month your child's slot in the program will be forfeited. No refunds or credit will be given for closing due to inclement weather, personal family vacation or child's sickness or suspension or expulsion from the program.

No refunds will be given for partial month; if your child does not attend the entire month.

### **WITHDRAWAL**

A two-week written notice is required if you choose to withdraw from the program. If written notice is not provided, full monthly payment is expected.

### **CARE 4 KIDS**

To help with the overall cost of care for each child we strongly recommend all families to apply to the Care 4 Kids Program and remain on the program if accepted. We have applications on site, in English and Spanish. We will assist families in completing the application if needed. The application can be faxed to Care 4 Kids from the Early Learning Center office.

Once accepted in Care 4 Kids Program the family fee determined by Care 4 Kids will be the monthly tuition accepted by the center. If you have more than one child in the program, you will be charged a monthly family tuition fee rather than a per child fee. Families who are accepted into the Care 4 Kids program may see a reduction in their child's monthly tuition fee.

### **FEES – SCHOOL READINESS (ONLY)**

Parent fees are based on income and family size. We use the current OEC School Readiness sliding fee scale to determine parent fees. The sliding scale chart is available for review, upon request. Weekly parent fees are charged regardless of absenteeism. Accounts have to be kept current at all times. Parent fees are due by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month. If payment is not received by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, your child will not be able to attend until the account is up to date. Should your financial situation or income changes, please come to the business office with new income verification.

We will assist families with access to the Child Care Assistance program (Care 4 Kids). All families are encouraged to apply for **Care 4 Kids assistance**. This is to help with the overall cost of care for each child. We have applications on site, in English and Spanish. If you receive Care 4 Kids assistance, the parent fee that you will be responsible for will be the amount that is stated in your Care 4 Kids acceptance letter. This amount takes precedence over the OEC School Readiness sliding scale.

The fee calculation is reviewed with parents, including parent/guardian signature and parent receives a copy of the fee calculation form. Redetermination of fees is done on an annual basis.

### **PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF POLICY**

Parents have to come into the classroom when dropping off and picking up a child to sign them in and out. No child will be allowed to leave the program with anyone other than the parent or person(s) listed on the registration/release form. It is your responsibility to update the information on the emergency form. A note must accompany your child if a person other than those listed on the registration/release form is to pick up your child.

According to State regulations, a telephone call is not acceptable notification, it needs to be a written note with the parent's signature. People who pick up children will be required to show a valid photo id.

### **LATE PICK UP/CLOSING TIME PLAN**

Two staff members 18 year of age or older will remain at the program with the child at all times. If a child has not been picked up within fifteen minutes of their designated pick-up, a staff person will attempt to call the child's parent/guardians using the numbers provided.

If they cannot be reached, the staff person will attempt to call the emergency and authorized, alternate adults provided by the parent/guardian at time of enrollment. The local Police will be called after one hour if parents or other adults cannot be reached. At that time the child may be released to the police.

Late pick up fees begin 1 minute after closing. Late pick up fee accrue at \$25.00 per quarter hour. If there is a discrepancy as to the time you are picking up your child, we will go by the time displayed on a cell phone. Even if you call and notify the center you will be late, a late pick up fee will be charged. After 3 late pick-ups the Y reserves the right to discontinue care for your child(ren) enrolled in the program. Regardless if the parent/guardian called the center or an emergency contact has been reached, child must be picked up within 1 hour after closing.

The State of Connecticut has an "Abandon Child Policy". If a child is not picked up within 1 hour of the Center's closing, and all efforts have been made to contact the parents/guardian or emergency people, the center is to assume the child has been abandoned, and providers

must contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the local police to have the child picked up and brought to the local DCF or other appropriate agency.

### **ABSENCES**

Early learning can help prepare your child for success in school and in life. These early years are so important to a child's development and learning. What happens now in the early years does make a difference in your child's life. If your child is not present they will not learn. Excessive absenteeism may lead to forfeiting your child's slot in the center. If your child is going to be absent, for any reason, please notify the center as soon as possible.

### **VACATION**

Tuition is due regardless. Please let us know if you plan to be out. Please check with the Site Coordinator/Office Administrator if you plan on going on vacation for an extended period, as there may be restrictions based upon the site.

### **EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

In the event of an emergency at the program it is our policy to stop all activities and collect all children at a designated location to take attendance. Parents of the children involved will be called immediately. Please provide an emergency contact number if neither parent can be reached during the day (grandparent, neighbor, etc.). Please be patient with us if you arrive during a drill or an emergency.

### **EMERGENCY NUMBERS**

All contact information (street address, email address, emergency contacts, telephone numbers) must be kept up to date, to insure that we can contact you immediately in case of an emergency. Please let your child's teacher know when there is a change, especially phone numbers.

### **WEATHER AND RELATED EMERGENCIES**

The CCCY reserves the right to close the Early Learning Centers due to inclement weather, other emergencies or the inability to maintain State of Connecticut required staff to student ratio. If severe weather develops during the school day, parents will be called and are expected to pick up their children within one half hour of notification. If you cannot pick up your child, please arrange for them to be picked up by someone on the child's authorized pick-up list. We will call persons on the child's authorized pick-up list if we are unable to contact the parent or guardian.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS**

The program has written procedures to protect children and adults from environmental hazards such as air pollution, lead, and asbestos, according to public health requirements.

Our staff attend trainings on different health issues (asthma, air pollution, lead) that support and protect the children and staff. We have an ongoing relationship with local Health and Environmental departments. They have an email notification system to inform problems of health and environmental issues in the community. We follow all the regulations in public health in regards to air pollution, lead and asbestos.



**HEALTH GUIDELINES**

Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Early Learning Centers follow all rules and regulations set by the State of Connecticut, the Office of Early Childhood and other licensing partners as they pertain to the administration of medication, individual care plans, doctors standing orders and storage of any medications or Epi pens that are used in child care.

Upon arrival at our Learning Center, all children will wash their hands when they come into the classroom. We teach the children the importance of hand washing to prevent sickness and spreading germs. We strongly encourage families to reinforce these concepts with the children at home.

**INJURED CHILD**

If a child is injured during the program hours, the following steps will be taken: If the injury is minor the child will be made comfortable and a staff member certified in first aid will treat. If injury is of a serious nature and emergency medical care is needed, EMS will be called and parents will be contacted immediately. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, the staff will take the necessary steps to obtain an ambulance and emergency treatment at a hospital. An emergency permission slip, previously signed by the parents or guardians will be kept on file.

**SICK CHILD**

If a child is sick with any illness that requires the child to be removed from the center during the program hours the child will be immediately removed from the group and brought to a supervised area away from the group. A staff member will make the child comfortable.

A staff member will call a parent/guardian. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached the staff will call people on the emergency list to pick up the child. The child must be picked up from the center within one half hour of parent notification.

Parents must advise staff of any physical or emotional conditions for which their child is being treated, particularly when the child is using mood-altering medications. Other physical conditions that staff should be made aware of would be, but is not limited to, allergies, asthma, or any restriction of activities.

Parent should notify staff of any medications taken at home prior to arriving at center so that in case of an emergency the staff is aware of any medication.

<b>Child may not attend if he/she has any of the following symptoms</b>	<b><i>Your child may return when the following is met.</i></b> Children can return when the latest local Health Department Guidelines are met for their illness. <b>A doctor’s note is required to confirm that they have been treated for the illness.</b>
Too sick to participate normally in the day’s activities, including going outside. Unexplained pain or discomfort or listlessness	When child is able participate in daily activities.
Fever of 100 degrees or above, with or without accompanying symptoms	Less than 100 degrees for 24 hours without fever reducing medications
Ear Ache	When child is on medication 24 hours and drinking/eating/sleeping normally

Diarrhea	When normal bowel movements return or 24 hours diarrhea free
Vomiting	24 hours vomit free
Hand, Foot and Mouth disease/Coxsackie	24 hr fever free and all of the blisters must be sealed (crusted over)
Abdominal pain	With a doctor's note and as long as your child has been cleared to participate in daily activities
Unexplained rash	With a doctor's note
Excessive cold symptoms- cough, sneeze, Constant Runny Nose	Doctor's note and the child must be cleared to participate in daily activities
Chest or Bronchial cough	With a doctor's note
Sore Throat/ Strep Throat/Tonsillitis/Scarlet Fever	With a doctor's note and 24 hours after treatment starts
Itchy eye/red or pink eye	Bacterial Conjunctivitis (Pink eye): With a doctor's note and after on medication for 48 hours
Chicken pox (varicella)/Pinworm/Ringworm/Fifth's Disease	When all lesions have scabbed over (usually 7-10 days), with a doctor's note and treatment for 24 hrs.
Head Lice/Lice	Treated and deemed nit-free. After first treatment with proof of purchase, head check and doctor's note
Ringworm/Scabies	Please consult us about proper treatment and then child may return 24 hrs after the child starts treatment.
RSV	Doctor's note with the ability to participate in daily activities
Covid or any variation of Covid	Most current CDC, OEC and local health department guidelines
Impetigo	Impetigo: 24 hours after treatment starts
Other contagious disease	Children may return to the program when all symptoms disappear as noted above or the child's physician signs a statement as to the lack of contagious disease

### **CONTAGIOUS DISEASE**

Please notify the YMCA if your child has a contagious disease. We must exercise precautions in order to maintain a reasonably healthy and safe environment and to avoid any epidemic situations. Children may return to the program when all symptoms disappear as noted above or the child's physician signs a statement as to the lack of contagious disease.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION**

In compliance with Public Act 02-84, the Early Learning Centers may not deny services to a child who has an allergy or a prescription for an automatic prefilled cartridge injector (such as an epi-pen). The CCCY will provide staff trained in the administration of medications, including the use of automatic prefilled cartridge injectors with a written order from a physician and signed by the parent or guardian. A parent/guardian has the option and is welcome to come to the center to administer medication personally.

We request, however, that whenever possible, medication be administered to your child outside the hours your child attends the center. Only those prescription medications that are critical for your child's wellbeing should be administered during program hours.

### **PRESCRIPTION**

An Authorization for the Administration of Medication by Child Care Personnel for all types of medication prescription to be administered must be filled out and signed by the physician and by the parent. One form is required per medication.

The medication **must be unopened** and have the **original bottle or packaging and prescription label** including:

- Child's name
- Dosage/route of administration (mouth, inhalation)
- Specific time/intervals to be given
- Current date of order
- Physician's name and telephone number
- Individual measuring spoon as may be required with medication

At least one dose must have been administered outside the center without adverse side effects. Even if taken before for another illness. Any unused medication will be promptly returned to parent after completion of treatment or will be destroyed within one week of termination of the order if not picked up.

### **NON-PRESCRIPTION-TOPICAL**

The teachers will administer sunscreen, SPF 15 or higher and insect repellent (if containing DEET, it will be 10% or less concentration of DEET) with a completed Authorization for Non-Prescription Topical Ointment form signed by the parent or guardian. Sun block, insect repellent and lip balms must be labeled with your child's name.

### **MEDICATION EXCLUSION**

The Early Learning Center reserves the right to deny application of certain medications unless the medications are those needed for an emergency. Medications that are not applied topically, taken orally, inhaled, intranasal or intra-aurally (in the ear) must be discussed with the director and the health consultant before the child comes to the program. The health consultant is responsible for obtaining special permission from the Office of Early Childhood. The child will not be able to attend the program until the staff is appropriately trained in the medical care of the child unless a parent or guardian is willing to stay in the Early Learning Center building while the child is in attendance.

### **ALLERGIES**

Parents are responsible to document to staff of any allergies to food, animals or environmental conditions, (e.g. Inhalers, food changes, allergies, EPI-Pens). Written health care provider documentation is required by OEC and must be on file before a child can enter the program. This information must be documented by the doctor on the child medical form. It must be kept current at all times and is the responsibility of the parent. Additional forms that are required are the Authorization for the Administration of Medications, and the Individualized Care Plan and other action plans as required.

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

We assist families to identify appropriate health, mental health, and medical services if needed. We have local healthcare resources and developed linkages and referral systems for families. We have a health consultant who provides consultation, training and education for our staff and families on well-child care. If you need assistance, please speak with the Teacher or Director.

Each year the children enrolled in the School Readiness program will participate in dental, hearing, and vision screening. These screenings will take place on site by trained personnel via collaborations with local organizations. Information about each screening is given to the parents in helping to educate them on these practices. Prior to the screening parents will be notified. Results of the screenings will be shared with the parents/guardian and referrals may be recommended. Throughout the year the parents are provided with flyers and other written material regarding information on dental, hearing, and vision.

If a family needs to secure medical insurance, ongoing well child care, immunizations, the program will help or make the necessary referrals to assist the family. A Family Needs Assessment is completed to help us identify what needs a family may have.

## **MEALS AND SNACKS**

The CCCY promotes healthy eating. All foods served in the Early Learning Centers are healthy and follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program or meals (if applicable) guidelines. All Early Learning Centers are a nut free environment. Food menus will be posted.

CCCY Early Learning Center staff must approve any foods brought from home. If applicable, they must be healthy, be in sealed packages with visible labels (see staff for recommended food items). Staff must clear any foods that come from home, for special events, to be shared among the children. They must be either whole fruits/vegetables or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory sealed containers with visible labels. Children under the age of four will never be offered hotdogs (whole or sliced), whole grapes, popcorn or hard pretzels, raw carrots/peas or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.

Safe drinking water will be available at all times and will be offered at intervals based on activities and individual needs to the children.

## **PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **LEARNING CENTERS**

This time allows children to choose activities in various learning or discovery centers. These centers may include science and nature, dramatic play, blocks, art, woodworking, gross and small motor, language arts, math, sand and water activities. When children are allowed to choose activities, they will choose what is most important to them. They use the materials in ways that meet their own developmental needs. We create the environment to allow each child to choose activities that are developmentally appropriate for this age. When children work at a task they selected they find it very satisfying and this is the most effective and engaging way to learn.

### **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

Activities such as arts and crafts, puppet play, storytelling, dramatization, block building, music and dance are a great time for children to learn to follow directions, be creative, and work in groups or individually.

## **PROCESS AND PRODUCT**

Children are learning new things all the time. They need the time to explore what happens if they do this or do that. They need the freedom to try things without worrying how it must turn out. Children will focus on the process of doing things. This is why a child will do the same puzzle over and over again or pour sand from one container to another repeatedly.

The child may be learning coordination or beginning writing skills or making discoveries about triangles or gravity. Mostly, she/he is building confidence. Your child's artwork will be of the process type. Be patient. Allow your child the time to grow and learn- that this is part of the task. Your child is very involved in what s/he does. S/he is learning to be creative and to problem solve.

## **PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES**

A period will be given daily for physical activities. The children may play outdoors, participate in physical education activities, music and movement or play group games.

## **GROUP TIME**

Children and teachers discuss many things. Sometimes it is the calendar, or weather. This time may be used to introduce new material and how to care for and use it. Teachers plan what they will do for the day. The children are developing their social skills such as: listening, taking turns, sharing and empathizing. The children are discovering how to solve problems, ask questions, brainstorm, as well as the importance of the sequencing of events and consequences. They are learning how to be fair, choose solutions, compromise and the routines of their day.

## **LITERACY TIME**

A quiet time when children will have the opportunities to listen to stories, learn and experience new things. Our stories often enhance deeper learning of topics that have been discussed during group time. Children are learning to value language.

## **MUSIC**

Songs, finger plays, and nursery rhythms are especially good for introducing children to the patterns and rhythms of language. They are learning numbers and shapes as well as new vocabulary, grasp of order and sequence, increased attention span, listening skills and manual dexterity and muscle control.

## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING and MATH (STEAM)**

Children are challenged to be critical thinkers, creatively make predictions and become inventors while participating in hands-on activities.

## **ASSESSMENT AND CHILD GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Assessment is ongoing throughout the year. We use a combination of the Connecticut Early Learning Development Standards (CT ELDS) and Connecticut Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS). They are documents that outline Connecticut's preschool learning standards and outcomes. This is to assist the staff in building experience learning plans that address the needs of all children that are intentionally planned for, implemented, observed, and assessed. Assessment is done within the regular classroom environment using a variety of information including developmental histories, individual child's portfolios, observations, CT DOTS and ongoing feedback from parents.

This helps us to understand each child's abilities, strengths, interest and learning styles. All progress is monitored using the Connecticut ELDS and the Connecticut DOTS. Assessments are integrated within the curriculum so that teachers can plan appropriate activities for each child and they enable us to identify children who may benefit from further evaluation. Program improvements are made as a result of assessment findings. The children's files are kept in the preschool coordinators office and remain confidential.

Assessment is also used to identify children that may require referral to the local public-school system for diagnostic assessment (see Serving Children with Disabilities).

The Connecticut ELDS and DOTS are used as the basis for planning learning experiences, observing and documenting child progress, and implementing teaching strategies. All curriculum used aligns with the standards and benchmarks outlined in the CT ELDS/CT DOTS. Staff is trained in using the CT Early Learning Development Standards (CT ELDS) and CT Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS).

Assessments are shared with parents/families at conference time and ongoing as needed.

### **PARENT/FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parents are welcome and encouraged to visit the program at any time. Parent meetings will be scheduled throughout the year to provide ongoing communication.

We want ongoing communication with parents. This may include: regular personalized communication, classroom observations, parent help or learning projects, parent supporting their child's learning in the home and community, parents linked to resources in the community.

If you are interested in assisting the teachers for special events, or have a special talent or interest that you would like to share with the children, please speak with the Teachers or Director. We also have a parent bulletin board for announcements. Please take the time to look the Parent board over regularly to keep informed of the center activities and announcements. Weekly experience plans and monthly plans will be posted for viewing. Parents are welcomed to join the Parent Advisory committee or the YMCA Board of managers to represent and support the Early Learning programs. It also gives parents the opportunity to participate in understanding how decisions are made and to be part of that decision-making process for the center.

The staff will work with families on shared child care giving issues, including routine separations, special needs, the food being served and consumed and daily care issues.

The staff encourages and support families to make the primary decisions about services that their children need, and they encourage families to advocate obtaining needed services. Staff and families work together to plan events for the program. The staff encourages families to regularly contribute to decisions about their child's goals and plans for activities and services.

The program provides program information to families in a language the family can understand and includes program policies and operating procedures. The staff encourages families to raise concerns and work collaboratively with them to find mutually satisfying solutions that staff then can incorporate into classroom practices.

Parent conferences are held twice a year and the information gathered is shared with families during parent/teacher conferences and ongoing as needed.

## **FAMILY LITERACY**

### **Language**

The program staff is familiar with family support services and specialized consultants who are able to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services. The program will use this information and knowledge to suggest and guide families to these services as appropriate. We have established linkages and agreements with education and training programs and libraries in the community. If you are interested in learning more about this, please contact the Teacher or Director for more information.

## **TRANSITION**

There are procedures in place to address transition planning by administrators, teachers, and families to facilitate children's transition from one teacher to another, from one group to another, from one classroom to another. This is to support continuity of care for children, as well as families and the program.

No child will be removed from one classroom to another until the family and staff have conferenced and discussed this decision as a team in the best interest of the child and family.

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

It is important to continually evaluate the program and make improvements where needed. Staff, parents and others are instrumental in the evaluation process in collecting information on quality and engaging in a reflective process to assess the effectiveness of the program.

A variety of sources for program evaluation are used. All assessments will be used to generate action plans for improvements and changes in the program.

## **SURVEYS**

We survey families, staff and others to collect information on quality of the program.

## **TOILETING**

We are aware that some children enter the program not fully toilet trained. We will provide assistance and work with the child and family in this developmental phase. If a child is not fully toilet trained, the parent is responsible for keeping a supply of extra underwear, sets of clothing at the center, as well as wipes to assist the child. If a child is not able to toilet themselves independently a plan will be developed and followed between the teachers and the parent to meet the child's needs. (Check with local program.)

## **OUTSIDE PLAYTIME**

Our program encourages outside activities such as walks and playground time whenever possible. Our classrooms will go outside everyday as long as the weather permits. We remain inside on days in which the weather is unhealthy for asthma or other health or age issues as stated by the local weather station (i.e. the oppressive heat or cold/ or when the temperature or wind-chill is below 15F degrees). We will spend 15 minutes or more a day whenever possible outside, so please dress your child for the day's weather.

### **CLOTHING, JEWELRY, TOYS & ELECTRONICS**

Children should wear comfortable clothing suitable to the season and activities at the Early Learning Center. Sneakers or close toed shoes should be worn at all times. Flip-flops, crocs, or open toed shoes are not permitted. A spare set of clothing is helpful to be left in the classroom in case of a mishap or accident. Please write your child's name in side all backpacks, raincoats, and jackets, etc. We enjoy painting, water and sand play, cooking, etc. This can be very messy work. We take precautions to remain clean; but will not guarantee it.

We go outside every day, year round. Please be sure to dress your child appropriately according to the weather.

Our centers are filled with age-appropriate learning materials. All personal toys and stuffies should remain home. The YMCA and staff are not responsible for any articles of clothing, jewelry or other valuables that the child brings to the center.

Please do not allow your child to bring tablets, laptops, cell phones, electronic devices or any other digital devices to the program.

### **COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS**

The program maintains a current list of child and family support services, available in the community (e.g., health, mental health, oral health, nutrition, child welfare, parenting programs, early intervention-special education screening and assessment services, and basic needs such as housing and child care subsidies). The program will share the list with families and assist them in locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children's and families' well-being and development.

The program staff advocate for the program and its families by creating awareness of the program's needs among community councils, service agencies, and local governmental entities. The program encourages staff and families to work together to participate in and support community improvement and advocacy projects. This information will be distributed throughout the year. Program leadership is knowledgeable about how policy changes at local, state, and or national levels affect the services and resources available for children and their families.

The program will inform families about community events sponsored by local organizations, such as museum exhibits, concerts, storytelling, and theater intended for children. Flyers and information will be sent home and posted in the center regularly.

The program invites members of the performing and visual arts community, such as musical performances, coordinators of traveling museum exhibits, local artists, and community residents, to share their interests and talents with the children. If you have these talents or know of someone who would like to share this with the children and the program, please talk with your classroom teacher or contact the director.





**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

### **Stratford YMCA Preschool Program**

The Stratford YMCA operates a NAEYC accredited year-round preschool program for 2.8-5 year-olds at our branch. Our hours are from 7:30am-5:30pm with part-time options available. Children are motivated to explore, manipulate, question, discover, and express their needs through play, group, and individual activities. We offer a comprehensive program to foster the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and creative needs and growth of the child. Swimming is offered during the day at an additional fee. We believe that all children should learn to be safe in and around water by the age of 12. Swimming incorporates water comfort, water safety, and stroke development. Thanks to the Y's Annual Campaign, the Y offers financial assistance to families who qualify. The Stratford YMCA is also a licensed provider with the state Care 4 Kids program.

### **Program is closed on the following dates\***

Labor Day	Stratford Public School Winter Recess
Yom Kippur	Good Friday
Election Day	Stratford Public School Spring Recess
Thanksgiving Recess	Memorial Day
Stratford Public School Holiday Recess	Independence Day
New Year's Day	Shut Down week in August
Martin Luther King Day	

\*Subject to change based on Stratford board of education school calendar

### **Stratford Y Preschool Inclement Weather Plans**

We follow the Stratford Public Schools for inclement weather delays and closings.

If Stratford Public schools are closed, the preschool will be also be closed.

If Stratford Public schools have a 2 hour delay, the Full Day Preschool will begin at 9:30am. The part day Preschool will begin at 10:30am.

If Stratford Public schools have an unscheduled early dismissal, the YMCA reserves the right to close. If severe weather develops during the school day, parents will be called and are expected to pick up their children within 30 minutes of notification.

STRATFORD FAMILY YMCA  
3045 Main St, Stratford, Connecticut 06614  
P 203 375 5844 F 203 380 0291 W StratfordYMCA.org



**CENTRAL CONNECTICUT COAST YMCA  
Early Learning Center Parent Handbook Receipt Acknowledgement Form**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please detach this form and return to a program staff member/teacher/director.

I acknowledge that I have received the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA Early Learning Center Parent Handbook.

I have read and understand the statements provided.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_