



YMCA OF GREATER ST. PETERSBURG

PRESCHOOL ACADEMIES

2026-2027

Preschool Handbook



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WELCOME, FAMILIES

Thank you for choosing the Y! We are excited to have your child and family enrolled in one of our YMCA Preschool Academies. We deliver high-quality, state-licensed early childhood education in safe, clean and inviting classrooms with an open-door policy, which means you, as family, are welcome to visit anytime during operating hours.

Children receive both group and individualized care. We realize that each child is unique and encourage them to express their individual preferences throughout the day with both teacher-guided and child-initiated activities.

We aim to help children develop healthy relationships and build self-reliance through the Y's values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. We believe it's never too early to teach children to be kind, socialize and live well with others. We accomplish this by providing opportunities to build social skills and work together to complete activities.

Welcome to the Y, where we are for Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility!

Your YMCA Preschool Team

About Our Program

The YMCA provides convenient, high-quality early childhood education ensuring your child stays active, learns and has fun every day! At your YMCA Preschool Academy, our caring educators help your child to develop the physical, educational, emotional and social skills that are essential for success. The Y gives your child a safe, nurturing place to connect and belong. In our care, your child will receive:

- care from licensed and certified educators
- curriculum that enhances academic and social success
- daily literacy enrichment
- daily outdoor activities and/or dance

Program Goals

- Foster achievement by giving children the opportunity to gain new knowledge and abilities
- Help children build confidence and discover who they are while promoting a sense of belonging by creating a supportive and welcoming environment for all
- Build strong and healthy relationships by encouraging children to make new friends and encouraging open and honest communication between staff and families

Child Philosophy

- Parents are the most pervasive and influential teachers of their children.
- Curriculum is everything that a child experiences, from the time they get up in the morning until the time they go to bed in the evening.
- Each child's uniqueness must be respected and fostered.
- Children grow and develop at individual rates that are often unique and unrelated to their calendar age.
- Children need an individualized curriculum that begins with what they already know and moves slowly from the concrete to the abstract.
- Children learn best through direct involvement with their environment.
- Play enables children to make sense of their environment and is essential to learning.





Shared Expectations

What you can expect from the Y:

- Your child will be treated fairly and with respect.
- We continually train our staff using the most current research in child development and early education.
- Our employees are trained and provide quality care and a safe environment.
- We will inform you of behavior concerns and work with you to create a plan to support your child's success in our school.
- We will do all that we can to provide a safe and happy experience for you and your family.

What we ask of you:

- When in our programs, you follow our core values: caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.
- Your commitment to your child's learning experiences at the YMCA.
- That you are a champion, along with us, in your child's development.
- Your help in developing a consistent plan to work through behavioral concerns.

Our Credentials

Quality, continuity and longevity of staff are priorities in a quality childcare program. Choosing our staff based on experience, competence and education is a priority to ensure that we have the most highly qualified staff available to care for your children.

Preschool Academy directors, assistant directors and teachers have a two-to-four-year degree in early childhood education, elementary education or a related field, a child development associate credential or practical experience working with young children. Early learning staff receive on-the-job training and gain experience in youth development and working with families. Staff are provided with annual trainings to ensure they are educated on best practices when working with youth. During our trainings and monthly staff meetings, we focus on behavior guidance, child development and curriculum.



- Completion of basic childcare training
- All staff are required to undergo a Level 2 background screening, with eligibility determined by the Division of Children and Family Services Clearinghouse
- All staff must be certified in CPR and first aid
- Monthly emergency drills and evacuation plans
- Ongoing annual professional development of staff

Licensing

All of our preschool programs are licensed by the Pinellas County Licensing Board. We meet all county requirements, including the following staff-to-child ratios:

- 2 months - 1 year, 1:3 ratio
- 1 - 2 years, 1:5 ratio
- 2 years, 1:10 ratio
- 3 years, 1:15 ratio
- 4 years, 1:20 ratio
- 5 years, 1:25 ratio



Our Curriculum

The Importance of Planned Curriculum and Play

A well-planned curriculum offers children a consistent, engaging sequence of learning experiences. Daily schedules include activities like music, stories, self-directed play, outings and academic games—all supporting development in science, math, art and literacy. Routines provide security, while new activities spark interest.

Play Is Powerful Learning

Play is more than fun—it's how children learn. Through play, they develop:

- Cognitive skills – solving problems in a pretend store
- Physical abilities – stacking blocks or running
- Vocabulary – using words like “volcano” or “menu”
- Social skills – cooperating in imaginative play
- Literacy skills – writing for pretend scenarios

Play and Learning Go Hand in Hand

Play comes in many forms—symbolic, dramatic, physical and rule-based. It's deeply connected to learning, like a science lecture paired with a lab. For children, play is the lab—where discovery, growth and joy happen together.





For Infants/Toddlers

The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers and Twos focuses on creating a responsive environment for the children where they will be physically and emotionally stimulated with materials, sounds and experiences, and have space to relax and learn from those around them.

We carefully plan daily routines and experiences, focusing on personal growth and development, making sure they are individualized for each child. Children will participate in creative art, large and fine motor activities, language and talking activities,

music and movement, social, emotional and cognitive activities. The child's personal care is also individualized to meet their own needs. Classroom materials and toys are rotated each week to go along with the weekly exploration topic. New items are placed in the learning programs to enhance the environment, keeping it relevant, fresh and fun.

For Preschoolers

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschoolers focuses on building relationships, the learning environment, how children learn, and how teachers and families can work together to strengthen the child's growth and development to ensure school readiness. This comprehensive approach balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, with an emphasis on responding to children's learning styles and building on their strengths and interests. The Creative Curriculum is one of the country's leading research-based preschool curricula that applies the latest theory and research on best practices in teaching, learning and content standards developed by states and professional organizations. The Creative Curriculum clearly defines the teacher's vital role in connecting content, teaching and learning for preschool children. Children will participate in large and fine motor activities, creative art and sensory, social, emotional and cognitive activities each day.





Getting Started

Enrollment

Before any student starts, we will provide a welcome packet of classroom or site-specific information. The packet will include a family questionnaire to learn about your child's interests, your family's approaches to learning, your child's developmental needs and your concerns and goals for your child. The teachers will incorporate this information into ongoing classroom planning.

Each family must complete the YMCA Preschool Academy orientation, which includes:

- a family visit in the classroom with the classroom teaching team
- an introduction to key employees
- an overview of available family support resources and activities
- an overview of program policies and procedures including technology usage
- a tour of the facility

Managing Your Account

Once you've enrolled your child, you'll be able to set up online access to your YMCA account. With online access, you can:

- View your account balance
- Update your payment method*
- Make changes to your authorized pick-up list
- Register your child for youth sports, swim lessons and more
- Download your annual childcare tax statement (when available)

Visit **www.stpeteymca.org/login** to login, learn more or set up access.

**Note that families can update payment method, but cannot update scheduled payments. Please notify the preschool director if changes are made.*

Payment Information

Credit/Debit Card Draft: Automatic credit or debit card drafts will occur every Friday, 10 days in advance of the scheduled week of delivering the service. These fees are non-refundable and will not be prorated for missed days due to illness, vacation, or any other reason. There is no tuition credit or refund given for scheduled school holidays or closings due to emergencies, pandemics, inclement weather, etc.

Failed or Returned Payments: If a payment is returned due to insufficient funds or account changes, I remain responsible for all program fees. The YMCA will attempt to reprocess your payment one time within one business day. A \$25.00 returned payment fee will be charged to cover related administrative costs. The YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg reserves the right to suspend services if payment cannot be collected.

Financial Assistance: Charitable contributions enable the Y to provide financial assistance based on a sliding scale. Qualified applicants receive assistance based on the availability of funds. Applications are available at stpeteymca.org or at your YMCA Preschool Academy.

Subsidized Care: Families who work or go to school may qualify for government-subsidized care, which is designated by the state. Families receiving Early Learning Coalition (ELC) assistance are subject to program fee changes at the discretion of ELC. Families will be responsible for payments that exceed the allotted absence days.

Attendance Guidelines

Building Access/Security

Each Preschool Academy has its own access and security procedures. You will be notified at enrollment what the specific requirements are for your location.

Authorization List

To ensure the safety of your child, the YMCA will follow the Florida statutes regulating childcare centers. Each child must be checked in and out by an authorized individual with a valid photo ID. Children will not be released to any person other than the individuals on the pick-up authorization list.

Authorized individuals are indicated in writing by the legal guardian on the pick-up authorization form at the time of registration. Changes to the pick-up list must be made utilizing your secure online account, and the director should also be notified. Please contact your director for instructions or more information. Phone calls, faxes or emails are not accepted.

For your child's safety, if the person picking up appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, our staff will contact another person on your pick-up list. If no one is available, we will be required to call law enforcement.

Signing In/Out Daily

We require all families to sign their child in and out each day using our electronic tablets. Doing so will also help you avoid a late pick-up fee and ensure the accuracy of the child's attendance record. Please do not drop your child off without walking them in. We are unable to send children out upon request. These policies are to ensure child safety and ratio requirements.

Drop Off

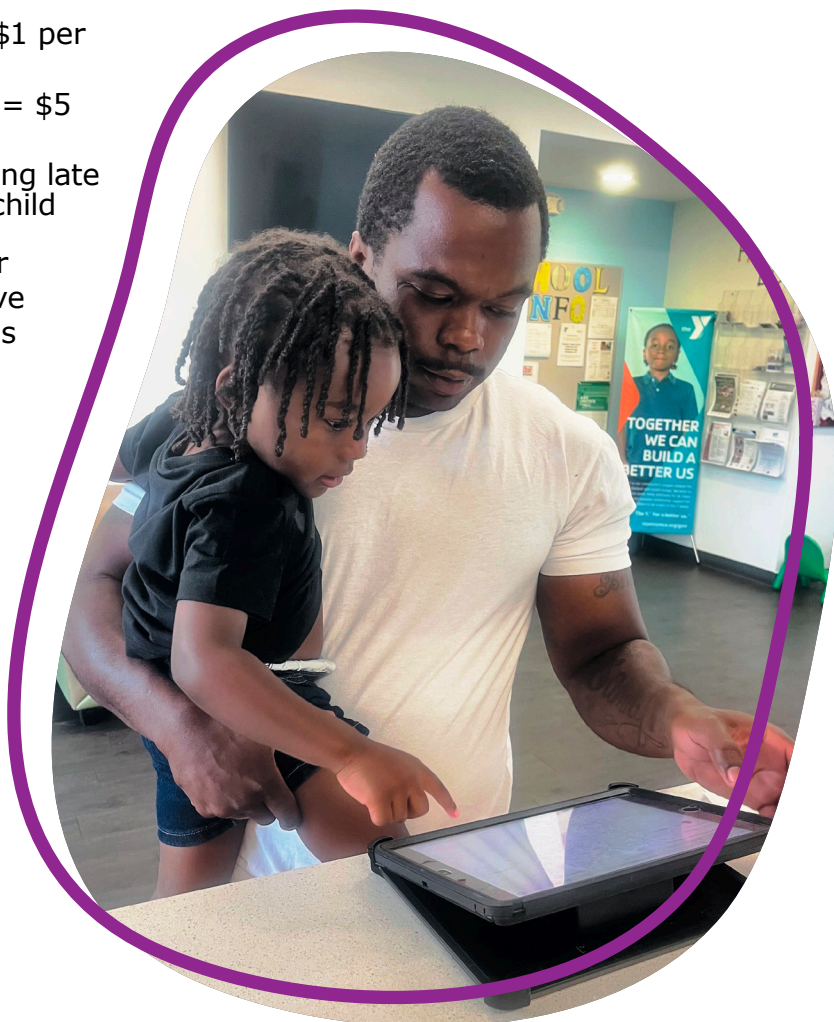
All children must be signed in by 9:00AM unless approved in advance by the director. Preschoolers must be dropped off and picked up at their classroom and/or the cafeteria. Please refer to breakfast times in the Meals section to ensure your child arrives in time to eat, if desired.

Pick Up

If you are running late to pick up your child from the program, please call to let the staff know. If you arrive after 6:00PM, whether you have called or not, you will be charged according to the following:

- First time being late = \$1 per minute, per child
- Second time being late = \$5 per minute, per child
- Third or more times being late = \$10 per minute, per child

Late fees will be added to your next tuition due date. Excessive tardiness, more than five times in the registration year, may result in the dismissal from the program. To avoid late fees, we strongly urge you to add multiple individuals authorized to pick up your child. Please remind any authorized individual that a valid photo ID is required to pick up your child. If your child has not been picked up by 6:30PM and we have not been able to reach a legal guardian or emergency contact, the police will be called for further assistance in locating an authorized pick-up person.



Absences

If your child will not be attending, please be sure to contact your child's school. It is permissible to leave a message. Please understand that we may not have time to call you back to confirm your message. If your child is not checked in for the day and we have not heard from you, we will call or email authorized individuals.

Holiday Closures

If these holidays fall on a weekday, our preschools will be closed. Please see Dates to Remember in the Registration Packet for complete details.

- New Year's Eve and New Year's Day
- Independence Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Labor Day
- Good Friday
- Thanksgiving and Black Friday
- Memorial Day
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Cancellation Policy

To cancel your child's enrollment before the program end date, you must submit an approved written request at least 14 days prior to the start of the week of care. Registration fees and any deposits paid (if applicable) are non-refundable.

You are responsible for ensuring your cancellation request is fully processed. This includes reviewing your bank or credit card statements to confirm that scheduled drafts have stopped. No refunds or credits will be issued for missed payments or cancellations that are not properly submitted.



Daily Procedures

Dress Code

It is important to send your child in comfortable play clothes. Closed-toe shoes are required. No flip flops, sandals, Crocs™ or hair beads. When skirts or dresses are worn, we ask that your child wears pants or shorts underneath.

Please send two extra full changes of clothes (in a labeled, clear plastic bag) to be kept at school in your child's cubby and used in the event of an accident, as well as a light sweater or jacket in case your child becomes cold in the classroom.



Toilet Training

Please provide disposable diapers or Pull-Ups® for your child. When you feel it is time to begin toilet training, please speak with your child's teacher. We will work with you on this important step in your child's development. During toilet training, please be sure to provide several changes of clothing, including training pants, pants, shirts, socks and an extra pair of shoes as shoes occasionally become wet from potty training accidents. Children should not be punished for accidents occurring during potty training, as they are learning to use the potty. We want to make this an enjoyable, rewarding transition in development and cheer the children on in achieving this developmental milestone.

Outdoor Play

We consider the outdoor environment as an extension of the classroom, where children have the opportunity to continue their learning outdoors at least twice a day, when possible. Outdoor play is a planned part of each day, weather permitting. Children are supervised at all times.

For staffing reasons, all children must go outside if they are in attendance for the day. We will not keep your child inside due to illness or threat of illness, or if they did not bring proper clothes for outside play. If they are well enough to come to the program, they are well enough to go outside. We will use extra clothing when we do go outside if your child needs it to be comfortable.

Nap/Rest Time

For Infants

Infant nap time is handled on an individual basis according to their schedule.

All infants under the age of 12 months will be placed flat on their backs for sleep in a safety-approved crib. If families request an alternative sleep position or another device/equipment for sleep, a written order with permission from a health care provider is required stating the medical reason and the time frame to follow the order. This includes swings, car seats, highchairs or other equipment not certified for infant sleep. Programs have the right to refuse care if they do not feel comfortable following the request.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends keeping soft objects and loose bedding (including blankets) out of the crib to reduce the risk of SIDS, suffocation, entrapment and strangulation for infants under the age of 12 months. Blankets, bumpers and mobiles are not permitted. In case of cold temperatures in the classroom, families of infants are asked to dress children in long sleeves or bring additional warm clothing to keep in the child's cubby. In addition, no hooded clothing or bibs are allowed at nap time.

With written permission, the provider may use a family-provided sleep sack and pacifier for your child. These items must not pose a suffocation risk to the infant in the crib while the infant is sleeping or preparing for sleep.

Sleep Sacks: Sleep sacks can be used. Once a child reaches two months of age and enters our care, only sleeveless sleep sacks should be used.

Pacifiers: The AAP recommends the use of pacifiers for sleep. Studies have reported a protective effect of pacifiers on the incidence of SIDS. The pacifier is not recommended to be attached to the infant's clothing or to a stuffed animal/toy. The pacifier should be checked for tears before use.

For Toddlers Through Five-Year-Olds

Rest time is important for a child's physical and mental health. Toddlers through five-year-olds will be given a rest period. The children are not required to sleep

but are required to lie down quietly. A cot and fitted sheets will be provided for each child. A small pillow and small blanket to cover the child must be provided by the family. All bedding will be sent home for laundering each week on Friday.



Cubbies

Each child is provided with a cubby for his or her belongings. All items from home must fit inside your child's cubby. Families of toddlers who use diaper bags are asked to take diaper bags home after placing items in the child's cubby and to return the bag on Friday for teachers to place bedding in to be laundered. Please return the bedding on the following Monday after laundering and label all items with your child's name. As stated in the "Nap/Rest Time" section, children should bring a small blanket to cover themselves for nap. All items must fit neatly inside the cubby.



Personal Items/ Electronic Devices

We want you and your child to have a positive experience in our YMCA program. Personal items such as cell phones, tablets, toys, games, trading cards, and other similar materials are not permitted. Varied activities are provided to keep your child engaged without these items. We also do not want your child's items to be lost, stolen or broken, as the YMCA will not be held responsible. Please have your child leave these items at home unless directed by YMCA staff.

Lost and Found

The YMCA is not responsible for lost or stolen items. We make every effort to help teach your child responsibility to keep all of their belongings in order. Any found items will be placed in the school's lost and found. Items not claimed within a reasonable amount of time will be donated.

Classroom Pets

Some sites may have small pets or fish in their classrooms or programs. You will be notified if your child's site has a pet. Please inform your child's caregiver if your child is allergic to any pet. Children may not bring their own pets for a visit unless they can show their pet has the proper vaccinations and there are no allergies in the classroom. Please contact the director for more information.

Nutrition

Meals/Snacks

YMCA Preschool Academies provide healthy meals when your child is developmentally ready for table food. Families of toddlers transitioning to table food may bring additional snacks as they may not eat the food the first time it is introduced. The staff will encourage the toddlers to taste the food provided and to feed themselves but understand that not all children will have the skill mastered when starting in the toddler classroom. Teachers will assist with feeding as needed.



We understand that starting a new school is stressful and may cause children not to eat until they have adjusted to the school. Families may speak with the director if special arrangements are necessary.

Lealman and Speer YMCA Preschool Academies:

- The Y provides a USDA-approved breakfast (served from 8:00AM until 8:30AM), lunch and snack daily. Menus are posted on a weekly basis.
- Food from home is not permitted once children are able to consume table food unless there is a doctor's note on file stating that the child has a medical condition and/or for religious reasons that YMCA Preschool Academies cannot accommodate.

Bardmoor YMCA Preschool Academy:

- The Y provides a healthy morning snack (served from 8:00AM until 8:30AM) and afternoon snack daily.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing their child with a packed lunch each day. Please label the lunchbox or bag with the child's first and last name, and be sure to include an ice pack to keep food temperature controlled.
- We ask that any food or drink follow the USDA guidelines, which include no candy or soda and to limit sugary snacks. You may request a copy of these guidelines or visit health.gov/dietaryguidelines or choosemyplate.gov.

Infant Feeding

YMCA Preschool Academies that offer infant care participate in the Child Care Food Program. Baby food and formula will be provided for infants upon request. Formula and food provided must meet nutritional requirements. We support and encourage mothers to breastfeed. Mothers may do so in the classroom and/or in a private designated area in the academy.

We will store breast milk according to best practices and guidelines:

- Refrigerated breast milk will only be stored for 24 hours
- Containers of breast milk stored at the academy must be labeled with the contents, the date milk was expressed and child's full name.

At six months we will serve breast milk and/or formula and add baby food to the infant's diet, with permission. At 12 months, it is recommended that whole milk be served, unless breastfeeding continues. Ultimately, the academy will support the family's decision on infant feeding choices.

All bottles and caps must be labeled with the child's first and last name and each bottle must have a cap. Dry formula should be premixed and poured into bottles, as the caregiver will not be responsible for mixing dry formula. Families who opt to have the YMCA provide formula must provide empty bottles labeled with the infant's full name. Bottles will be sent home daily for proper washing.

Outside Food

Please notify your child's teacher in advance of birthday parties. All items must be store-bought. Latex balloons are not permitted. Neither families nor caregivers are permitted to bring homemade treats or foods to the academy to share with the children. No fast food or food deliveries permitted. As child obesity and health issues such as diabetes and heart disease are on the rise, we encourage healthy treats for children.

Food Allergies

We are required to have a doctor's notification on file listing all food allergies your child may have. Please remember to list all allergies when filling out the registration packet, so we can make the appropriate accommodations to better serve your child.

Water Bottles

Each child is required to have a reusable water bottle labeled with first and last name. With water fountains unavailable, this measure guarantees easy access to water. We emphasize the importance of hydration by stipulating that only water, not juice, should be stored in these bottles. This policy promotes healthy habits and environmental consciousness while supporting optimal physical and cognitive function.

Health

Hand Washing Standards

To help control the spread of germs and disease, hands are washed:

- upon arrival to the classroom
- before and after all meals
- when dispensing medication
- before food preparation (including bottles)
- when setting tables
- after toileting or diapering
- after sneezing, coughing or wiping runny noses
- after playing outside or in the gym
- before and after using a sensory table



Sanitizing/Disinfecting

All toys are washed each week at a minimum or when dirty. Infant and toddler toys are sanitized after being mouthed. Toilets, sinks and bathrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily. Tables are sanitized before and after each meal. Blankets and sleep toys are sent home each week for cleaning. Cots are disinfected each week. Floors are swept, mopped and vacuumed daily.



First Aid/Accident Procedures

All staff are certified in first aid and CPR. We will provide basic first aid for your child if it is necessary. We will not remove splinters, wood ticks, etc. We will apply ice, clean the injured area as best as possible and apply a bandage if necessary. We are not able to put any creams, gels or any type of antibiotic ointments on the injury due to possible skin allergies and adverse reactions.

Incident Reporting

If your child is involved in an incident or accident, a staff member will complete an official report, which will be available when picking up your child. If you wish to have an in-depth discussion or meeting with your child's teacher regarding a report, we ask that you schedule a specific time frame.

Illnesses

It is common for children to be afflicted with childhood illnesses. If your child displays the following signs of illness they are not permitted to attend programming and should not return to school until they have been symptom-free for a full 24 hours without aid of medication:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or greater
- Sore throat or stiff neck
- Rash of any kind (until diagnosed, treated or declared harmless by a physician)
- Colds with a heavy colored nasal discharge
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Drainage from ears or eyes
- Two or more diarrhea incidents in one day (child must be free of diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to school)
- Vomiting (child must be free of vomiting for 24 hours before returning to school)
- Head lice or ringworm
- Signs of any communicable disease

If a child becomes ill while in our care, we will call the legal guardian first to pick up the child. If we cannot reach the guardian, we will call someone from the emergency pickup list. We ask that families take no longer than one hour to pick up the child as symptoms could worsen.

If your child is sent home ill, they will not be permitted back to the academy for 24 hours unless a doctor's note is received stating that the child is clear to return to school sooner.

Please inform the director if your child has been exposed to a communicable disease. Children must be able to participate in regular group activities. We are unable to keep ill children from participating in outdoor play.

Medications

Our Preschool Academies do not dispense medications except those needed for life-saving measures. In order for the Y to dispense (life-saving) medication for your child:

- a medication form must be filled out (ask your director for this form)
- medication must be in the original bottle with the doctor's prescription and the daily dosage indicated (staff will only administer medication according to dosage)
- medication must be prescribed for your child specifically
- the child's legal guardian must bring in the medication, give it to the staff member in charge and train the staff on how to properly administer it

Immunizations

All enrolled children are required to be up-to-date with their immunizations and families are expected to provide their child's immunization record. According to Pinellas County Licensing Board, childcare programs cannot refuse to provide care to unimmunized children who are otherwise eligible if the family presents a Religious Exemption from Immunization form, DH 681. Provided however, that whenever there is good cause to believe that a child is suffering from a recognized contagious or infectious disease, the unimmunized child may be temporarily excluded from the facility until the operator is satisfied that any contagious or infectious disease does not exist.





Behavior and Discipline

In keeping with the YMCA mission and character values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, appropriate behavior is expected of all program participants AND families. Respectful interactions with other participants and staff are essential to having a successful experience for all.

Youth Behavioral/Discipline Policies

Childcare personnel will use positive techniques such as redirection and collaboration between staff, families and educators to guide behaviors and set appropriate limits that encourage children to make positive choices. We do not put children in time out or use food as a reward/punishment.

Florida Department of Children and Families Statute on Discipline

As stated in Florida Statute 402.305: "Minimum standards for child discipline practices shall ensure that age-appropriate, constructive disciplinary practices are used for children in care. Such standards shall include at least the following requirements:

- 1 Children shall not be subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating or frightening.
- 2 Discipline shall not be associated with food, rest or toileting.
- 3 Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.

Prior to admission of a child to a childcare facility, the facility shall notify the family in writing of the disciplinary practices used by the facility.

Information on Biting

Children sometimes bite other children. Although not all children bite, biting is considered a normal stage in a child's development. Children may bite for a variety of reasons, rarely with the intent to hurt another child.

Karen Miller, author of *Things to Do with Toddlers and Twos*, suggests that children may bite for any of the following reasons:

- **Teething:** Toddlers are often cutting teeth and it hurts. Chewing on something relieves the itch and stops the pain for a moment.
- **Sensory Exploration:** Toddlers are very good at using all of their senses to learn about the world. The "oral mode," an important style of learning for infants, continues into toddlerhood. They bite everything, not just their playmates.
- **Cause and Effect:** Toddlers are eager explorers. They are constantly studying cause and effect. Biting produces a predictable response. Often, the response is dramatic: there is a lot of noise and attention from adults.
- **Self-Assertion:** This is probably the most common reason young children bite. It is a way to express frustration when they do not yet have the language skills to do so.

Our teachers act to reduce the number of biting incidents by providing access to teething toys, sensory exploration activities, opportunities to explore cause and effect, and offering toddlers options and alternatives to reduce frustrations.

When a child receives a bite, that child is immediately comforted, the bite is washed with soap and a bandage is applied if the skin is broken. The teacher will tell the child who bit, "It is not okay to bite. Biting hurts very much." If possible, the teacher will try to encourage the child who received the bite to express his/her feelings.

"It hurts," or "Don't bite me," are statements that teachers will model for the child to repeat. The teacher will then redirect the child to another area of the classroom.

Consistent with the CDC confidentiality policy, families are not told the name of the child who bit their child. The family of the child who bit is informed and works together with the teachers to help prevent further incidents of biting.

We recognize how upset families may be when they learn their child received a bite; however, we also recognize that biting is a normal component of child development. Despite our many concerted efforts to prevent biting incidents, they are bound to occur. Our program does not exclude children because of biting alone.

Please feel free to ask the staff any questions about young children biting. Families should understand and take comfort in knowing that biting is a normal stage in the course of a child's development and, like all stages, they will quickly outgrow it.

For more information on biting, we suggest reading the book *Things to Do with Toddlers and Twos* by Karen Miller.

Family Behavioral Policies

One of the goals of YMCA Preschool Academies is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of the Y but is the responsibility of every parent, guardian or adult who enters our facilities.

Families are required to abide by the YMCA Code of Conduct. **A current copy of the Code of Conduct can be found at www.stpeteymca.org.**

The YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg reserves the right to add to and/or change this code as deemed necessary. Families who violate the YMCA Code of Conduct will not be permitted on YMCA property thereafter.

Prohibited Behaviors

In addition to what is outlined in the YMCA Code of Conduct, the following behaviors are strictly prohibited:

- **Any acts of corporal punishment against children are not permitted.** While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for families to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Families are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.
- **Families are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own.** If a family witnesses another child behaving inappropriately or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for them to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or director.
- **It is inappropriate for one family to seek out another family to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior.** All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or director will address the issue with the other family. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our confidentiality policy.

Staff Behavioral Policies

YMCA staff sign a code of conduct, which outlines expectations for their behavior at work and in the community. Signing this document is a critical step in the protection of your child during our programs and in community social settings. YMCA staff members are required to abide by these guidelines or face termination.

To protect our organization, staff and participants, please do not ask YMCA staff to babysit, transport or otherwise be responsible for your child OUTSIDE of YMCA program time.

Additionally, staff are not permitted to engage with children online, so please do not exchange personal emails or phone numbers with staff.

Cultural Differences

The Y is made up of people of all ages, from all backgrounds, working side-by-side to strengthen our community. Together we work to ensure that everyone can reach their full potential with dignity. The Y is a place where all people are respected and welcome and receive what they need to thrive.

YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg is a non-partisan organization. We do not take public positions on partisan issues. We focus our energy and resources on our purpose: strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other.

At YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg, we are dedicated to fostering a culture that promotes the goals of accepting, respecting and valuing differences among all members, staff, volunteers and guests, and creates a welcoming environment to ensure the YMCA experience is open to all.

To the extent possible, the YMCA will make all efforts to provide program materials in the native language of our families.



Termination of Enrollment

In addition to behavioral issues, we reserve the right to terminate enrollment of a child for the following reasons including, but not limited to:

- Failure to pay tuition and fees
- Routinely late pick up
- Failure to complete the required forms
- Failure to update records that expire in a timely fashion
- Failure to adjust to the academy after a reasonable amount of time
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property
- Our inability to meet your child's needs
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations
- Serious illness of child

Measuring Success

Assessments/Screenings/Referrals

Assessment is an ongoing process at our academies and serves as a key resource for curriculum planning. We use a blend of informal and formal tools—including observations, anecdotal notes, screenings, conferences and samples of children’s work—conducted in natural settings to minimize disruption.

Teachers also gather insights through daily interactions, assessing children’s physical and social-emotional development to ensure they are meeting milestones or to identify areas needing additional support.

Assessment results are shared with families to track progress and guide curriculum decisions, helping each child reach their educational goals.

Families and teachers collaborate together to plan activities to assist children with developmental delays. These activities should be implemented both at home and at school. All children who participate in the Florida VPK program will be assessed according to VPK guidelines. Referrals may be made by the YMCA Preschool Academy staff, with legal guardian authorization, for children who may have developmental delays.

If it is found that a child has a delay, your child’s teacher or director will provide referral information to Early Steps or Florida Diagnostic & Learning Resources System (FDLRS). Once the agency is contacted, a representative will provide families with information outlining services and/or resources available. Intervention services from speech-language or occupational therapists may be conducted during the day while the children are at the academy.





Family Participation

Families Are Welcome at Any Time!

If you wish to assist your child's teacher by sharing a book, helping with mealtime or participating in special events, your help would be greatly appreciated. Family participation is the key to a child's academic success. Please join us for family meetings, holiday performances and events. **During hours of operation, the YMCA has an open-door policy.**

Conferences/Progress Notes

Conferences or meetings may be called at the request of the program staff or the family. Family/teacher conferences will be offered two times per year to review your child's progress. Although our staff would love to visit with you daily, it may not always be possible as they may be gone for the day or working with other children. If you have a specific question or concern, please contact your child's teacher or director.





Family Information Boards

A family information board is displayed at each academy and/or in each classroom. These boards are a wealth of information about our programs, safety information, upcoming events and highlights from your program/classroom.

Lesson Plans



Lesson plans are available in print for families and are posted in the classroom, along with a monthly calendar of events. This is a great extension to the child's learning and helps you make the important connection between home and school.

Community Partners/Resources

Through partnerships with the Early Learning Coalition of Pinellas County, Juvenile Welfare Board and the Pinellas County Licensing Board, YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg Preschool Academies are able to provide families with information about programs and services for families. Our staff support and encourage all efforts to negotiate health, mental health, screenings, assessments and education services, including culturally and linguistically appropriate services, for their children and will assist the process in any way possible.

Please ask for a current list of community resources.

Grievance Procedure

If you have a grievance concerning something regarding our program, you should refer to the following procedure. If you do not feel that you have reached satisfaction, then you must continue through the process stopping when you feel you have satisfaction on the matter.

- Teacher or Assistant Teacher of your child, as appropriate
- Preschool Assistant Director
- Preschool Academy Director
- Executive Director of Early Childhood Education

Safety

Active Supervision

Our program is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all children through the practice of active supervision. Active supervision is the focused, intentional and continual observation of young children by educators and program staff. This approach ensures that children of all ages can safely explore and engage with their learning environments. Staff remain alert, position themselves strategically and interact with children to anticipate and prevent potential safety concerns, fostering a secure and supportive space for learning and development.

Emergency Procedures

In case of an emergency, you will be called. If our program staff is not able to reach you, we will attempt to notify the emergency contact(s) indicated on your child's authorized form.

Medical Emergencies

A form authorizing emergency medical care for your child is signed at the time of enrollment. If we feel the child needs medical attention and we are unable to reach the family or emergency contacts, we will call EMS to transport them for further medical attention.

Fire or Weather

Fire and severe weather drills are conducted on a monthly basis to ensure that children know what to do in emergency situations. If you would like to familiarize yourself with such procedures, emergency evacuation routes are posted in each classroom.

In severe weather conditions, we follow Pinellas County Public Schools' decision to close. If Pinellas County Public Schools are closed in anticipation of a natural disaster, YMCA Preschool Academies will also be closed. After the all-clear is given, YMCA Preschool Academies will re-open for business as soon as the building is in operable condition. Families will be notified when the facility is safe to re-open.

Building Evacuations

In the case of a mandatory evacuation of the building, teachers and students will relocate and families will be contacted and notified of the relocation address. Families will be contacted and expected to pick up the children within the hour. Teachers are provided with each child's emergency documentation in case an emergency prohibits reentry to the building.

Child Abuse Prevention

Our Commitment

Serving the youth in our community is a vital part of our mission, and we are committed to creating a safe environment for the thousands of children and teens we serve every year. At our Y, we take the following actions to keep kids safe in our facilities and programs:

- All Ys in the U.S. are required to implement child sexual abuse prevention practices and policies to remain a member in good standing with the National Council of YMCAs.
- We engage external experts in abuse prevention.
- We partner with passionate local Y leaders who facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

We also practice and advocate for the three habits of child abuse prevention: KNOW. SEE. RESPOND. Because when we know and understand how abuse happens, see the warning signs, and are prepared to respond quickly to prevent it, we create a culture of child abuse prevention that results in even safer environments for kids to reach their full potential.

Learn more at stpeteymca.org/childabuseprevention.

Reporting Procedures

When there is suspicion of child abuse or neglect, 911 or Child Protective Services and the Department of Children and Families must be notified immediately. Any evidence of unusual bruises, contusions, lacerations or burns found during the informal health check shall be noted on the child's record and reported immediately to the director. The YMCA will follow the procedures below:

- Fill out an incident report with the facts.
- Notify the director.
- The director will immediately notify 911 or Child Protective Services. This agency will conduct the investigation and give further instructions.
- In the event the reported incident involves an employed staff person or volunteer, the director, after consulting with the Executive Director of Early Childhood Education would, without exception, suspend the person from all activities involving the supervision of children until an investigation is completed.
- Regardless of where or under what circumstances the alleged incident took place, if an employed staff person is involved, it will be considered job related and affecting job performance. Reinstatement of a staff person or volunteer will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the responsible director and the investigating agency.
- All staff and volunteers will be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of information in this area and will be instructed to discuss matters pertaining to abuse or suspected abuse only with the director.



KNOW



SEE



RESPOND

Confidentiality

All information received by YMCA Preschool Academies is held in confidence and will not be released to any unauthorized party. Inquiries made by regulatory authorities, child's legal guardians and authorized staff will have immediate access to view children's files. The faculty and staff are mandated to report any abuse and neglect suspicions. Any suspicion of abuse will be reported to the director; however, staff may contact the Abuse Hotline to report suspicions of abuse independently. If you suspect child abuse and/or neglect, you may contact the Child Abuse Hotline at 1.800.962.2873.

Court-Ordered Documents

At the time of enrollment, legal guardians must provide all court-ordered paperwork if any parties are not able to have contact with a child enrolled in the YMCA program. Paperwork must be an official court-ordered document and indicate who is the primary residential guardian or if multiple individuals have shared custody. These documents must be updated annually. It is not the responsibility of the YMCA to track visitation days.





No Idling Policy

We have committed to reduce vehicle idling at our facilities. When parking at the YMCA, please turn your vehicle off. This will help reduce exposure to exhaust fumes that can enter our building. Do not leave children unattended in vehicles.

Photos/Social Media

The YMCA does not condone posting pictures of children without written permission from a legal guardian. For privacy purposes, we ask that you not post pictures of children from our programs on your social media platforms. These pictures may be taken innocently at school and program events, but not all families provide photo release consent.

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/stpeteymcayouth and on Instagram @stpeteymca.

Sex Offenders

The YMCA reserves the right to deny access or membership to any person who has been accused or convicted of any crime involving sexual abuse or is or has been a registered sex offender. The YMCA conducts regular sex offender screenings on all staff, members, participants and guests.

Sex offenders are not allowed into our Preschool Academies regardless if they are a legal guardian or relative. It is the guardian's responsibility to ensure there are an adequate number of approved individuals authorized to drop off and pickup.

Smoke-Free Policy

Smoking and e-cigs are prohibited on YMCA and school property. This includes vaping.

Weapons Policy

The YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg prohibits carrying concealed weapons of any kind at YMCA facilities and on YMCA grounds. Examples include:

- Firearms (pistols, revolvers, shotguns, rifles and BB guns)
- Knives (switchblades, gravity knives or any knife with a blade longer than three inches)
- Metal knuckles
- Bows and arrows
- Tasers

LOCATIONS

Bardmoor YMCA Preschool Academy

8495 Bryan Dairy Rd., Largo, FL 33777

727.565.4414 | License # 52-51-1532944

Hours: 7:00AM - 6:00PM; VPK 9:00AM - Noon

Kierstin Wimberly, Academy Director

727.895.9622 x5213 | kwimberly@stpeteymca.org

Lealman YMCA Preschool Academy

5175 45th Street North, St. Petersburg, FL 33714

727.205.3115 | License # 52-51-1841985

Hours: 7:00AM - 6:00PM

Infant care 7:30AM - 5:30PM; VPK 9:00AM - Noon

Tracey Frank, M.Ed., Executive Director, Early Childhood Education

727.895.9622 x2220 | tfrank@stpeteymca.org

Speer YMCA Preschool Academy

2100 26th Ave. South, St. Petersburg, FL 33712

727.822.2156 | License # 52-51-1486743

Hours: 7:00AM - 6:00PM

Infant care 7:30AM - 5:30PM; VPK 9:00AM - Noon

Geneka Fields, Academy Director

727.895.9622 x3004 | gfields@stpeteymca.org

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