

# **Family YMCA of the Desert**

## **Early Childhood Education Program**

### **Parent Handbook**

#### **2020-2021**



**Family YMCA of the Desert**  
**43-930 San Pablo Ave.**  
**Palm Desert, CA 92260**  
**760-341-9622**  
[www.ymcaofthedesert.org](http://www.ymcaofthedesert.org)

#### **Proudly Serving Families at the Following Locations:**

**Doris Mechanick CDC**  
**44-700 Arabia Street**  
**Indio, CA 92201**  
**760-347-6698**

**Jean Benson CDC**  
**75-433 Orange Blossom Ln.**  
**Palm Desert, CA 92211**  
**760-836-3336**

**La Quinta CDC**  
**49-955 Moon River Dr.**  
**La Quinta, CA 92253**  
**760-564-2848**

*The Mission Statement of the Family YMCA of the Desert : "To put Judeo-Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all."*

*Effective July 1 2020*

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

# **Family YMCA of the Desert – Early Childhood Education Program**

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## About Us:

# The Family YMCA of the Desert Early Childhood Education Program

### Welcome

Welcome to the ECE program of the YMCA! We have three wonderful child development centers to serve your family located in Palm Desert, La Quinta and Indio. We provide a safe and a quality learning environment which provides optimum learning opportunities for your child. We are delighted you will be participating in our program. This Parent Handbook has been designed to give you an overview of our policies and procedures, and to explain our approach to planning educational experiences for children.

We believe children learn through play and active involvement with people, places, and things. Our curriculum is designed to be appropriate for the developmental capabilities of each child, and is implemented with attention to children's differing needs, interests, and the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of our families. Our goal is to partner with you as your child grows, and to provide the best possible environment for your child to learn and explore. If you ever have any questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions please contact us. Our goal is to work together, as a team, to provide a positive learning experience for your child, and support your family's needs in every way that we can.

Our staff members are experienced educators who strive to remain up to date to the changing needs of children and families. For the safety of your child, we follow Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing regulations that require staff members to complete a thorough background screening, which includes screening for criminal records. All staff members are required to obtain a health screening, T.B. test clearance and maintain current immunizations as required by law. We welcome the enrollment of children with disabilities, and understand the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make reasonable accommodations. What we expect of parents and guardians is that you read the handbook, notices and newsletters that we send to you. We also want you to feel free to be part of our ECE program, by volunteering, offering suggestions, comments and moral support. The YMCA has an open-door policy which allows parents to observe the program during any time of the day. Although the health and safety protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic may limit visitors at times, please reach out to staff at any time if you wish to virtually visit your child's class, or have any communication needs that we can work with you to address.

### Purpose

The primary goal of our ECE program is to provide a quality early childhood education program for your child to learn and grow according to his/her own maturity level. We provide a safe learning environment for all children and a place where children will learn through play. The emphasis of the learning activities we offer are Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) individualized to meet the needs of each learner.

### Philosophy

We, the staff of the ECE program, believe that...

- Children learn best when they are actively engaged in their daily experiences with materials and people in a safe, loving and nurturing environment.
- Children develop and learn according to their own maturity level in the areas of Language Development, Social – Emotional Development, Cognition, and Motor Skills. Setting an inviting environment with activities that are developmentally appropriate is key to promote learning that challenges children.
- Modeling positive guidance and discipline techniques guide children to control their behavior. These intervention strategies teach children to work out conflicts on their own rather than solely relying on teachers to

assist with managing behaviors. Staff members are proactive by arranging the learning environment and foresee possible conflicts, rather than react to situations.

- All children are unique individuals and deserve respect as a child and as a person.
- All children should be able to relate and to be proud of their own culture, as well as respect and relate to other cultures around them.

### *Program Goals and Objectives*

Our goals and objectives as early childhood educators are to contribute to your child's overall development. We are sensitive to the fact that developmental ability and personalities can vary widely at any age. We help children to build social skills and self-control and by working with your child, taking turns, working in a group, learning to follow rules and sharing. We respect multiple learning styles and use a wide range of teaching methodologies so that all children are able to grow physically, emotionally, socially, and mentally. We respect all families as they are key members of the educational team.

In order to attain the above goals, the staff will help children:

- Gain pride in their own cultural background
- Learn to work and play independently and with others by valuing one's own rights and the rights of others
- Develop self-identity and a view of themselves as having competence and worth
- Realize many opportunities to strive and succeed physically, intellectually and socially
- To wonder, to seek answers, to question, to explore and to be curious while exploring their environment
- To strengthen physical skills, using large and small muscles
- To offer learning experiences through play to enrich lives of children
- Explore creativity, science, music, drama, health, safety, sports, games, and multicultural activities, etc.
- Grow in the ability to express feelings effectively
- To be partners with our parents for the well-being of their child(ren)

### *Program Adaptations due to COVID-19 and/or other Emergencies*

At this time, we have adapted certain aspects of program in order to prioritize the heightened health and safety practices that minimize risk to all participants. We are guided by Community Care Licensing, the California Department of Education, and Riverside County of Health. Families will continue to receive prompt updates when any of our practices are revised. Our goal is to keep our services open and available to the community, as an essential service, and thus we follow the strictest recommendations for group childcare. At any time, please reach out to the Program Director Robin McConnell (760-341-9622, [rmcconnell@desertymca.org](mailto:rmcconnell@desertymca.org)) with any questions about our current safety and health practices.

### *Character Development*

The YMCA of the USA is introducing a recommitment to character development. The YMCA maintains that families are the key to character development. Parents and other caring adults have the primary responsibility to teach their children the values they feel are important.

The YMCA will support families in character development by challenging children to accept and demonstrate positive values. We will do this by providing an environment, role models, and activities conducive to character development. We will keep parents informed and involved. We will also challenge all adults to be positive role models and values educators.

The YMCA has adopted the following four values: **Honesty, Caring, Respect** and **Responsibility**. Children will learn about these principles through various elements of the curriculum and through reciting of the Character Pledge before snacks and meals.

The YMCA challenges all families to demonstrate Honesty, Caring, Respect and Responsibility. We also promote health and wellness in our daily activities through our lessons and meals. We request that parents partner with us in modeling our character values and healthy habits at home to strengthen the home-school connection.

### *Ensuring Program Access for All Children*

The Family YMCA of the Desert does not discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender, ethnic group identification, race, ancestry, national origin, religion, color, or mental or physical disability, in determining which children are served. The program refrains from religious instruction or worship. Questions regarding this policy may be directed to the Program Director at 760-341-9622.

The Family YMCA of the Desert, in keeping with its mission to help all people realize their fullest potential, encourages and supports the participation of all children in YMCA Early Childhood Education program. Consideration is given to the individual needs of every child and the reasonable ability of the program to meet those needs.

It is essential that all pertinent information about the child's needs be available to staff from enrollment and that a continuing bond of trust and mutual partnership exists for the benefit of the child. A parent has the obligation to disclose significant medical, physical and behavioral issues at the time of the child's enrollment and on an ongoing basis. If necessary, a meeting with the Program Director will take place prior to the start of the child participating in the program.

### *Types of Programs and Locations*

1. California State Preschool Program (ALL DAY, AM & PM) – Doris Mechanick Child Development Center, Indio
2. All Day Preschool, Part Day Preschool and California State Preschool Program (ALL DAY) - Jean Benson Child Development Center, Palm Desert
3. All Day Preschool, Part Day Preschool, School Age Care (Kinder-5<sup>th</sup> Grade), and California State Preschool Program (AM & PM) - La Quinta Child Development Center, La Quinta

**\*\*Please note that due to the ever-changing situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, not all schedules or program types may be available at all times during the 2020-21 program year. At time of enrollment staff at the site will be able to advise you of your enrollment options, and there will be a waitlist for any alternate program type/schedule not being offered at that time. \***

## Financial Policies and Procedures

### Registration

#### 1. Registration Options:

- a. You may choose a full time or part time schedule ( 3 or 5 days per week).
- b. If your child is enrolled in the part day state preschool program there is an option to enroll in “wrap around” care which provides care for the time your child is not in the state preschool program. (This program is only 5 half days per week available at La Quinta only).
- c. The 3 day options have limited space available.

2. A non-refundable, non-transferable annual registration fee of **\$150.00** is charged annually for the first child within the family, \$50 for the second child and no fee for the third or more enrolled. A re-enrollment fee of **\$55.00** per child is charged if your child drops from the program for any length of time and re-enrolls within the registration year.

- a. Fees cover the operation of the center, facility rental, staff salaries, supplies, curriculum materials, water, electricity, etc. This fee also includes a YMCA membership that entitles you to various benefits throughout the year. Timely childcare payments are necessary so that we can continue to give the quality child care our children deserve.

3. The registration packet must be completed before the first day of attendance for your child to attend our program.

4. The Site Supervisor is available to discuss policies and procedures of the program.

5. A physical exam must be completed and up to date immunization record must be available at the time of enrollment.

### Payment Schedule

Payments are due according to the terms of your signed admission agreement.

A lockout is the term used to describe termination from the program due to failure to pay tuition fees according to policies and procedures. Three (3) lockouts on any family’s account (may be over a multi-year period), may result in termination from YMCA programs.

We accept check, money order and credit card at the sites. Cash payments are no longer accepted.

Visit our website at [www.ymcaofthedesert.org](http://www.ymcaofthedesert.org) to pay online and view other exciting programs.

**Parents/ guardians receiving Third Party assistance through the state or other agency are responsible for all fees not paid by the Third Party Agency.**

**It is imperative that Third Party Participants sign the daily attendance completely and accurately (i.e. stating the reason for the absence when absent) on the specified sign-in sheet. It is the parent’s responsibility to review the accuracy of attendance and absence each month and sign off the attendance sheet at the end of the month. This has a direct impact on the continuation of your approved services by the third party agency.**

Once you choose the days of attendance it is expected that you pay the fees in full as we reserve the available space for your child. Adjustments to fees will not be made.

### ***Financial Assistance***

Applications are available to all participants in need of financial assistance for registration and/or program fees.

**Financial Assistance is reviewed annually.** Individuals may be asked to provide the YMCA with current financial information during the term of their financial assistance agreement. Recipients of financial assistance are expected to keep their accounts current or risk losing their assistance. Financial Assistance is limited to funds available. It is your responsibility to re-apply for financial assistance at the end of each term.

### ***Sibling Discount***

A 10% discount is offered to families who have two or more children enrolled in YMCA Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs and/or YMCA Licensed Childcare programs. The 10% discount will be applied to the child enrolled in our ECE programs. This discount is currently unavailable for programs other than ECE programs. The 10% discount is only valid for families receiving no other discounts, including, but not limited to financial assistance, staff discount, and/or third party participation.

### ***Returned Checks***

There is a \$25.00 service fee for all returned checks. The second time that a check is returned, all future fees must be paid with a money order or credit card.

### ***Payments for Vacation / Sick Time***

There are no adjustments to the monthly/weekly fees for absence or non-participation. Payment is still required. There are no fee credits or adjustment made for vacations, illness of participants or days which the provider is closed.

### ***Childcare Expense and Tax Reporting***

As a licensed childcare, expenses for the year can be claimed as a valid tax expense. Our tax ID number is 95-3673295.

### ***Email Billing***

The Family YMCA of the Desert's Early Childhood Education Program bills via email, and therefore a correct and current email address for the responsible party must always be on file. If you would prefer to receive a paper bill, attached to your child's sign in/out sheet, please speak to your site staff. You have the right to change your preferred method of billing at any time.

### ***Refund Policy***

Refunds are only given if the YMCA cancels a program. There are no credits given for illness, vacation or other personal reasons. When I register, I am reserving the time, space and staffing whether or not my child attends.

## Operational Policies and Procedures

### *Family YMCA of the Desert Early Childhood Education Preschool Program Policies*

1. Files are maintained on each child for health and attendance purposes.
2. Files pertaining to eligibility standards and family service records are kept confidential with limited access in secured files.
3. Attendance is taken on a daily basis.
4. Every child is treated with respect and dignity.
5. The program refrains from religious worship or instruction.

### *Contract Hours / Days of Operations*

Days of Operation: Monday - Friday 7:00am – 6:00pm

\*\*Due to Covid-19 operating hours have been slightly reduced to ensure adequate staffing dedicated to each group of children, and to manage increased sanitizing practices. Resuming our regular hours of service is the goal, however, and families will be informed at each site as soon as this is possible.\*\*

### *Group Size and Staffing*

Currently, to minimize risk during COVID-19, groups will be comprised as small as possible, typically ten children with two teachers assigned to each group of ten. Siblings will be placed in the same group to fullest extent possible. Groups are stable and do not combine with other groups at any point of the day, inside or outside. An additional staff member is assigned to support each group with cleaning, sanitizing, and acts as designated substitute should one of the teachers be absent. These measures limit children's exposure to other households, and allow us to control contact spread should anyone amongst staff or families become ill. Changes to our group size and staffing arrangements will be communicated promptly to families whenever we are able to change them.

### *Physical Distancing and Activities Guidance*

Currently our classrooms have been adapted to minimize the amount of shared materials. Children are reminded to practice physical distancing to the fullest extent possible. Social engagement is critical to the benefit of early care, so as we increase the safety of all with physical distance, we also focus on increasing the wellness of all through social connection, continuing to foster each child's overall development through responsive care. Materials in the classroom are organized in creative ways to limit the sharing by the group. Some harder-to-clean materials have been stored away, some organized in individual sets of ten labeled for each child. Children rotate through play centers to manage overcrowding in each area. Items used in the morning are removed and washed and sanitized at midday. Items used in the afternoon are washed and sanitized at end of day.

### *Vacations/Holidays*

Child Development Centers will be closed in the observance of the following holidays:

Independence Day -	July 3, 2020 (Friday)
Labor Day -	September 7, 2020 (Monday)
Veteran's Day -	November 11, 2020 (Wednesday)
Thanksgiving Day & Day after -	November 26 & 27, 2020 (Thursday and Friday)
Christmas Eve & Christmas Day -	December 24 & 25, 2020 (Thursday and Friday)
New Year's Day -	January 1, 2021 (Thursday & Friday)
President's Day -	February 15, 2021 (Monday)
Memorial Day -	May 25, 2021 (Monday)

### *Enrollment Procedure*

Parents are required to complete a registration packet to enroll your child at the YMCA Early Childhood Education Program. Your child will not be permitted to start the program unless the packet is complete and accurate. Registration packets are required to be updated annually. It is the parent's responsibility to keep all information current and

updated, such as change of address, emergency contacts, telephone numbers, etc. A Change of Information form is available for parents to update information. \*\*The Jean Benson Child Development Center offers priority enrollment to residents of the Desert Rose HOA community, and to families living in Palm Desert in our Early Childhood program classrooms. \*\*

### ***Signing In and Out Procedures***

A parent or designated person, who is at least 18 years of age, must sign the child in when brought to the center. **SIGN IN INCLUDES FULL NAME, THE EXACT TIME, AND MUST BE LEGIBLE** on the attendance sheets provided. This is in compliance with Title 22 Licensing Regulations 101226.1 (b) and 101229.1 (a.1). The same process must be completed when picking the child up.

### ***Authorization to Pick Up Children***

No child will be released to a person not authorized by a parent to pick up the child. **We must have written authorizations for persons picking up children who are not on the child's authorization list.** Parents will be asked to list persons authorized when they register their child at the center.

### ***Divorce/Separation***

In the case of separation/divorce, court documents must be provided to inform the site of custodial rights and days and if the non-custodial parent may pick up the child. No changes to the pick up authorization form will be accepted by phone. Restraining orders must be on file in our office. In the event that custody is shared jointly, children will be released to either parent and to any adult listed on the emergency card provided by either parent. Should disagreements arise between the parents, related to issues of who may pick-up the child; staff will follow any procedures outlined in court orders.

**ONLY** persons authorized in **WRITING** by the **PARENT** may pick up a child. This is for the child's protection. The staff will question anyone who is unfamiliar to them and check their ID and authorization to pick up a child. They will be stopped from taking the child if there isn't written authorization on file. If someone not on the authorization list is planning to pick a child up, the parent must notify the Site Supervisor both verbally and in writing.

**Reminder** - Only written authorization will be accepted along with verbal verification from the parent. Staff will require that the person picking up the child show proper (photograph) identification at time of pick up.

### ***Morning Drop Off and Afternoon Pick Up Procedures***

Drop off and pick up are currently taking place outside the site buildings during specific windows of time. Staff wear personal protective equipment for check in, and conduct a health screening of each child prior to being admitted for the day. This includes a temperature check using non-touch thermometer, and screening questions. Health policies are described in more detail elsewhere in this handbook, and are subject to change based on the evolving situation of COVID-19. Please ensure you allow adequate time for drop off procedures with your child each morning.

### ***Daily Absences***

If a child is going to be absent the parent must call the appropriate child development center as soon as it is known that the child will not be attending. Fees must be paid even when your child is absent as we reserve this space.

### ***Late Pick Ups***

Children need to be picked up on time every day. Excessive late pick-ups will result in termination of all child care services. **After the closing time there will be a late charge of \$1.00 for each minute until the child is picked up.** This fee must be paid the following school day. Checks are to be made payable to the Family YMCA of the Desert. Should a parent fail to pick up their child (ren) by closing time the staff will attempt to call those listed on the emergency form. After ONE (1) HOUR, the proper authorities will be called and the child will be released to their care.

### ***Emergency Information***

REMEMBER if you or anyone on your authorization form changes jobs, offices, moves, etc. you must notify the Administrative Assistant or Site Supervisor and fill out a new Emergency Information Form with new address, phone numbers, etc. as soon as possible. This information is vital and needs to be kept current in case of an emergency or if staff needs to contact you. A Change of Information Form is available at all centers.

### ***Release of Children's Records***

Copies of children's records ( i.e. sign in/out sheets, physicals, registration forms, etc.) can only be released to parents who have legal custody of enrolled children, unless a court order states otherwise.

The child's file is available for review by the Department of Social Services, Child Protective Services, Law Enforcement Personnel, Community Care Licensing, California Department of Education and/or authorized YMCA staff. We value your privacy and will restrict access to your child's file to only those necessary to ensure the safety of your child.

### ***Withdrawing from the Program***

To withdraw from the program, one week's written notice is required to be given to the Administrative Assistant or Site Supervisor specifying the last day of attendance by completing the *ECE Change of Care Form*. If this is not done, you will be charged one week's tuition.

### ***Licensing and Regulations***

Child Development Centers of the Family YMCA of the Desert are licensed by the State Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing and follow Title 22 regulations which establish health and safety standards for child care centers. A licensing analyst has the authority to inspect the facility and interview children in care. The findings of each visit are posted on the parent bulletin board or a copy can be requested from Site Supervisors and/or the Program Director.

### ***Grievance Procedures***

If a problem or complaint should arise, please speak to your Site Supervisor. If the problem is not resolved with the Site Supervisor, please contact the Program Director at (760) 341-9622.

### ***Open Door Policy***

Our Centers have an open door policy and we urge you to visit the classrooms any time and volunteer in whatever capacity you feel is appropriate for you. Volunteer possibilities include helping with the daily classroom routine, sharing special activities (music, art, cooking), and/or collecting classroom resources. Please note that classroom volunteers (including parents) are required to provide proof of immunizations according to California law, and need to follow Family YMCA procedures for clearances of all volunteers. Please see your Site Supervisor for more information.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual volunteering or visits to classrooms may be arranged in lieu of in person visits.

### ***Staff Providing Child Care***

All YMCA staff working directly with children are required to take training beyond their current education and experience in child abuse prevention and positive guidance within the first 30 (thirty) days of employment and annual retraining are required. As part of our policies on the protection of children, staff is not allowed to relate to members/participants outside of the YMCA programs. Please do not put staff in a difficult position by asking them to provide personal childcare or engage in any other outside events.

### ***Confidentiality***

All information is held in strict confidence. No information will be released without the prior written permission of the parent. Authorized information will be for the sole purpose of administration and teaching staff of the center, unless requested and/or authorized in writing by the parent or legal guardian.

### ***Mandated Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting***

Legislation (AB-2710, Chapter 1718, States of 1984) requires that any person who enters into employment in a capacity in which they are required by law to report known or suspected cases of child abuse must sign a statement, to be provided by the employer, indicating knowledge of an agreement to comply with child abuse reporting requirements.

Under the law, mandated reporters are required to report any reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Family YMCA of the Desert are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of Family YMCA of the Desert are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the law, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Family YMCA of the Desert take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The law is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Family YMCA of the Desert cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith." Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child's body
- Severe verbal reprimands
- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation

In addition, if social workers or other designated employees from Child Protective Services wish to interview your child at our facility, we are required by law to allow them to do so. Notification to parents that such an interview took place is not required.

### ***Religious Instruction***

The program refrains from religious instruction or worship in all classrooms.

### ***Sexual Harassment***

Family YMCA of the Desert prohibits any form of discrimination including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is abusive and illegal behavior that harms victims and negatively impacts the YMCA's culture by creating an environment of fear, distrust and intolerance. In order to provide a safe and healthy environment, we provide an educational and employment environment free from sexual harassment.

### ***Photographic Release/Consent***

Family YMCA of the Desert may take photographs / videos of the children and families for instructional, training and promotional purposes. Children take pride in seeing their pictures of themselves engaged in classroom activities. This is a very powerful motivator for learning. These pictures / videos may be posted on our web site or social media sites and may also be used for publicity purposes.

If you do not wish for us to take and/or publish photographs / videos, a request in writing must be given to the Site Supervisor. However, the Family YMCA of the Desert is not responsible for any photographs / videos that may be taken / published by other program participants (i.e. parents, grandparents, etc).

### ***Learning Genie***

Families will be provided information on how to sign up for Learning Genie, the free parent app, upon enrollment. Learning Genie is a key tool of communication between you and your child's teachers, and updates and resources from your preschool will be sent regularly. The app translates messages for the receiver into your preferred home language, if desired. If it is not possible for you to set up a Learning Genie account, please inform your site staff so we can keep you informed about your child and preschool events via an alternate method.

## **Attendance Policy – Applicable to Third Party Attendees**

Your child will have a more fulfilling experience if he/she is here for their entire school day. It is important that your child attend class every day so that he/she may take full advantage of what the program has to offer. It is essential that the child is present on the days he/she is designated to attend. It is therefore unfair to the children on the waiting list to continue to serve children with poor and or irregular attendance or tardiness. To provide delivery of services, the following absentee policy will be implemented.

### ***Absences***

Call as soon as you know your child will be absent. It is imperative that Third Party participants monitor excused and unexcused absences and state the reason for the absence on the specified sign-in sheet. It is the parent's responsibility to review the accuracy of absences each month and sign off on the attendance sheet at the end of each month. This has a direct impact on the continuation of your approved services by the third party agency. Please talk to your Site Supervisor if you have specific questions or need assistance in filling out the attendance sheet.

### ***Providing Approval Certificates and Sign-In and Out Sheets***

It is the parent's responsibility to make sure that the site has current, approved certificates from their third party agency. Failure to provide appropriate certificates may lead to program termination and the responsibility to pay tuition not covered by your third party agency.

Some agencies provide the Provider Invoice / Sign-In Sheet directly to the parent. In this case, it is the parent's responsibility to give the invoice to the Site Supervisor in a timely manner. The Site Supervisor has the right to suspend care until the Provider Invoice / Sign-In Sheet is turned in to the site.

## Classroom Policies

### *First Day*

We suggest you plan on spending at least 15 minutes with your child on the first day. Spend some time “checking out the room” with your child and help him/her get involved with the activities and children. When you need to leave, tell your child good-bye calmly, then go. A prolonged farewell often increases anxiety and sneaking out tends to scare the child and cause mistrust. Our teachers will be especially attentive to your child on their first day and during the transition period in order to help your child become part of the group.

### *Curriculum*

The YMCA believes that all children should be provided with a nurturing, active, and challenging environment that encourages curiosity, hands-on learning activities, problem-solving skills, language development and a positive self-image. The curriculum is aligned with the CA State Department of Education Preschool Learning Foundations and Curriculum Framework which guides teachers in supporting and extending each child’s development and learning to establish a strong foundation for future learning. All instructional practice is supported by current educational research and best practice for Early Childhood Education.

The curriculum embraces children’s natural curiosity and encourages them to explore, play and engage with the world around them. Activities are organized into three ways of learning:

- Large group instruction – circle time and story time experiences
- Small group instruction – directed activities that build knowledge and skills in curriculum areas
- Learning centers – intentional play, social interactions, child-initiated learning opportunities, exploration and skill generalization.

### *Quality Start Initiative*

The Family YMCA of the Desert’s three preschool centers participate in Quality Start Riverside County. To be a participant, a preschool program must undergo a comprehensive review process and be able to meet certain criteria for high-quality preschools. The Quality Start Initiative provides one-of-a-kind support to preschool programs by giving them tools they need to improve quality for children, such as:

- External reviews to evaluate program safety, environmental quality and adult-child interactions
- Customized coaching support responsive to the needs of each teacher and center

Quality Start participation helps us improve our classrooms and skills, and demonstrates our commitment to our children and families. For more information about this program, please see your Site Supervisor.

### *Assessment*

Children are assessed with the use of formal and informal assessment tools in order to individualize instruction. Desired Results Development Profile (DRDP), anecdotal notes, and photographs are maintained as part of the child portfolio.

### *Homework*

We encourage families to read for 15-30 minutes every day with your child. According to research, children who have been read to at a younger age become better readers and writers. In addition, this instills the love of reading. Some parents often request homework for their preschooler. A holistic approach to education recognizes that children need time for other activities (play, socializing, exercise, hobbies, dance class, karate, etc.) in order to thrive at developmentally appropriate levels.

Homework has very little value for young children. In fact, research suggests that homework in the early years can be counterproductive. Therefore, it is the policy of the Family YMCA of the Desert to not assign homework to our Early Childhood Education program students. Many activities and meaningful lessons given in the home by parents can constitute as homework. Parents can encourage "spontaneous homework" where a child is inspired by a topic they are learning about in school and they find a book at home or at the library related to that topic.

### *Toys/Items from Home*

Toys and items from home can be disruptive to the program and we request these to be kept at home. However, if your child needs a special item to help with separation or nap times, he/she may bring that from home to use as needed. The item may be kept in your child's cubby. No guns, or other toys representing destruction, are to be brought to the center.

### *Clothing*

Our philosophy of active involvement, hands-on experiences, and learning through play often means children get 'dirty' during their stay with us, so please do not admonish your child to "Stay Clean!" We also believe children should be as self-sufficient as possible, so please dress children in clothing that will help him/her experience success as they learn to 'do for themselves' (no complicated belts, overalls or buckles while newly potty trained, no clothing that is too expensive or too valuable to get dirty). Children should not wear any clothing that may limit playing or movement. Closed toe shoes must be worn to preschool. In the interest of safety, jackets are to have the cords removed. **A change of clothing should be kept at the center for your child. Clothing has to be labeled and put in a sealed bag. Please make sure to replace the extra clothing in school in the event your child changes clothes at school.**

### *Accessories*

Accessories such as bracelets, necklaces, earrings, and rings can cause a hazard in the classroom and on the playground. For this reason, accessories will be removed by staff and go home with your child at the end of the day. The YMCA is not responsible for lost accessories.

### *Naps and Blankets*

Naps are part of the full day program to give the child the opportunity to rest or sleep. Your child will be provided a sheet and blanket for rest time. All bedding will be washed at the centers. Children rest on cots that are placed at maximum spacing possible, and positioned head to toe. In some cases, clear partitions are placed between two cots to further protect the children while resting.

### *Bottles and Sippy Cups*

Age appropriate self-help skills are an important part of a quality early learning environment. Therefore, in an effort to prevent tooth decay and to promote self-drinking from cups, please do not send a sippy cup or bottle to school. Children will be provided with age and size appropriate cups and water bottles and sippy cups will not be used. If there is a medical or developmental need for the use of a bottle or cup, please speak to your Site Supervisor about what accommodations can be made.

### *Menus and Meal Times*

Meal times are posted at each center. Parents are provided a copy of the menu at the beginning of each month. Mealtimes, like any other time in an early childhood class, are an exceptional learning time for children. Our program believes in serving meals family style. Children will learn the joy of independence as they serve themselves, eat in a group setting, and experience new foods. Children are encouraged to try new foods, but are not forced to eat them. Mealtimes are enjoyed in a relaxed setting with a group. Children will be encouraged to learn to use utensils, napkins and basic table manners. They also learn by watching others, which is why it is valuable for staff and volunteers to sit with them modeling correct behavior.

**\*\*At this time we have suspended family style meal service. Children's meals are pre-portioned by the center cook, and delivered to the classroom door for the two classroom teachers to serve. No servings of food, dishes or utensils are shared. Meals are still an important time of the day, with conversation and our typical delicious and varied menu. Families will be informed promptly if and when we are able to resume family style service.\*\***

### *Meals and Snacks*

The Family YMCA of the Desert will provide a healthy breakfast, lunch and snack with fresh fruits, vegetables grains and other nutrients at no additional charge to the parents. These meals and snacks meet the guidelines set by the Child and

Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and are in accordance with licensing regulations. Since the YMCA provides meals, we require that children do not bring food to the center for meals or snacks unless the child is on a special diet prescribed by a physician and have completed the Special Diet Accommodation Form filled out by a physician. If your child has allergies to certain foods, require any special foods or eating apparatus please inform the Site Supervisor in order for accommodations to be made. Accommodations will be made if possible. Such decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

The CACFP is available without charge to all eligible participants. Children are served the same meals at no separate charge.

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil  
Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

*This institution is an equal opportunity provider.*

**Civil Rights Procedure** - . Civil Rights Procedure and guidelines are available at each center. All staff members are aware to direct parents with any questions with this regard to Civil Rights to Vanessa Walker - Civil Rights Coordinator at our administrative offices: 43-930 San Pablo Ave Palm Desert, Ca 92260 telephone: 760-341-9622.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are a special time for children, and your child's class would love to help your child celebrate. If you choose to celebrate at school, there are many ways this can be done: Mom/Dad can visit in the classroom, a special song or game can be introduced, or snacks from home can be shared. In order to be consistent with our nutritional goals, we ask you to plan school celebrations that do not include concentrated sugary snacks (cake, cupcakes, ice cream, etc.). Please talk to your child's teacher in advance about any plans you wish to make to help celebrate your child's special day at school. A list of healthier alternatives was provided in your registration packet or you may ask for a copy from your center's administrative assistant. When visitors inside the center are limited, it may not be possible to have outside food, but a virtual visit by family, or other creative ideas to make your child's day special, can be arranged with the teachers.



## Family YMCA of the Desert Early Childhood Education Program Diaper Changing / Toilet Learning Policy

### 1. Policies and Expectations

- a. No child shall be punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.
- b. Toilet learning shall not be coerced.
- c. All policies and procedures must be followed consistently and reviewed periodically.
- d. The child's classroom Lead Teacher and Site Supervisor will make the final decision on whether your child is fully potty trained for school. At that point, the Site Supervisor will notify the Administrative Assistant to make the rate change for the following bill cycle on the child's billing account.

Toilet learning is an exciting time for children and their loving adults. We support your efforts at home as your child becomes more and more independent.

For school, a child's considered toilet trained when he/she can manage all steps of pottying independently. These include:

1. Reading their body's cues and heading to the toilet.
2. Pulling down/undoing clothes.
3. Situating themselves onto toilet seat adequately or aiming into toilet bowl reliably.
4. Tearing appropriate amount of toilet paper.
5. Wiping themselves from front to back correctly.
6. Pulling up/fastening bottoms.
7. Proceeding to wash hands.

### 2. Diapering Policy

- a. An adequate supply of clean and dry cloth or disposable diapers shall be maintained for each child. The child's parent/guardian is responsible for providing diapers and wipes. Parents/guardians will be notified when the supply is low. If a child runs out of diapering supplies, the center will provide them for the child at an additional charge of **\$3.00 per day.**
- b. Each child's diaper shall be checked at least once per hour. These checks shall be documented on the Daily Diaper Changing Form. A copy of the form will be given to the parent at pick up. Each child's diaper shall be changed when wet or soiled.
- c. Each child shall be washed and dried with individual washing materials during each diaper change. After changing, the child's hands shall be washed with soap and running water. Hands shall be dried with disposable towels.

- d. Each child shall be changed on either a changing table or in the bathroom while standing, whichever is the most appropriate for the child and classroom situation.
- e. If a changing table is being utilized, a disposable covering shall be used on the changing surface. The covering shall be large enough to adequately cover the surface and prevent the child from coming in contact with the changing surface. The disposable covering shall be changed and disposed of in a closed container after each child has been diapered.
- f. If a changing table is being utilized, the changing surface shall be washed and sprayed with a bleach solution after each child has been diapered. The bleach solution shall be prepared daily and appropriately labeled.
- g. If being changed in the bathroom, the teacher will use gloves and utilize proper cleaning techniques.
- h. Clothing or cloth diapers soiled by feces, urine, vomit or blood shall be placed in a sealed bag or container. These items will need to be taken home at the end of each day for laundering.
- i. Soiled disposable diapers shall be placed in a designated container with tight-fitting cover and a disposable plastic liner. These diapers shall be removed from the center daily or more frequently as necessary.
- j. Diaper pails must be emptied, washed and sanitized at least daily.
- k. Staff shall always use disposable gloves when diapering a child.
- l. After diapering a child, educators shall wash their hands with liquid soap and running water using friction. Their hands shall be dried with disposable towels.
- m. Common changing tables shall not be used for any other purpose.
- n. A change of clothing shall be available for each child. Each child who is not toilet trained shall be required to provide 2 changes of clothes, which should include at a minimum a top, bottoms, and socks. It is highly recommended to also include at least one pair of shoes.
- o. Running water shall be adjacent to the diapering area for hand washing.
- p. Diapering areas and hand washing facilities shall be separate from facilities and areas used for food preparation and food service.
- q. Parents will be provided with a daily log that shows when diapers were checked and changed and whether the diaper was Dry, Wet or had a Bowel Movement.

### 3. Toilet Learning

- a. Toilet learning shall be done as requested by parents and in a manner that is consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities.
- b. No child shall be punished for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.
- c. Toilet learning shall not be coerced.
- d. Staff and parents will develop a written plan for toilet learning.
- e. Sufficient extra clothes, including underwear, shall be provided by the parent while the child is being toilet trained.

## Nutrition and Physical Activity Policy

Healthy living is an essential part of the goals and mission of the YMCA. We strive to teach children the importance and value of making healthy choices in their food choices and activities. In an effort to provide the best possible nutrition and physical activity environment for the children in our program, we have adopted the following policies. The administration and staff appreciate support from the parents in promoting the health of our children.

### *Nutrition*

#### *Fruits and Vegetables*

- We offer fruit to children at least 2 times a day.
- We only offer fruit canned in its own juice (no syrups), fresh, or frozen.
- We offer vegetables to children at least 1 time a day.
- We only offer vegetables steamed, boiled, roasted, or lightly stir-fried with little added fat.

#### *Meats, Fats, and Grains*

- We offer fried or pre-fried (frozen) meats (chicken nuggets) or fish (fish sticks) twice a month or less.
- We offer fried or pre-fried potatoes (French fries, tater tots, hash browns) once a week or less.
- We offer high fat meats like sausage, bacon, hot dogs, or bologna twice a month or less.
- We offer processed meats once in a two-week cycle or less.
- We offer beans, lean meats or other healthy proteins at least once a day.
- We offer seafood (non-fried or pre-fried) at least twice a month.
- We offer vegetarian meals at least once per week and participate in “Meatless Mondays” where all meals served on Mondays will be vegetarian.
- We offer high fiber, whole grain foods at least 2X a day.
- We offer sweets or salty foods once a week or less.
- We do not offer sweetened grains/baked goods (e.g., cookies, cakes, donuts, Danishes, etc.).

#### *Beverages*

- We make drinking water freely available both inside and outdoors.
- 1% Milk is provided with breakfast and lunch daily.
- We do not offer sweetened drinks other than 100% juice.
- We do not have soda or other vending machines on site for families or children.

#### *Menus and Variety*

- We have 3 week (or greater) cycle menu that allows for seasonal changes.
- Our menus include healthy items from a variety of cultures.
- Our menus include a combination of new and familiar foods.

#### *Feeding Practices*

- Our staff help children determine if they are full before removing their plate.
- Our staff help children determine if they are still hungry before serving additional food.
- Our staff gently and positively encourage children to try a new or less favorite food.
- We do not use food to encourage positive behavior or discourage a negative behavior.

#### *Foods Offered Outside of Regular Meals and Snacks*

- We provide and enforce written guidelines for healthier food brought in and served for holidays and celebrations.

- We celebrate holidays with mostly healthy foods or non-food treats.

### *Supporting Healthy Eating*

- Our staff join children at the table for meal times.
- Our staff always consume the same food and drink as the children.
- We provide visible support for good nutrition in 2-to 5-year old classrooms and common areas through use of posters, pictures, and displayed books.
- Our staff often talk informally with the children about trying and enjoying healthy foods.

### *Nutrition Education for Staff, Children, and Parents*

- We provide training opportunities for staff on nutrition
- We provide teacher-directed nutrition education to the children, 1X per week or more.
- We provide nutrition education to parents 2X per year or more.

### *Physical Activity*

#### *Active Play and Inactive Time*

- We provide at least 120 minutes of active play time to all children each day (Full Day Programs).
- We provide opportunities for outdoor play 2 or more times per day. (Full Day Programs)
- We ensure that children are rarely seated for periods of more than 30 minutes.
- We do not withhold active play time for children who misbehave. Instead, we provide additional active play time for good behavior.
- We rarely show television and videos.

#### *Play Environment*

- We provide fixed play equipment (tunnels, climbing and balancing equipment) that is extensive and varied for all children.
- We provide portable play equipment (wheeled toys, balls, hoops, ribbons) that is diverse and available for children to use at the same time.
- We make outdoor portable play equipment freely available to all children all of the time.
- Outdoor play space includes an open areas and a track/path for wheeled toys.
- Indoor play space is available for all activities, including running, when weather does not permit outdoor play.

### *Supporting Physical Activity*

- Our staff often encourage children to be active and often join children in active play.
- We provide visible support for physical activity in 2-to 5-year old classrooms and common areas through use of posters, pictures, and displayed books.

### *Physical Activity Education*

- We provide training opportunities for staff on physical activity (other than playground safety)
- We provide teacher-directed physical activity education for children, 1X per week or more.
- We offer physical activity education to parents.

## Health and Safety Policy

### Health

All children must be in good health each day when they arrive at the center. **We will not accept children who are ill.** Upon arrival, a staff member will examine each child and complete a health check. **We invite parents to accompany your child to wash their hands as they arrive at the center as hand washing is proven to reduce the spreading of germs.** We must maintain a healthy environment for all of our children. If a child is ill, we expect the parents to make arrangements for their care. The Site Supervisor has the right to refuse admittance of any child if they have any signs of illness. These signs include, but are not limited to, runny nose and/or eyes, coughing or skin rashes. It is the parent's responsibility to call the YMCA site if the child is going to be absent. All contagious illnesses such as strep throat, pink eye, lice or ringworm must be immediately reported to the YMCA so that we can check all children and take steps to halt the spread of the problem.

#### KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME IF THEY:

- Have a fever or have had one during the previous 24-hour period
- Are taking an antibiotic (for the first 24 hours)
- Has vomited within the last 12 hours
- Have head lice\*
- Have a heavy nasal discharge
- Have a constant cough
- Have symptoms of a possible communicable disease. These are usually sniffles, reddened eyes, sore throat, headache and abdominal pain, plus a fever

Children may be sent home for ANY illness concern at the discretion of the Site Supervisor. There are no refunds for children who are sent home ill.

If any symptoms of illness appear during the day, the parent will be contacted to pick up their child immediately. The child must be picked up within one hour of parent notification. A Physician's note may be required for any contagious disease. If a child is absent more than three (3) days, a doctor's excuse and authorization to return to the center *may* be required.

\*A child may not return to the program until they are lice and nit free. A staff member will check the child before they are admitted back into the program.

## COVID-19 Pandemic Health Policy Updates

### Health Checks and Exclusion Policy

Health checks have always been a part of our care, but will be more rigorous during emergency childcare services. Now more than ever, all children and staff must be in good health each day when they arrive at the center. **We will not allow children or staff who are ill to enter the school.** Upon arrival in the morning, all staff will have their temperature checked and screening questions asked before entering for the workday.

Adults dropping off and picking up the child should be in good health. Older grandparents and those with underlying health conditions are not recommended to accompany the child to/from preschool at this time. Although we will have limited contact during the check in and out process, we appreciate your cooperation by following current guidance and wearing a cloth face covering, respecting the distance recommendation of six feet apart, and helping us to keep our

preschool a healthy environment so that we may continue to serve essential worker families.

**Children with fever or respiratory or gastro-intestinal symptoms like a cough, congestion, runny nose, diarrhea or vomiting should stay home. A child whose household members are ill with COVID-19 indicated symptoms, should stay home . Call the center to report your child's absence, and guidance will be provided as to when they may return.**

During the child check-in time, a staff member will take each child's temperature with a no-touch thermometer.

**Temperature threshold is 100.4 degrees** - that is considered elevated and under no circumstances will the child be admitted. If your child has a temperature slightly under 100.4 degree threshold, but other signs of illness are present, it is at the Site Supervisor's discretion to exclude the child for the day.

In addition, the parent/caregiver will be asked the following questions before admittance to the center:

- Have you or a member of your household traveled to another country in the last 14 days?
- Have you or a member of your household been in contact with someone under investigation for, or with a confirmed case of, COVID-19?
- Have you or a member of your household been instructed to self-quarantine?
- Has your child been experiencing symptoms of illness? If so, what symptoms?

The Site Supervisor has the right to refuse admittance of any child if they have any signs of illness. These signs include, but are not limited to, runny nose and/or eyes, coughing or skin rashes. It is the parent's responsibility to call the YMCA site if the child is going to be absent. All diagnosed contagious illnesses such as strep throat, pink eye, lice or ringworm must be immediately reported to the YMCA so that we can check all children and take steps to halt the spread of the problem.

### ***Isolation Procedures***

If any symptoms of illness appear during the day, the child will be removed from the group immediately and a staff member will stay with child in the site's designated isolation area. **Parents and/or additional contacts on the Emergency Contact form on file will be contacted to pick up the child immediately.**

Staff members attending a child in isolation will wear face covering and gloves, and if the child can reasonably and safely wear a face covering, he/she will be asked and supervised to do so. The isolation areas will be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and ventilated immediately after the child leaves the site.

Upon arrival at the center, parent/caregiver picking up sick child will be met outside the center to sign the child out. As always, staff members will ensure person is aged 18 or over, authorized for pick up, and may ask for ID before child is can be signed out.

### ***Maintaining a Healthy Environment***

The cleaning and disinfecting of all learning environments inside and out will be intensified. High touch surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected hourly, toys washed and disinfected twice daily, playground equipment disinfected every time a group exits from outside time. Toileting and diapering, and food preparation areas will be maintained with the stringent cleaning and disinfecting guidelines always recommended. The classrooms will be strictly off limits to all staff and children not specifically assigned to that room.

### ***Outside Time and Ventilation***

Outdoor time will be maximized as much as weather allows, and each group of ten children will rotate and have time during the cooler portions of the day. Classrooms will be ventilated with outside air to the fullest extent possible each day. During hotter weather, the open space in each classroom inside will also be utilized to provide physical activity opportunities with children safely spaced out. Dancing, jumping jacks, yoga poses and other activities can provide physical activity even when it is too hot to go outdoors.

### *Cloth Face Coverings on Adults*

CDC recommends that people wear a cloth face covering over their nose and mouth in community settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will follow any state or local health department guidance. Since many people who have COVID-19 don't have symptoms, wearing masks can help reduce the possibility that someone without symptoms can transmit the disease to others. Site staff currently wear cloth face coverings or clear face shields at all times, including when a distance of less than six feet exists between them and another. Cloth face coverings must cover both the nose and the mouth, and are washed daily to be hygienic and effective.

Staff at check in and check out will be wearing face masks and gloves, and we urge all families to follow the current guidelines, and wear face masks when coming to pick up or drop off their child for the safety of our preschool community.

### *Cloth Face Coverings on Children*

Children under the age of 2 should never wear face coverings. Current guidance from the CDC advises children ages 3-8 to wear cloth face coverings when closely supervised and taught to use hygienically. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that young children 3-8 benefit from wearing face coverings in places where they encounter people at a closer than 6 foot range. Situations in which children should NOT wear a mask include:

- Children under the age of 2 years, due to risk of suffocation
- If the only face covering available is a possible choking or strangulation hazard
- If the child has difficulty breathing with the face covering on
- If the child is developmentally unable to remove the face covering without assistance
- **If wearing the face covering causes the child to increase risk of getting exposed to the virus because they are touching their face more frequently**

### *Proper Handwashing*

All children and staff wash their hands immediately upon entering the site each day. Teachers work with children throughout the day to wash their hands properly and thoroughly, and talk about how washing hands, and physical distancing, are the best defense against spreading germs at this time. Please ask your site staff if you need any support or creative ideas to help your child practicing safe hygiene and proper frequent handwashing at home.

### *Sunscreen*

Please bring your child to care in the morning with sunblock applied. After nap, if the weather is such that the group is able to have additional outdoor time in the afternoon, a staff member wearing face covering and gloves can administer an application of sunscreen to your child. We will not at this time be able to accept a family's choice of sunscreen, but the site can provide you with the brand name and SPF level they keep on site for this use. **As always, sunscreen is considered a non-prescription medication and requires a consent form to be filled out by the parent.** If you would like us to be able to administer sunscreen to your child, please ensure that you have completed the appropriate form.

### *Toothbrushing*

At this time we are unable to have children brush their teeth at school. We encourage families to maintain healthy tooth hygiene at home, and will reintroduce this practice as soon as it is safe to do so.

### *Immunizations*

To attend a Family YMCA of the Desert Early Childhood Education center, your child's Immunization Record must show the date for each shot required. If you do not have an Immunization Record, or your child has not received all required shots, call your doctor now for an appointment.

If a licensed physician determines a vaccine should not be given to your child because of medical reasons, submit a written statement from the physician for a medical exemption for the missing shot(s), including the duration of the

medical exemption.

A personal beliefs exemption is no longer an option for entry into child care; however a valid personal beliefs exemption filed with a child-care facility before January 1, 2016 is valid until entry into the next grade span (transitional kindergarten through 6th grade) and may be transferred between child-care facilities in California. For complete details, visit [ShotsforSchool.org](http://ShotsforSchool.org). You must also submit an immunization record for all required shots not exempted.

### ***Medication***

Medication will be dispensed to a child only if the medication is in the original container with the child's name, drug name, dosage time to be given and length of time medication is to be given. Written consent from the parent is required. A "Medications Release Form" can be obtained from the office. Permission given by phone will not be accepted. No over-the-counter medications, including aspirin, cough medicine, etc. will be given without a doctor's note. A child may not administer medication to him/herself. \*

\*Exemption to the policy of children not administering their own medication is the use of asthma inhalers. Parents are to send a doctor's note explaining dosage, time to be given and how the child uses his/her inhaler. Additionally, parents will need to review proper usage with center staff.

### ***Ages and Stages Questionnaire***

Each family registering a child is required to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). By including the family in the assessment process the teacher takes advantage of parental knowledge of the child and builds a partnership with the family. The ASQ is a screening tool with high validity when administered by the parent or teacher. The ASQ covers five developmental areas including communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social. It is used as a first-level comprehensive screening for developmental delays and also communicates to families the stages of a child's development in their child's age group. The ASQ is scored by our staff. The results are shared with teachers to inform their classroom practices and guide them in individualizing curriculum to meet the developmental needs of the children in their class. If a score indicates a concern regarding an individual child the Site Supervisor will meet with the family to consider further assessments. If staff and parents agree that further testing is needed the family is referred to local resources for additional screening and/or services.

### ***Developmental Concerns***

If you have any concerns of the overall development (vision, hearing, speech, motor, social, language, behavior etc..) concerns of your child, please talk to your child's teacher, Site Supervisor and/or Program Director. We will be happy to meet with you for a Student Study Team (SST) meeting and assist you to locate and obtain resources.

### ***Excessive Heat and Outdoor Play***

Safety is our first priority and for the protection of your child, if it is excessively hot, precautions including reducing or eliminating outside play time will occur. Our staff receive training in Heat-Related Illness, and daily temperatures with humidity index are monitored by the Site Supervisor, to ensure children's safety.

### ***Blackouts / Loss of Power***

Blackouts are not expected to exceed an hour in length. If a blackout should occur, all children will be kept inside and will be given quiet activities such as reading, puzzles, board games, or they can use the time as a rest period to engage in. All sites will have plenty of water available and battery operated lighting. Do not call the YMCA if you suspect a blackout at your child's center. The telephones operate with electricity so alternative communication will be available (i.e. cell phones) and we must keep these lines clear. YMCA staff members are trained in CPR and heat exhaustion prevention. If the blackout presents conditions that are unsafe, you may be called to pick up your child.

### **Illness/ Serious Injuries**

In case of accidental injury we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If necessary we will also call the ambulance or the paramedics. Until the arrival of the parent, an ambulance or the paramedics, the Site Supervisor will be in charge and make all decisions about the care of the child. Parents will be expected to assume responsibility for any resultant expenses. The YMCA will maintain a parent's signed consent form agreeing to this provision.

### **Ouchie Reports**

An Incident Report, also known as an "Ouchie Report," is given to parents to explain injuries that happened while in care. Reports *may* not be given for minor bumps, scratches, etc that do not require any immediate treatment (such as a band aid, ice pack, observation, etc.)

### **Emergencies**

We practice fire, earthquake and lockdown drills monthly for all age groups. In the case of a real emergency, evacuation will follow the guidance of the Family YMCA of the Desert. Children will be released only to parents, or those individuals you have authorized. It is recommended that you speak to your Site Supervisor or Administrative Assistant to find out where relocation sites are in case of center evacuations during an emergency situation.

***It is to your child's benefit that all pertinent information such as, phone numbers, emergency contacts etc. are kept up-to-date.***

### **Accident Insurance**

The YMCA does not provide accident insurance.

### **Children Left in Cars**

Due to the extreme heat we experience in the Coachella Valley, it is imperative children **NOT BE LEFT ALONE IN CARS**. This is a California law as well as safe practice. Because they are supervising children or at the front desk, our staff is unable to supervise a child left in the car. If a child is left in a car, we are required by law to contact the police and report it.

*California Vehicle Code 15620. (a) A parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for a child who is 6 years of age or younger may not leave that child inside a motor vehicle without being subject to the supervision of a person who is 12 years of age or older.*

### **Car Seats**

It is also the law that children be secured in a car seat appropriate for their age and weight.

*California Vehicle Code 27360. Babies and young children must ride in the back seat, properly buckled up, in a safety seat or booster until they are at least 8 years old OR are at least 4'9" in height.*

If program staff determines that a child is being transported to and/or from the program without the proper car seat, we are required by law to report this to the police. If a parent consistently transports a child without the proper car restraint, program staff is required to contact Child Protective Services (CPS) and file a child endangerment report.

### **Animals**

For the safety of the children, please do not bring any animals to the program without prior approval of your Site Supervisor.

### ***Fingernails***

As a safety measure, please make sure that your child's fingernails are groomed to an appropriate length to ensure that other children will not be injured if scratched. If a teacher notifies you that your child's fingernails are too long, your child will not be allowed to return until they have been properly trimmed.

### ***Parent Conduct Expectations***

Parents and families are always welcome and we enjoy their attendance in our program. However, parents and visitors are expected to be a positive presence and conduct themselves appropriately. The following behaviors are unacceptable and visitors will be asked to leave the premises, and we reserve the right to terminate the child's enrollment of the offending parent/guardian if they are being exhibited:

- Disciplining any child in front of the other children, either verbally or physically
- Talking "negatively" about a child in her/his presence
- Smoking is not allowed on the program site
- Custody and visitation disputes are not to be argued on site
- Rude and/or malicious actions toward program staff, other parents, or children, including the use of profanity
- Causing injury to another child or staff member, or threatening to do so
- Making slanderous, libelous or otherwise disparaging remarks about the YMCA and/or its programs
- Violations of California Education Code regarding firearms, alcohol, drugs, physical altercations, theft, and destruction of property, immoral conduct, etc.

## Behavior / Discipline Policy

### *Behavior Guidelines*

- Children are taught to be RESPONSIBLE for their actions
- Children are taught to RESPECT each other and the environment
- Children will learn that HONESTY is the basis for all relationships and interactions
- Children will learn to CARE for themselves and those around them

### *Discipline*

We strive to prepare our children to understand who they are, so they will not be deprived of educational and cultural advantages. Our goals are realized as our children, one by one; enter school for the first time, ready to participate, and bearing the strength of personal pride.

The Family YMCA of the Desert's Early Childhood Education Program's children are not subjected to physical (corporal) or psychological punishment, humiliation, mental abuse, or punitive interference with the daily functions of living such as eating, sleeping, or toileting (CCL Sec I 012230). This includes "spanking", or the threat to use any of these methods of punishments. These forms of punishments will not be implemented UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES even at the parent(s) request.

In order to guide children in positive ways toward appropriate behaviors, the following methods of discipline are integrated into the daily learning experience.

1. Redirect Activities: Simply changing the environment, activity, or materials that seem to be contributing to the inappropriate behaviors can modify a child's behavior. For example, if children are throwing books, the teacher may get out the bean bag for a tossing game or gather the children in the group and model appropriate ways of using books by reading a story to them. This way the children can learn appropriate behaviors without constant corrections by the teacher.
2. Natural Consequences: Children are asked to correct what their behavior has caused. For example, spilled milk gets wiped up, thrown table blocks get picked up, a hurt child gets soothed (if appropriate according to the circumstances). This teaches children that all behavior has effects on their surrounding environment and on the people around them.
3. Conflict Resolution between teacher and child:: When children are disruptive or out of control teachers will help children talk through conflict first. If the child is upset and unable to deal with the situation, they may need to find a calm or quiet place in the room where children are able to regain self-control; followed-up by active communication between teacher and child. It is never used as "punishment."

TIME OUT IS NEVER TO BE USED. Physical punishment is never used for any reason. Additionally, no child will be left alone without adult supervision.

Through these methods teachers are able to maintain an environment conducive to self-control and autonomy for the children without fear of losing self-respect by making a mistake or testing a limit. Thus, each child will gain a sense of self-worth and ultimately self-discipline.

It is our policy to only discuss children, or any concerns regarding children, with appropriate staff for professional consultation when it is necessary to assist a child in developing appropriate behaviors. The teaching staff and parents/guardians work cooperatively in an effort to foster acceptable behavior. In the event that this is unsuccessful or the parent/guardian is unwilling to cooperate or the YMCA ECE Program cannot meet the needs of the child, the program may discontinue services to the family.

## ***Incident Reports***

Incident reports will be filled out, a copy given to the parent and a copy placed in the child's file, if the child displays behaviors which are concerning to staff which may include, but are not limited to:

- Hitting, kicking, or biting the staff or other children
- Running away from the program/teacher
- Damaging property belonging to the center, school and/or other children
- Abusive, foul or on-going unacceptable behavior
- Defiant, disruptive and / or out-of-control behavior

## ***Biting Policy***

Biting is a natural, developmental behavior in which many young children engage, especially during their second and third years of life. We recognize that biting is a distressing activity for parents, staff, and the child who has been bitten. Because biting is so distressing, everyone involved would like to eliminate it quickly. Unfortunately, a "quick fix" is not usually available. However, biting does require immediate action by staff to comfort the child who has been bitten, express disapproval to the biter, and to find the cause of the biting.

Children bite for a variety of reasons so it's important for adults to get to the cause of the behavior. Most of the reasons for biting are not related to behavior problems nor does biting make the biter a "bad child". Since biting is developmentally related, it is more common for toddlers to bite than for older preschool age children.

### How Staff Respond

Staff members respond to biting as they would other aggressive behavior – by:

- calmly, yet firmly telling the biter that biting hurts and is not allowed
- by comforting the victim immediately and providing first aid if needed
  - wash the bite with soap and water
  - apply ice to reduce swelling
  - if the skin is broken, universal precautions are followed and an injury report is written
- by documenting the biting in an incident and/or ouchie report

When a particular child bites on a regular basis, the center staff attempt to find the cause of the biting and take action to prevent future incidents. The staff look at:

- the precipitating factors such as time of day, area of the classroom, the activity, other children involved, etc.
- changes in the child's life such as health problems, teething, the absence of a family member, the birth of a sibling, transitions, etc.

The staff then develop strategies to help prevent further biting. These might include:

- Ensuring that there are enough materials, including duplicates, for the children to use
- Ensuring that there is enough space in the classroom and that there are quiet times in the schedule
- Shadowing a biter in situations and times when the child has bitten before
- Providing teething toys for children who are getting new teeth
- Showing disapproval of biting
- Working collaboratively with parents to reduce or eliminate biting

### How Parents Are Informed

The parents of a bitten child are notified of the incident the day the incident occurred. Confidentiality prohibits the staff from divulging the name of the biter. The parents of the biter are informed personally and privately the same day.

It is important to recognize that this behavior is a normal part of children's growth and development. However, biting is usually upsetting to all parties involved (including the family of the child who bit). During this difficult transition, we ask

that parents be patient with the children and staff as they identify patterns or reasons for biting and implement a plan of action to prevent it.

If we see that there is a consistent biter these steps will be taken.

- If a child bites more than two times in a day, the child will be sent home to protect the safety of the other children in the room. If a child bites more than two separate dates, a conference will occur with the Site Supervisor, classroom teacher, parent, and, if necessary, the Program Director. A plan will be put in place for techniques to use in the classroom and guidelines will be set for grounds of termination.
- If after techniques are in place and there is still no improvement or the child continually goes back to biting, other interventions may be implemented.
- Our program puts the welfare of the child first. If the needs of the child are more than the YMCA can provide, or if the safety of other children or staff are put at risk, termination from the program may occur.

### ***Counseling Centers***

The YMCA cannot recommend the use of certain counseling centers. The choice and decision has to be made by the parents and or guardians of the child. We suggest using the yellow pages of the phone book under Marriage, Family and Child Counseling Services or call the Riverside County Office of Education at 760 863-3345 for a referral list.

### ***Student Study Team (SST) Process and Procedure***

When repeated Incident Reports are written and determined that discipline intervention becomes necessary, we do it with Positive Behavior Support (PBS). The child is taught of the acceptable and unacceptable according to his developmental level. **Safety of all children is the highest priority for setting the discipline policy.**

1. When there is a serious concern about a child's behavior, the parent will be called by the Site Supervisor and or the Program Director to schedule a Student Study Team (SST) Meeting in order to discuss strategies to best help the student be successful. Staff members of the SST are: Child's teacher(s), Parent(s), Site Supervisor and the Program Director.
2. Data will be collected using a variety of data collection methods (Antecedent Behavior Consequence (ABC) charts, anecdotal notes, interval data, time sampling data...etc.) in order to learn the motivation of the behavior.
3. All staff members will work with the child and the family in providing techniques of a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PBSP) in assessing the behavior.
4. Staff and parents will collaborate and decide if screening may be necessary for developmental delays or other issues which may be attributing to the behavior.
5. Special Circumstances Policy- The team meets weekly and/or as needed to provide parents with community resources, chart progress and/or concern of the behavior. The goal of the team is to find a replacement behavior which is socially acceptable and teach the child of desirable behaviors.
6. It is the family's responsibility to seek the help of a professional in cooperation with the center's efforts to best serve the child. During the time of intervention, should the child's behavior escalate and becomes a danger to the child, to others (children or staff) and or damage property, the child's parent will be contacted to pick the child up.
7. If the family does not seek the professional guidance, if required, and the child's needs are beyond the recognized capabilities of the center's staff, the center reserves the right to terminate enrollment. When a child

is terminated from the program due to a special circumstance, whether by the parent or staff members, there is no refund or credit issued.

When a child exhibits behavior regularly that endangers the safety of him/herself, other children or staff members, and the family is unwilling to participate promptly in a Student Study Team (SST) meetings or adhere to the shared home-school plan of action in a timely fashion, the Family YMCA of the Desert reserves the right to terminate enrollment.

#### ***At-Will Termination***

Unfortunately, from time to time, the Family YMCA of the Desert needs to terminate a child and/or family from our programs. Listed below are some of the reasons a child may be terminated from YMCA programs:

- Three or more lock-outs on a family's account
- Five unexcused absences for an Alternative Payment Participant
- Failure to provide appropriate certificates for an Alternative Payment Participant
- Excessive late pick ups
- Violations of the Parent Conduct Expectations
- A child is requiring constant one on one attention
- A child is inflicting physical or emotional harm on other children
- A child is physically abusing staff or is unable to conform to the rules of the program
- A child has to be physically restrained from hurting other children, staff or themselves

In addition to the above, The Family YMCA of the Desert reserves the right to terminate any child and/or family from any of its programs at-will for any reason.

## Family Involvement

You are your child's first teacher. Student success depends on the support of networks that include parents, teachers, and other key stakeholders in their school communities. We invite you to get involved in your child's educational journey by volunteering in our ECE program. You may participate in activities such as: serving in the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), assisting in the classroom, assisting in the office, sharing your cultural celebrations and other activities. Please talk to your Site Supervisor for more details.

### *Communication from Classroom*

We use Learning Genie to enhance our Parent-School connection. The app is a free, safe messaging app that keeps families up to date with what's happening in the classroom. If you need to speak to your child's teacher or any other site staff, please call the center. In order to ensure professionalism and appropriate contact, teachers are not allowed to communicate with parents through personal cell phones or e-mail.

### *Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)*

A Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) will be formed each year. The goal of the PAC is to encourage parent involvement and parent communication. Committee members will represent the parent community, their needs and ideas for what they want to see in our program. PAC meets every other month and will assist the center with parent surveys and parent volunteer program. All parents / guardians are invited to participate on the committee.

### *Parent Surveys*

The Desired Results Parent Survey issued by the California Department of Education (CDE) are given annually. The survey asks for your feedback pertaining to your child's education and the quality of our program. We at the YMCA are very interested in how our early childhood education program is meeting your child's learning and developmental needs. Your responses will be confidential and will help us to improve the services provided to you.

### *Parent Conferences*

Parent conferences are scheduled with staff at least twice per year. Teachers are also available by appointment throughout the year for additional conferences and discussions. Conferences are an opportunity for teachers to share information about the child's development as reflected in the Desired Results Developmental Profile, the teacher's anecdotal records and the child's portfolio. The parent and teachers will work together to jointly develop a plan to support your child's development. We encourage your input regarding your child's development.

Parents are encouraged to talk with teachers on a daily basis and to share special information that may affect the child. (for example: moving, divorce, new pet, late night, missed breakfast, etc.) This information will help the staff in meeting your child's needs. Please be aware that a teacher will not be able to engage in a lengthy conversation while they are working with children during class time and need to be providing adequate supervision. Please ask the teacher when they'll be available to talk or schedule a meeting if you need more time.

### *Notices and Updates for Families*

A classroom bulletin board is reserved for items that parents need to read. It has information and notices about the center and its activities. Updates are sent out virtually as well, for parents who are not on the school site. At the beginning of each month, a Parent Newsletter containing information about learning experiences, program information and other important information will be shared with each parent. Since it will contain important information, keep it posted during the month for reference. Each site has an active Facebook page where events, reminders and photographs are routinely posted. We encourage families to “like” their Center page to keep updated. Please see your Site Supervisor or Administrative Assistant for more information.

## **YMCA Sexual Harassment Policy**

Sexual Harassment includes:

- Unwelcome or unwanted sexual advances
- Requests or demands for sexual favors
- Engaging in sexually oriented contact that interferes with another’s work performance

Creating a work environment that is intimidating hostile, or offensive because of unwelcome or unwanted sexually oriented conversation, suggestions, requests, demands, physical contacts, attentions or the presence of sexually oriented materials.

Complaint Procedure:

- Any parent, general public, or employee who believes he/she has been harassed by a co-worker, supervisor, member/participant, volunteer, vendor, teacher or any employee of the YMCA shall promptly report the facts of the incident to Chief Executive Officer:

Paula Simonds, CEO or Amanda Henn, Director Human Resources  
43-930 San Pablo Avenue  
Palm Desert, CA 92260  
(760) 341-9622

- Any employee who has knowledge of any harassment of employees, parents or the general public must immediately bring such information to the attention of the Director of Human Resources, Amanda Henn, or the Chief Executive Officer, Paula Simonds, contact information as above.

Human Resources will promptly investigate all such claims and take appropriate corrective action. All complaints are investigated confidentially to the degree possible. The YMCA will not tolerate any type of retaliation against any person who, in good faith, brings forth information regarding alleged harassment.

## **Facing the Facts of Child Abuse**

### **A Parent's Guide to the Understanding of Child Sexual Abuse**

The State of California requires that parents of children enrolled in preschools receive information about child sexual abuse. Schools have been instructed to provide the following information.

#### **What is Sexual Abuse?**

The sexual abuse of a child occurs whenever any person forces, tricks, or threatens a child in order to have sexual contact with him or her. This contact can include such "non-touching" behaviors as in adult exposing himself or asking a child to look at pornographic material. It includes behaviors ranging from the sexual handling of a child (fondling), to actual genital contact, to intercourse, to violent rape. In all instances of child sexual abuse, the child is being used as an object to satisfy the adult's sexual needs or desires.

*'Candy is my best friend. I play at her house a lot. Today her daddy asked us to look at some pictures. They were nasty pictures of people with no clothes on. He said, 'Doesn't that look like fun?' I didn't think so, but I said, 'Yes.'*

#### **Who Gets Sexually Abused?**

Any child of any age is a potential victim of sexual abuse. Some important facts to keep in mind:

- Although the majority of adults do not sexually assault children, most sexual abuse occurs with an adult the child knows and trusts.
- Most sexual abuse goes unreported and undetected.
- Although we do not have exact numbers, some studies have found that one out of every four girls and one of every ten boys become victims of child sexual abuse by the age of eighteen.
- Children often keep sexual abuse a secret.

*When Mommy goes to work, I stay at Mrs. Jenkin's house. I wish I didn't have to. Mommy says Mrs. Jenkins is a real nice lady, but Mrs. Jenkins' son Ralph sometimes makes me do bad things. Yesterday he made me take off my underwear, and he put his finger in my privates.' He said, 'You better not tell.'*

Children may keep a sexual assault a secret for many reasons. They may fear rejection, blame, punishment, or abandonment; they may think people won't believe them. Boys are less likely to report an abuse than girls. The closer the relationship of the offender to the child, the less likely it is that the child will report the incident.

#### **How Can You Determine If Sexual Abuse Has Taken Place?**

First and foremost, if your children confide that they have been sexually assaulted, believe them! Children very seldom lie about such a serious matter. Also be aware that most sexual abuse does not result in the child being violently attacked or hurt physically. Often there is not physical evidence a child has been molested. Fondling, involvement in child pornography and oral sex usually present no physical signs of abuse. But, if a child has been physically harmed as a result of sexual abuse, the following may be signs of this occurrence.

- A discharge from the vaginal area or penis
- Injury to the genitals or anus

- Pain, itching, or bleeding in the genital or anal area
- Discomfort in walking or sitting
- The discovery of a sexually transmitted disease

Children, especially very young children, are many times unable to verbalize that they have been molested. The following are some indicators that sexual assault may have taken place:

- Nightmares and sleep disturbances
- Bedwetting
- Fear of certain places or certain people (such as a day care center or friend)
- Loss of appetite
- Clinging to a parent more than usual
- Behaving as a younger child (such as an older child sucking his or her thumb)
- Unexplained changes in behavior at school, day care, or in relations with peers
- Withdrawal
- Acting out the abuse with dolls, friends or through drawings.
- Excessive masturbation

While everyone should report child abuse and neglect, the California Penal Code provides that certain professionals and laypersons must report suspected abuse to the proper authorities. The mandated reporters include:

- Any Child Care Custodian (teachers, licensed day care workers, foster parents, social workers)
- Medical Practitioners (physicians, dentists, psychologists, nurses)
- Nonmedical Practitioners (public health employees, counselors, county welfare department employees)

Failures to report suspected abuse by a mandated reporter (listed above) within 36 hours is a misdemeanor punishable by 6 months in jail and/or a \$1,000 fine.