



METROWEST YMCA

Early Learning Center

Family Handbook

MetroWest YMCA, Early Learning Center

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Table of Contents

I	Overview of MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center	
A	MetroWest YMCA Mission Statement	1
B	Philosophy, Goals and Objectives	1
C	Statement of Purpose	1
D	Non-discrimination Policy	1
E	Licensing Information	1
II	Our Educators	
A	Overview	2
B	Educator and Volunteer Qualifications	2
III	Children’s Rights and Responsibilities	
A	Educators’ responsibilities	2
B	Children’s responsibilities	3
IV	Enrollment Procedures and Requirements	
A	Registration	
1	Enrollment Criteria	3
2	Medical Information Needed Prior to Enrollment	4
B	Registration Changes	4
C	Child and Family Orientation	4
D	Financial Information	5
E	Financial Assistance	5
F	Withdrawal Policy	6
V	Curriculum and Assessment System	
A	Program Plan	6
B	Curriculum and Assessment	7
C	Developmental Screening	8
D	Assessment and Its Relationship to Curriculum Planning	8
E	Interest Centers	9
F	Outdoor Play Areas	10
G	Program Evaluation	10
VI	Policies and Procedures	
A	Child Guidance	11
1	Methods of Guidance Approved for YMCA Educators	11
2	Prohibited Methods of Behavior Management	12
3	Child Guidance Procedure	13
B	Children's Evaluations	13
C	Special Needs	14

D	Referral Plan	14
E	Transition Plan	15
F	Commitment to Partnership	15
G	Procedures to Avoid Suspension and Termination	16
H	Clothing and Rest Time	17
I	Toileting Procedures	17
J	Toothbrushing	17
K	Sippy Cups and Pacifiers	18
L	Toys from Home	18
M	Birthdays	18
N	Holidays	19
O	Inclement Weather Policy	19
P	Arrival, Departure, and Attendance Policy	19
Q	Late Pick-Up Policy	20
R	Authorized Pick-Up Policy	20
S	Emergency Procedures	21
T	Emergency Evacuation Plan	21
U	Transportation	21
1	Parking	21
2	Emergency Transportation Plan	22
VII	Health Policy	
A	Sickness	22
B	When Children Should or Should Not Attend the Y	22
C	Administration of Medication	23
D	Individual Health Care Plans	23
E	Allergies	23
F	Infection Control	23
G	Diaper Changing Policies and Procedures	24
1	Diaper Policies	24
2	Diapering Procedure (posted at changing stations)	24
H	Nutritious Snack or Lunch Suggestions	25
I	Animal and Pet Policy	25
VIII	Child Protection Policies	
A	Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect Strategies	26
B	Mandated Reporting	26
C	MetroWest YMCA Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse	26
IX	Parent Rights and Responsibilities	
A	Parental Rights	27
B	Parent Input and Volunteer Opportunities	28
C	Parent Visits and Conferences	28
D	Progress Reports	29

E	Children’s Records	29
1	Access to the Record	29
2	Charge for Copies	29
3	Amending the Child’s Records	29
4	Transfer of Records	29
F	Parental Responsibilities	30
X	Responsibilities of the Program	
A	Providing Information to the Department of Early Education and Care	30
B	Reporting Abuse or Neglect	30
C	Notification of Injury	30
D	Availability of Regulations	30
E	Confidentiality Policy	30
F	Research, Experimentation, and Unusual Treatment Policy	31
G	Unauthorized Activities Policy	31
	Appendix	
	MetroWest YMCA Staff, Lines of Authority & Supervision	32

I Overview of MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center

A MetroWest YMCA Mission Statement

The MetroWest YMCA is dedicated to providing programs and services that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

B Philosophy, Goals and Objectives

The central focus of the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center is to foster growth and development, not only among the children involved in the program but also among their family members.

Components of this goal are developing self-esteem, learning by discovery, age appropriate activities, individual and group activities, variety, and exploration.

Children develop in their own ways and at their own pace. We are committed to being sensitive to each child's growth and development. We are also sensitive to those children who are developing with disabilities. The MetroWest YMCA early learning educators work to establish an atmosphere that enables all children to explore and grow.

C Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center is to provide quality care and education in a safe and supportive environment that fosters the physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social growth of children, while supporting and strengthening families.

D Non-discrimination Policy

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center admits children of any race and ethnicity to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities provided or made available to all children and families at the Y. The Y does not discriminate based on gender, race, religion, parents' marital status, family structure, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, physical or mental disability, toilet training status, sexual orientation, or ability to pay. Children do not need to be toilet trained to be eligible to enroll.

To ensure that all children and families are welcome and comfortable in our programs, we do not observe holidays and cultural celebrations in our classrooms. We encourage children to discuss special events and meaningful parts of their lives while they are at school, but the educators do not design any activities or introduce concepts that are not inclusive and relevant to all the children. It is our intention that no child or family should ever feel excluded or devalued.

E Licensing Information

All MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and are mandated to uphold all the EEC rules and regulations pertaining to large group day care licensing policies. The EEC regional office responsible for the program is located at 10 Austin Street, Worcester, MA 01609. The phone number is (508) 798-5180. Family members may contact EEC for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history.

II Our Educators

A Overview

We believe the success of our programs lies in the quality of our educators who directly provide your child's experience. Our educators are carefully selected based on their experience, education, talents, and interpersonal skills. They receive an in-depth orientation that includes such areas as program goals, emergency procedures, group work, curriculum planning, philosophy of education, goals and objectives, and policy procedures. Our early learning educators have a multitude of experiences and backgrounds. All our educators have background record checks that include criminal background checks (CORI checks), Sexual Offenders Registry Index checks (SORI), Department of Children and Families review, and fingerprints in addition to training in first aid, CPR, and child abuse and neglect prevention.

B Educator and Volunteer Qualifications

The Y provides its educators with multiple opportunities for development and advancement through staff training throughout the year. Our program leadership shares all training available to Y staff. These opportunities include conferences, workshops, college courses, and other opportunities. Regulations require teachers to complete at least twenty hours of training per year.

Center Directors also contact speakers to come to the YMCA to speak to educators on topics such as child abuse, behavioral problems, children with disabilities, positive guidance, and other pertinent issues.

The Y also encourages volunteers to work in its early learning programs as teacher assistants or similar roles. These volunteers receive appropriate orientation, training, supervision, and staff development. We chose them for their ability to meet the needs of the children and interest in supporting our efforts. They must meet the same requirements as the staff regarding Background Record Checks (BRC)'s, references, and an orientation to the program. We encourage volunteers to participate in training that we offer to the paid educators. Although volunteers must track the dates and times of their service, they cannot be alone with children and must always be under the direct visual supervision of an EEC qualified educator unless they meet EEC certification requirements.

The background record check and reference checks are not required for family members of children enrolled in the Early Learning Center who volunteer for isolated activities such as to be a mystery reader or to help with a special event. If the family member volunteers on a regular basis or is included in the educator to child ratio, they must complete a background record check and reference checks.

The YMCA will describe, in writing, any arrangements they may have with any school or professional training program that will include an overview of student responsibilities as well as an explanation of the supervision of students by the training program and the YMCA.

III Children's Rights and Responsibilities

A Educators' Responsibilities

- Educators are responsible for ensuring that children enrolled:
- Have a safe and reliable environment free of hazards.

- Have use of all the equipment and space on an equal basis; equipment will be functioning and clean condition.
- Have their ideas and feelings respected.
- Guided into appropriate behavior using positive guidance strategies that are fair, equal, and respectful.
- Have opportunity to express their emotions such as joy, anger, frustration, and disappointment in an appropriate manner.
- Have activities that allow participants to express their creative ability, as they explore and discover, while developing to their fullest potential.
- Have an environment that offers a variety of choices: fine and gross motor, quiet, indoor, outdoor, active, and passive areas, creative, dramatic play, and exploration.
- Have a right to voice their opinion on the rules and give input on activities offered.
- Have educators that care about them, enjoy being with them and help them grow.
- Be treated with care, honesty, respect, and responsibility - the core values of the Y.

B Children's Responsibilities

Children need to be responsible for:

- Learning to accept consequences for their own actions.
- Displaying the Y character development traits of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility.
- Respecting the rules that their teachers and classmates established together.
- Controlling their anger so that their actions do not harm anyone.
- Not willfully damaging any equipment or property in the building or anyone else's property.
- Sharing equipment and facilities with all children in the program.
- Returning materials and equipment to the place they found them and before they start a different activity or go home.
- Participating in and committing to complete activities

IV Enrollment Procedures and Requirements

A Registration

1 Enrollment Criteria

The MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center enrolls for children ages 12 months to five years (pre-kindergarten) following an annual calendar that aligns with the Framingham Public Schools. Children also start during the year pending availability. Fall registration opens to existing families to confirm their interest in continuing their child's participation in the program before it opens to the waitlisted children then the public. Our license from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) determines our enrollment.

We encourage families interested in learning more about our Center and potentially enrolling their child to connect with the program leadership to schedule a tour of the facility and meet with the Director or Associate Director. Families start the enrollment process by submitting a one page application form and fee. Once we confirm a start date, families will receive a link to DocNetwork.com, a secure online service to complete the enrollment process. DocNetwork information includes health information, recent physical completed by a licensed health professional, immunizations, developmental history, pick-up authorizations, emergency information, nutrition forms, authorization forms. Families typically complete

the developmental screening forms on paper. Please note that all information must be complete before children can start. In addition, families must update information such as authorizations and emergency contact information annually.

The MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center partners with Framingham Public Schools to offer Pre-K learning opportunities to children who reside in Framingham the year before entering Kindergarten. We have two Pre-K Partnerships for Early Learners (PEL) classrooms at our center. Early Education at Framingham Public Schools oversees the enrollment process and all students accepted are registered with the district and our center.

2 Medical Information Needed Prior to Enrollment

Medical information from the pediatrician's office must include the following:

- Dates of immunizations (including Varivax/Varicella/Chicken Pox)
- Update Lead Test (yearly up to age 3)
- Physical within 12 months
- Signature of Doctor

Enrollment and registration materials are confidential, but available immediately to:

- The program administrators and educators in the child's classroom
- The child's parents or legal guardians
- Regulatory authorities, on request.

B Registration Changes

Families must send an email or provide written requests for changes in registration information (i.e., changes in pick-up authorization, addresses, work or home phone numbers, emergency contacts, etc.). Families must provide at least one month's notice if interested in changing their child's scheduled days. We will accommodate schedule changes based on space in the classroom.

C Child and Family Orientation

- As part of our commitment to family engagement, the Y offers this orientation process to welcome children and families to our program and to help ensure that the program is a good match for the child, their family, and the center. In our experience, children are most successful transitioning into our centers when they visit their new classroom a couple of times prior to their official start date. After we agree on a start date for the child, we recommend that children spend at least an hour visiting their new classroom. In most cases, we encourage adult family members to leave the room for second half of the visit so that the child can start becoming comfortable without their family member present. If appropriate, the Director or Associate Director will meet with the family members to discuss the priorities for the family and review the following center policies and procedures if families have questions. Please note that families must complete all information in DocNetwork and other documentation before the child's first day in the Center.
- Whenever possible and needed, the Y will work with families to provide a translator and to translate written materials. If translators are not available, written information will be translated by online software for families to access.
- Philosophy, curriculum goals and objectives, and written statements of purpose
- Types of services provided
- Child guidance policy
- Communication strategies

- Procedures for addressing individualized needs including IFSP's, IEPs, and health plan such as severe allergies
- Health and safety precautions and requirements that affect families and their children including building security and access, medications, inclusion or exclusion of ill children, and emergency plans
- Techniques used by the program to negotiate difficulties and differences that arise in interactions between families and program staff
- Payment, meals, and snacks, and sleeping arrangements
- Confidentiality policy
- Referral policy
- Termination and suspension policy
- Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect
- When appropriate, transportation plans and field trip policies including safety precautions such as cell phone availability, first-aid supplies on trip, and alternative transportation arrangements

If a child demonstrates significant discomfort and anxiety during this orientation process, we work with families to schedule additional visits or create a modified schedule. The child may start on the agreed upon date after the visit is complete, families have submitted all the enrollment paperwork including physical forms and paid the first tuition payment, and Y staff have reviewed all the documentation.

D Financial Information

New children interested in enrolling in the Early Learning Center pay a non-refundable one time enrollment fee of \$30. All families, including those on Y Assist, pay an annual registration fee of \$30 except for those on state-subsidized financial aid (contracted slots or vouchers).

Upon enrollment, families on EEC subsidies must provide a deposit equal to the assessed parent fee for five full days of care. Regular tuition payments are due no later than the Monday two weeks before the date of care unless the family and the Y have made alternative arrangements.

For all other families, we required pre-payment equal to one week's tuition at the time of registration to reserve your child's space in the program. We apply that payment to your child's first week of tuition. Families must pay tuition on or before the Monday two weeks before the week of care unless the family and the Y have made alternative arrangements. We charge families a late fee of \$15 when payments are one week late. Tuition that is two weeks overdue may result in termination of care and prohibit access to other Y programs if we do not have a payment plan established. The MetroWest YMCA sends unpaid tuition fees to a collection agency.

We do not reduce tuition for our Early Learning Center for any weeks containing scheduled holidays, closures due to inclement weather or child absences.

E Financial Assistance

The tuition is based on covering the operating costs of the program. Our Annual Campaign helps to keep tuition as reasonable as possible while allowing us to provide quality programming. Through Y Assist, we offer financial assistance to individuals and families who cannot afford the full price of membership, program activity or Early Learning tuition. We determine eligibility based on income level, family size and funds available. We require all families who receive Y-Assist to explore other tuition subsidies, such as the Department of Early Education and Care vouchers, so that we can help as many families as possible. As a result, we also accept voucher payments through local resource and referral agencies and

have limited contracted slot spaces for income eligible participants. Ask the Director of Family Services for more details.

Children must meet eligibility requirements to enroll in the Partnerships for Early Learners (PEL) classrooms where they become students of Framingham Public Schools. There are no enrollment fees or tuition for PEL participants.

F Withdrawal Policy

Families must inform the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center in writing at least one month in advance if they are withdrawing their child from the program. Families who fail to do so will still be liable for payment for one month after the written notification. The Y reserves the right to terminate services with a two-week advance notice to families. When the health, welfare and safety of other children are at stake, the Y reserves the right to suspend or terminate services immediately.

V Curriculum and Assessment System

A Program Plan

We designed the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center to build strong bodies, minds, and spirits. Activities at the Y put learning in the context of play and to celebrate the joys of education and growth. They include motor and language activities, sensory experiences, creative expression, learning through hands-on exploration and acquisition of self-help skills. Our curriculum addresses each child’s developmental needs and interests and emphasizes the Y character values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. This individualized instruction helps each child grow and succeed. We designed our classes to make children feel safe and comfortable while learning, exploring, socializing, and enjoying themselves. Programs allow children to be social, to feel empowered and to participate in active learning opportunities. In our Center, young children have opportunities to test themselves through action and performance, which enables their brains to mature and helps them learn how to solve problems, make sound judgments, and try on broader responsibilities. By participating in a large variety of engaging activities that support all areas of development, children will be more prepared for school and older children will be more successful academically. We provide safe and reliable environments for kids to select and develop new interests . . . while they have fun!

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center provides high quality early education and care to children ages 12 months to five years (pre-kindergarten). Part-week and full-week programs are available for preschool and pre-kindergarten classrooms. We only offer full-week care in our toddler classroom.

Routines create a structure for children that helps provide a framework for understanding and learning in their environment. To meet the developmental needs of each child, the daily schedule and curriculum vary among classrooms. Even within a single classroom, there is flexibility within the schedule to respond to the individual children at a given moment while keeping the framework of the schedule for consistency. This is a sample daily schedule for an early learning classroom.

7:30	–	9:00	Arrival, centers, and choice time
9:00	–	9:15	Snack
9:15	–	9:45	Circle Time
9:45	–	11:00	Centers and projects
11:00	–	12:00	Outdoor Play

12:00	–	12:30	Lunch
12:30	–	1:00	Story time
1:00	–	2:30	Quiet time/Rest time*
2:30	–	3:00	Stories, Special Quiet Activities/Rest time
3:00	–	3:15	Snack
3:15	–	4:00	Outdoor Play
4:00	–	5:30	Centers, projects, and choice time
5:30	–	6:00	Story time and departure

*We incorporate quiet time/rest time into the daily schedule in the early afternoon for each early learning classroom. Although children can sleep during this time, the teachers provide children who do not fall asleep quiet activities.

B Curriculum and Assessment

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center provides a variety of activities in a safe and caring environment designed to meet the individual interests and developmental needs of the children enrolled in our programs. The curriculum provides the basic structure for how we go about the business of supporting growth and learning based on thorough knowledge of the developmental stages each child travels through and the skills that they acquire along the way.

Our Early Learning Center uses the MyTeachingStrategies.com system including Creative Curriculum and Teaching Strategies GOLD for curriculum and assessment. This combined curriculum and assessment system ensures the effective measurement and support of growth across all developmental domains. It identifies important skills and knowledge for children across a broad range of learning in the areas of social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language as well as content areas such as literacy, mathematics, science and technology, health and safety, creative expression, and the arts.

With this basic knowledge and a greater knowledge of each child enrolled over time, our educators plan learning experiences designed to encourage active learning and continued growth in all areas. The key to keeping children excited and motivated to learn is by planning activities based on what we discover about each child’s interests and needs.

Our learning environments are child-friendly, print-rich and organized into interest centers. The materials and equipment seen in our programs include:

- Dramatic play materials such as dress-up clothing, puppets, housekeeping furniture, play food and dishes
- Sensory materials such as sand, water, play dough, paint, and blocks
- Literacy materials such as books, writing utensils, posters, photos, and shelf labels
- Math materials such as balance, counting bears, unit blocks, and lotto games
- Science materials such as magnets, prisms, rocks, shells, feathers, and plants
- Gross motor equipment that requires pulling up, climbing in, on or over, moving through, around, under and pushing, pulling, and riding

Planned activities, books, dolls, play food, multilingual labels, dress-up clothes, musical instruments, posters, and other activities, materials, and equipment represent diversity in culture, language, gender roles, age, and abilities.

A daily schedule and routine help to integrate all the activities and opportunities for learning but is always flexible enough for unplanned learning experiences that may present themselves. The schedule incorporates times for quiet and active play as well as opportunities to interact with large groups, small groups, or independently. Some activities are short in duration, while others may be long term or repeated frequently. Many activities will challenge children to use what they already know and challenge them to apply that knowledge to different circumstances.

Our Early Learning Center does not allow any screen time except for the rare instance when the use of a digital device or video is linked to a specific activity and has been pre-approved by Center leadership ahead of time. We do not allow screen time for children under the age of two.

C Developmental Screening

Before the child's first day, adult family members complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE) at home or in another location comfortable for the child. The questionnaires provide information on how each child is developing in their communication, gross and fine motor (physical), cognitive/problem solving, personal-social, and social emotional skills. Both the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE identify each child's strengths as well as areas where the child may need additional support. This information is beneficial since it helps establish a partnership between the child's family and educators, they provide information necessary for individualizing the classroom curriculum, and puts a system in place for addressing potential areas of concern.

Once families complete the questionnaires and return them to the Center, a trained program supervisor will score the tools and share the results with the child's family and the child's teachers. If the screening tools indicate follow-up recommendations, we will schedule a more formal conversation with the family. During the meeting, we would discuss different options that could support the child in future learning and development. Some examples of follow-up actions are to provide specialized activities both in the classroom and at home that are designed to target specific skills, sharing results with child's primary care physician, or a recommendation to be further screened by early intervention or the special education department of the family's public school system. Based on our Confidentiality Policy, the MetroWest YMCA will only share ASQ results and recommendations within the Center staff on a need to know basis and we will not make any referrals to outside professionals without written consent from the child's parent or guardian.

When possible and appropriate, we encourage families to complete new developmental screenings when their children move into new classrooms.

Additional information regarding the ASQ's is available at www.AgesandStages.com or with the Director.

D Assessment and Its Relationship to Curriculum Planning

Assessment is the process of examining each child's progress towards achieving developmental milestones. Each skill or content learning a child develops within each developmental level builds upon a previous skill or knowledge base. The assessment portion of MyTeachingStrategies.com involves the use of a progression of knowledge, skills and behaviors that are the most predictive of school success. It also includes objectives that help educators focus on the competencies valued in the Massachusetts Early Learning Standards as well as national standards. Each area of development – socio-emotional, physical, cognitive, language – is subdivided into curriculum goals and objectives. Those goals and objectives serve as tools in the teaching/learning process. Teachers use these goals and objectives as focus points for observations.

Teachers must participate in workshops or college coursework in addition to mentoring support to learn the Y's curriculum and assessment process. After teachers finish their training on how to authentically assess children, they observe and interact with each child in their natural state of play as individuals and participants in small and large groups within their class. The assessments take place in a language the children understand doing developmentally appropriate activities to discover their interests and strengths. Educators collect detailed records over time for each developmental goal to reveal growth, areas of interest and areas needing special support when appropriate. This informal assessment technique includes discussions, observations, and information gained from family members. Educators also collect samples of children's work and photograph children in action for sharing in portfolios with families twice a year. Classroom educators discuss assessments with families at least twice per year. Prior to the conferences, teachers also share a chart that demonstrates the child's progress during the year. Conferences include discussion on each child's development and any goals families and teachers have for the child. Educators will share methods of supporting students at home while considering the child's learning strengths and style as well as the family dynamics. To ensure student confidentiality, the classroom teacher will maintain all assessments until the scheduled conferences. After the conference, we will store a copy of the assessments in the child's permanent file at the Center, and families will have a copy for their own records.

The benefits to using MyTeachingStrategies.com including the Teaching Strategies GOLD Objectives for Development and Learning include the following:

- Assisting educators and families to have realistic expectations within developmental stages
- Targeting specific goals for observation and develop individual plans for each child based on these observations
- Promoting a positive approach to teaching by focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses
- Providing educators with a wealth of information to share with families about their child
- To improve curriculum, adapt teaching practices, and adjust the environment
- To identify areas for program improvement such as informing curriculum, individualized instruction, and professional development topics

Once teachers have collected their observations, they analyze the data collected and identify which objective each child has reached on the developmental continuum. Educators discuss this information with families and jointly plan priorities, goals, and next steps. By working with families, educators gain greater knowledge of each child to plan learning experiences to encourage active learning and continued growth in all areas. The key to keeping children excited and motivated to learn is by partnering with families to provide activities based on each child's interests and needs within the context of each family's values, beliefs, experiences, and language.

In addition, educators analyze cumulative information for the whole class to prioritize objectives for both the entire class as well as for individuals. Teaching teams then plan strategies to best support children's learning creating the last step in a four-part continuous cycle: Observe, Record, Reflect, and Plan. Educators constantly flow from one part to the next which provides the framework to present activities that encourage continued growth in all areas.

E Interest Centers

We divide our classrooms into different interest centers to help provide learning in different areas. The materials and equipment seen in our programs include:

- dramatic play
- sensory materials such as sand, water, play dough, paint, and blocks

- literacy, math, science, social studies, and other content areas; and
- gross-motor opportunities such as pulling up; walking; climbing in, on, and over; moving through, around, and under; pushing; pulling, and riding.
- Manipulatives

F Outdoor Play Areas

Every day, we give children the opportunity to be active for at least 60 minutes. This active play usually takes place outside on our playgrounds. We designed the playgrounds to be age and developmentally appropriate and include places for children to play alone or with friends. Motor experiences such as running, balancing, riding, jumping, crawling, and scooting are typically part of the structure experience. We also incorporated other non-motor activities such as dramatic play, block building, manipulative play, and art activities into the outdoor experience. Children can learn about the natural environment including exploring different surfaces, materials, and plants during outside time. It is our hope that children with all levels of gross motor skills, including those with disabilities, can participate in the outdoor curricula. We keep sandboxes used for playing clean and covered when not in use by the children.

A Certified Playground Safety Inspector has visited our playground and certified that the play equipment is safe for children through kindergarten age, there are no unsafe conditions, and we perform regular inspections and maintenance.

G Program Evaluation

To ensure that the Early Learning Center is operating at the highest level of quality possible, every year, the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center conducts a comprehensive program evaluation.

Administrators, families, educators, and other stakeholders work together to measure progress toward the MetroWest YMCA Strategic Plan and the individual program's goals and objectives. The evaluation process gathers evidence in all areas of program functioning by using valid and reliable processes such as family surveys, educator surveys, classroom observations, aggregated child assessment data, and financial reports. Since all components of program operation are guided by written policies and are conducted through articulated plans, systems, and procedures, the evaluation process also includes reviewing whether the policies support the smooth and effective guidance needed to reach program goals.

Examples of program functioning that we evaluate are policies and procedures, program quality, children's progress, and learning (including review of developmental screening and assessment effectiveness), family involvement and satisfaction, community awareness and satisfaction, and financial health.

Once we have completed the evaluation, we share the annual evaluation findings with families, educators, administration, and the Regional Education Community Board (the policy group led by volunteers who provide guidance and recommendations to the Education Branch). With their input, we use the evaluation results to support the continuation of successful activities and to establish goals for improvement and innovation. The evaluation helps determine appropriate professional development opportunities, program quality improvement activities, and operation and policy updates.

During staff and family meetings, we determine if we are making progress in program goals and requirements. We maintain electronic documentation including data review toward goals in addition to the database collection and monitoring of children and staff files and financial records. We may modify program goals during the year based on new circumstances or priorities that occur.

VI Policies and Procedures

A Child Guidance

The goal of our child guidance plan is to minimize opportunities for challenging behaviors, suspension, and/or exclusionary measures, as well as to help children develop tools to make good decisions about resolving conflicts and solving problems so that children can demonstrate respect for each other and their environment as well as ensure the safety and security of everyone involved.

We use a positive approach that respects the child to support individual behavior management. Y staff actively incorporate communication, social, and emotional regulation skills into the curriculum to guide children in using appropriate behavior rather than focusing only on reducing challenging behaviors. We address discipline procedures individually, usually with a natural consequence that is associated with the situation and incorporates the teaching of a more positive alternative and does not include any circumstances when it is permissible for staff to use any form of physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child.

Y staff members observe children to assess the function of the behavior and to identify events, activities, interactions, and other contextual factors that predict or contribute to the child's use of challenging behavior. Once we find these negative behavior triggers, Y staff explore ways to minimize their impact to promote positive behaviors by the children through the modification of the environment or activities as well as provide adult or peer support.

When a staff member has identified a challenging behavior that has impacted the safety or learning opportunities within the environment, the Inclusion Team will observe the child in attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the function and intent of the behavior. The Inclusion Team may set up a meeting with the child's adult family members to learn more about strategies that are successful in the home to integrate into the classroom, as well as speak with other partners that already work with the child (i.e., therapists, specialists, previous providers). The Inclusion Team will share with the child's family an Individualized Child Plan (ICP) that includes specific positive behavior support strategies for the teachers to utilize when working with the child. This plan will be re-evaluated by the Inclusion Team on a regular basis to assess effectiveness and to update as needed.

We provide formal training on positive classroom management during our professional development days as well as incorporate specific learning opportunities for educators in their individual professional development plans. The Inclusion Team members and program leadership also coach and monitor educators to implement positive classroom management techniques in the classroom. The strategies incorporate the entire classroom to ensure maximum impact, and may include group transition warnings, creating or minimizing options for independent play, visual cues, routines, or where the educator stands/sits in the room to ensure proper monitoring.

1 Methods of Guidance Approved for YMCA Educators

Teachers address challenging behavior by assessing the function of the child's behavior, determining positive behavior supports and interventions, and when necessary, collaborating with families and professionals to develop individualized behavior support plans to develop the student's plan for success.

Teachers help children manage their behavior by guiding and supporting children to:

- Persist when frustrated
- Play cooperatively with other children

- Use language to communicate needs
- Learn turn taking
- Gain control of physical impulses
- Express negative emotions in ways that do not harm others or themselves
- Use problem-solving techniques
- Learn about self and others.

When a challenging behavior occurs, teachers respond to the child in a way that is safe for the child and others in the classroom, is calm, is respectful and maintains the dignity of the child. The teacher then determines what approach to take based on three behavioral categories: unskillful, inappropriate, or unacceptable.

Unskillful behavior: An unskillful behavior occurs when the child does not have the knowledge of how or when to behave in a specific situation. In these situations, the teacher will work with the child to teach the appropriate behavior, practice the behavior, and then assist them in using the behavior in the appropriate way. For example: A child grabs a toy from another child. The teacher would help the child with the skills to ask the other child if they can share the toy.

Inappropriate behavior: An inappropriate behavior is an unwanted behavior that does not match the context of the situation (wrong time, wrong place). When a child exhibits an inappropriate behavior, teachers will help the child substitute a different behavior that does not match the current situation. For example: A child yelling during circle time. The teacher will remind the child of the expected behaviors during circle time, review circle time expectations, and potentially share when yelling is acceptable such as when playing outside. The teacher will praise the student when the appropriate volume level is demonstrated at circle time.

Unacceptable behavior: An unacceptable behavior is when the student has “crossed the line” humiliating another child or jeopardizing the safety and well-being of the group. When a child exhibits unacceptable behavior, the team will convene immediately to determine a positive behavior support plan in collaboration with the family and professionals when appropriate. For example: A child runs away from the group or space and runs into the parking lot which creates an unsafe situation for the child, the staff members who are following the child, and the other children in the group who now have less supervision and support. The team will continue to monitor or adjust the plan based on the child’s behaviors.

In problematic situations where children exhibit persistent, serious, and unacceptable behaviors, teachers, families, and the Y’s Inclusion team will partner as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child’s inclusion and success both at home and at the Y. When necessary, additional supports or an alternative placement may be needed.

2 Prohibited Methods of Behavior Management

Staff may NEVER use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion when disciplining a child. The following methods of discipline are examples of strictly prohibited actions:

- No spanking, shaking, hitting, squeezing, biting, pulling any body part including hair, or other forms of corporal punishment.

- No cruel, unusual, or severe punishment, humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, abusive treatment including shaming, ridiculing, threatening, frightening, ostracizing, or secluding.
- No rough handling, physical restraint, or forcing a child to perform an action such as cleaning.
- No denial of meals or snacks, drink, rest, or bathroom facilities as punishment.
- No punishment related to eating or not eating food including no force-feeding.
- No punishment for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet or forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or forcing a child to remain on the toilet or other excessive practices of toileting.
- No time-outs or similar approaches where children are isolated for a specific amount of time based on their ages. At the MetroWest YMCA, children may need to leave the group or their activity until they can demonstrate that they can make appropriate decisions about their behaviors. Educators help the children explore the situation as a learning experience so that the children can make more appropriate decisions in the future.

Any YMCA staff that violates any of the prohibited methods listed above will be immediately suspended until Department of Children and Families and Department of Early Education and Care complete further investigation.

In all cases, suspension and/or expulsion of a child from the Early Learning Program is the final decision of the MetroWest YMCA President or his designee. Although a last resort, suspension may be necessary to ensure the safety of your child and of others in the group. Please note that children enrolled in Partnerships for Early Learners classrooms are Framingham Public School students, so FPS and the Y will make decisions regarding suspension and/or expulsion for PEL children together.

3 Child Guidance Procedure

In problematic situations where children exhibit persistent, serious, and unacceptable behaviors, teachers, families, and the Y's Inclusion team will partner together to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success both at home and at the YMCA. The Y will often encourage the external consultations or evaluations by behavioral health professionals, special education departments of public schools, early intervention, or others to provide additional insight and recommendations for how the child's needs can be met. The Framingham Public Schools will be actively involved in the support of children enrolled in the PEL classrooms.

Sometimes, we may need to ask the family to withdraw the child from the Center –

- If the concerning behaviors have not diminished.
- If the problematic incident is the final incident in a succession of aggressive behaviors that are harmful to the child and/or other children/staff at the center.
- If it is determined that we are unable to provide the services that the child requires (i.e., special language or speech support, additional staffing, etc.).

If this situation occurs, we will consider re-enrollment of the child after this phase has passed.

B Children's Evaluations

All children enrolled in the Early Learning Center will have two formal evaluations each year using Teaching Strategies GOLD. We will also provide families with information about their child's development and learning on a quarterly basis for toddlers and children with special education plans. Evaluations provide the opportunity for families and educators to discuss goals and next steps for the child. They also cover developmental areas including cognitive, social, and physical growth. Families or educators may also request an individual conference with educators or the Early Learning Center Director at any time.

C Special Needs

We encourage families with children who have special needs to meet with the Director of Inclusion prior to registration to discuss what the child needs to be successful in our programs. When possible, we would like to review documentation including the identification of specific accommodations required to meet the needs of the child, which would include change or modification in the child's participation in regular activities as well as identification of any special equipment, materials, ramps, or aids. If we expect the accommodations to cause undue burden on the program, we will notify the family in writing with the reasons for the decisions. Families may contact the Department of Early Education and Care to review the decision.

D Referral Plan

The MetroWest YMCA has information regarding resources for multiple different resources for families. Here are the more commonly requested community supports:

Counseling:

SMOC Behavioral: (508) 879-2250

Wayside Youth and Family: (508) 879-9800

Advocates: (508) 485-9300

Medical Services:

Dr. Jeffrey Zaref, Southboro Pediatrics in Framingham: (508) 872-1260

Natick Dental Partners (Pediatric Dentists): (508) 653-2417

MetroWest Medical Center: (508) 383-1000

Education and Special Needs:

Criterion Early Intervention: (508) 620-1442

Ashland Public Schools (508) 881-0150

Ashland Public Schools, Special Education Department: (508) 881-0155

Framingham Public Schools, Department of Student Registration: (508) 424-3420

Framingham Public Schools, Special Education Department: (508) 424-3458

Framingham Public Schools, Early Education: (508) 782-6898

Social Services and Tuition Assistance:

Department of Transitional Assistance: (508) 661-6600

Child Care Resources: (508) 796-1829

SMOC Helpline: (800) 620-2347

United Way Call Center Information & Referral Line: 211

Families should contact the Director of Early Learning regarding these and other referral services. She will consult with the Director of Inclusion to try to identify the most appropriate resource for the family. If an educator develops a concern about a child based on the assessment process, the educator will observe, record, and review the behavior before recommending a meeting with the family to discuss a potential referral. During the meeting, the Y staff will share the program's concerns and discuss the referral in a sensitive and supportive way. We keep all referrals confidential.

If a child is at least 2 ½ years of age, the Y will inform the child's parent(s) or guardians(s) of the availability of services and their rights, including the right to appeal under Chapter 766. If a child is under

the age of 2 ½ years, the Y will inform the child's family of the availability of services provided by Early Intervention Programs.

The Y will provide families with a written statement including the reason for recommending a referral for additional services, a summary of the program's observations related to the referral and any efforts the program may have made to accommodate the child's needs, including the creation of an Individualized Child Plan (ICP). The Y will also offer the child's family to make the referral. We require written parental consent before making any referral. We maintain a written record of any referrals in the child's file as well as records of conferences with family and the results. The Director of Inclusion will have contacts for the Chapter 766 and Early Intervention Programs.

The MetroWest Care Connection (<https://mwcareconnection.info/>) provides additional resources for families with translation services available.

E Transition Plan

Educators, specialists, and family members work together to determine the best way to support children when they transition out of our Early Learning Center. When possible, the adults involved work together to use multiple strategies to help the child understand and prepare for the change. With family consent, educators complete a developmental profile to share with teachers at the child's new school including kindergarten and special education teachers. For children involved with special education as well as significant behavioral challenges, Y educators try to be involved in the transition meetings and provide written reports as appropriate.

The MetroWest YMCA collaborates with the Framingham Public Schools to support children and families transitioning into the public school system. Y staff can quickly access public school information, forms, and supports directly to families enrolled in our Early Learning Center. Y staff share flyers relating to special education screening, kindergarten enrollment, and other public school related services. When families experience challenges navigating the public school system, YMCA staff can provide additional support. For children moving into kindergarten, School's Out can provide before- and afterschool care at six of the eight public elementary schools in Framingham. Please contact the School's Out Director or School's Out Enrollment Coordinator for more information.

We try to minimize transitions during the year, especially for our toddlers to allow children to develop trusting relationships with their teachers and to promote their social and emotional development. For this reason, we prefer not to enroll children between 2 and 2 years, 9 months. This way, children have at least 9 months with the same teachers to support their social and emotional needs.

F Commitment to Partnership

If a child comes to us with identified special needs or behavioral issues, or if these issues emerge during the course of a child's time at the Y, we work together with the child's family and other professionals, when appropriate, to determine what kinds of interventions and supports that child will need to thrive and grow. Sometimes through this process it may become apparent that a child needs more support than the Y staff is able to provide. In such circumstances, we may recommend that a child be evaluated for supports outside of the Y, such as speech and language development, or occupational therapy through Early Intervention or through the public schools. Some children may exhibit behaviors that indicate they may benefit from emotional supports such as counseling or play therapy. We are happy to work collaboratively with outside organizations and welcome professionals working with children to do so at our sites when it is appropriate and feasible.

In some cases when a child needs more support, after going through the process of evaluating and responding to a child's individual needs, we may determine that the Y programs are currently not able to meet the needs of a particular child by assessing multiple factors including:

- The child's safety and ability to access the learning environment we provide.
- Our staff's ability to provide the level of support needed by a particular child, especially if that child needs a significant amount of one-to-one support.
- The safety and wellbeing of the rest of the children in the group.
- The safety and wellbeing of our staff.
- The ability of our staff to provide a consistent and stable environment in which all the children in the group can learn and have fun.

When a particular child has needs that impact the factors above, we will need to decide if the child will be able to remain in our program. We do not see this as punishing the child or the adult family members; we see it as coming to an understanding that we cannot meet the needs of a particular child within the perimeters of our programming. Sometimes a child may need a smaller group size, or more one-one assistance than we are able to provide or may need a more specialized or therapeutic environment in which to develop the skills that they need to reach their full growth potential. We always hope to be able to come to these decisions in partnership with the child's family.

G Procedures to Avoid Suspension or Termination

When possible, we use warnings and/or suspensions before terminations. We document incidents to share with families and make a reasonable effort to work with the family prior to termination when possible. We document in the child's file all referrals that we recommend or family's request.

We only consider expulsion after multiple interventions and meetings have been explored and is a last resort method. Please note that children enrolled in the Partnerships for Early Learners classrooms are Framingham Public School students, FPS and the Y will make decisions regarding suspension and/or expulsion for PEL children together.

In these situations, we discuss referrals or services with the families to assist them in finding an alternative programming. Our policies are in line with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care Regulations.

Reasons for suspension and/or termination of a child from the Early Learning Center include:

- Inappropriate behavior by child, considered to be harmful to the child, staff, or others (Families are still liable for payment for days suspended due to inappropriate behavior.)
- Inappropriate behavior or language by adult family members, considered to be harmful to your child, educators, or others (Families are still liable for payment for days suspended due to inappropriate behavior.)
- Chronic tardiness at departure time
- Chronic absenteeism
- Overdue fees
- Other, as determined and discussed with the Director

When we ask a child to leave our program, our educators prepare the child for departure in a manner consistent with their ability to understand, when possible. Suspension will not be for punishment or to circumvent the referral requirements and will not be in violation of the ADA.

H Clothing and Rest Time

Children at the Y are active and involved. They should wear clothes that are seasonally appropriate, comfortable, practical and wash easily. Although children wear paint smocks, spills and paint still can get onto their clothing. Please send your child to the program with an extra set of clothing in case of accidents/spills. And during the winter months, all children should come to the center with mittens, boots, hats, and snowsuits. To protect your child from injury while running and climbing, we ask for no sandals or flip flops. Your child's shoes should cover the toes completely and be secure on their feet.

In addition, children need to bring bedding for their cots during rest time. Typically, children need a small blanket and crib-sized sheet. Some children also enjoy a small pillow and a small stuffed animal or other comfort animal. Due to our space limitations, we do not allow sleeping bags and full size pillows. Families are responsible for washing all bedding weekly or more often if needed.

Families should label all belongings with the child's name. The Y is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing or bedding.

I Toileting Procedures

For children not toilet trained, the educators will change diapers every two to three hours, when the child wakes from a nap, or as needed during the day. We change diapers on a changing table with fresh paper and place soiled diapers in a closed container with a leak proof disposable lining. We clean diaper pails when needed. Staff wash the changing surface with a soap and water solution then disinfected with bleach/water solution (1 part bleach/10 parts water) between each change. We also wash and dry each child with individual washing materials during every change. Teachers will wear gloves whenever changing a child.

After every change, the child and staff wash their hands following EEC guidelines for hand washing and use disposable towels to dry hands. Families supply diapers and ointments.

Children who are already toilet trained will go to the bathroom as needed. For those children who are just learning, teachers will provide opportunities throughout the day for the child to become accustomed to the toilet. Children using the toilet will follow EEC guidelines for hand washing and will use disposable towels to dry their hands. The teachers will always discuss the procedures with families and follow their requests.

If a child should have a toileting accident and they soil their clothes, one teacher will escort the child to the bathroom where the teacher will clean the child and assist the child in putting on a clean change of clothes. The staff member will put the soiled clothes into a plastic bag labeled with the child's name and placed in the child's school bag for the family to take home at departure. All families must keep at least one clean set of seasonally appropriate clothes for their child (pants, shirt, underpants, t-shirt, & socks) at the Early Learning Center.

J Toothbrushing

With concerns about the increase in tooth decay (cavities) among young children, the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center includes the promotion of positive oral health and prevention of tooth decay in the classrooms. Early Learning Educators encourage children to brush their teeth after lunch. This program is implemented safely by following the regulations for infection control set by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is free to the families. Children will be brushing with the direct supervision and assistance of our educators using toothpaste with fluoride and approved by the

American Dental Association. The MetroWest YMCA will provide new toothbrushes for each child after three months of use, or after they are sick.

K Sippy Cups and Pacifiers

One of our goals at the Early Learning Center is to help children learn self-help skills including how to eat while seated and to drink from a regular cup and transition from a pacifier.

We encourage preschool children who arrive at the Center with a sippy cup of milk or juice as part of their breakfast to sit at the breakfast table until they finish. After the child finishes, we discard the contents, rinse the cup, and put it in your child's cubby. We serve snack and lunch beverages (except juice boxes) in 5 oz. disposable plastic cups.

We encourage families of toddlers to provide more than one sippy cup for use at snack (2 times) and lunch. All sippy cups must be sanitized before they can be reused. Beverages that are not totally consumed may not be returned to the refrigerator for later use. When each Toddler is individually developmentally ready, they will be introduced to a regular drinking cup.

When children are fully adjusted into the early learning center and are developmentally ready, educators and families will work together to support children who enroll in the center using bottles to transition to sippy cups, then to regular cups.

Pacifiers can be very comforting to young children, especially during transition and rest times. To support the development of self-soothing skills and prevent ear infections, speech delays, and dental problems, educators and families will work together to help children transition away from pacifiers as soon as appropriate.

To prevent children from using someone else's sippy cup or pacifier, please make sure that all sippy cups and pacifiers are labeled with the child's name.

L Toys from Home

The teachers discourage any toys/valuables from home being brought to the programs so that sharing does not become an issue, and nothing is lost or broken. The classrooms provide toys promoting learning and essential skills that are not rotated throughout the center. If a child brings in a toy to the center, the toy will be placed in their cubby until the end of the day.

M Birthdays

Birthdays are happy events, and most families enjoy celebrating by having parties and inviting friends and relatives to share the special day. Traditional parties involve a lot of decorations, balloons, specials foods, cake, ice cream and gifts. These types of parties usually take place at home or at a function hall.

At the Early Learning Center we like birthdays, too, but because this is an inclusive school environment, we honor birthdays differently. Children can decorate a special birthday crown they can wear throughout the day. If families are interested in bringing in a pre-approved healthy snack to share (refer to the Health Care Policy Manual for guidelines on nutritious snacking), they should connect with the classroom teachers a couple of days ahead of time to discuss the details.

If a family would like to join in the birthday celebration, families should speak with the Center Director or Lead Teacher before the special day. During this discussion, families can share the names of visitors

other than immediate family members who may be participating as well as receive approval for optional “goody bag” contents and fill out a photo/video release form.

Please note that children from other classrooms may not “come to the party” since ratio and classroom size guidelines must be met. Unfortunately, balloons are a choking hazard, so they are not allowed in the Center and gifts are not a part of this classroom party.

N Holidays

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center may not be open on the following days.

Professional Development (two days)	August
Labor Day	September
Columbus Day	October
Veteran’s Day	November
Thanksgiving Day	November
Day after Thanksgiving Day	November
Christmas Eve (close at 1:00)	December
Christmas Day	December
New Year’s Eve (close at 1:00)	December
New Year’s Day	January
Martin Luther King Jr. Day	January
President’s Day	February
Patriot’s Day	April
Memorial Day	May
Juneteenth	June
Independence Day	July

O Inclement Weather Policy

In the case of inclement weather, the Early Learning Center will send out an email to all the families as well as a message via *TalkingPoints*, a multilingual texting and communication app. We also share the Information on our Facebook page. Please call for a voice mail message (508) 879-4420 x251 for cancellation or delayed opening changes. If poor weather develops during the day, we may ask families to pick up their children early. The MetroWest YMCA also reserves the right to close early or consolidate programs and/or classrooms due to low attendance.

P Arrival, Departure and Attendance Policy

To ensure a child’s safety at drop-off, family members and other authorized adults must walk the child into the child’s classroom, sign the child in on the appropriate form, and make sure that an educator is aware that the child has joined the group.

Arrival and departure times provide great opportunities to connect with your child’s teachers. If the teacher is busy with another parent or engaged with children, feel free to wait until they have a moment or ask them to call you during rest time. Families are also welcome to email the classroom directly. Please note there is a “no cell phone” policy inside the center. If you must take/make a phone call, please step outside of the Early Learning Center to do so.

To ensure the safety of all the children in our Early Learning Center throughout the day, the MetroWest YMCA has added a locked security door to access the classrooms. Please do not share the code with children or any adults not on an authorized pick-up list including non-management or facilities employees of the Y who do not work in that department. In addition, do not open the door for any

adults or children unless you are completely certain that they are families of enrolled children or Y educators. If you are not positive that an individual should have access to the classrooms, please refer the individual to the Director or a member of the leadership team.

Teachers take attendance throughout the program hours. Educators will note any unusual arrival or departure times. All programs will repeat attendance procedures at times of transition such as going to and from the playground.

If a child is to be absent from the Early Learning Center, families must call prior to the child's usual scheduled arrival at the program. If a child is absent on their scheduled day, families are still responsible for payment for early learning services. We may contact families if a child does not arrive at the Y and families did not provide previous notice. We request that all children arrive by 9:30 a.m. so that they can benefit from participation in circle time and classroom meetings.

Q Late Pick-Up Policy

All employees' scheduled hours revolve around the program's closing time. On certain occasions, when adults must be late, the Y has established these firm policies:

- Adults must call the Y to let us know what time they will expect to arrive if they anticipate being late.
- We assessed families a \$10.00 fee for the first ten minutes, and \$5 for each five-minute interval afterward when children are still in the program after the center closes. Late fee charges are added to the family's bill. We do not accept cash for late pick-up fees.
- In the event of consistent tardiness, the Director will meet with the family to discuss alternatives pick-up arrangements. Consistent cases of tardiness may result in your child's termination from the program.

If the Y does not receive a prior phone call from the family before the program closes and the child is still at the program, the following procedures will be immediately implemented:

- A Y staff member will contact the family for instructions. If we cannot make contact, the staff member will call the people on the emergency contact list to arrange pick-up. Late pick-up fees are still assessed and added to the family's bill.
- If the Y cannot connect with the child's family or authorized contacts after 1 hour after the program has closed, the Y will contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Emergency Unit to report an abandoned child. Staff will then follow instructions given by DCF as to what further arrangements are necessary. Families will need to contact DCF for further instructions.

R Authorized Pick-Up Policy

Prior to the child's enrollment in the Early Learning Center, the parent or guardian must share the names and contact information for the people they authorize to pick up their children in DocNetwork, our online portal for managing children's information. Families must notify the Y via email if someone who is not on their child's DocNetwork profile will be picking up their child. Authorized adults must enter the Early Learning Center and sign out the child. For your child's safety we will not allow your child to leave the site without an authorized person. Please have picture identification available. All authorized people must be at least 16 years of age.

Please be aware that if a staff member suspects you or the adult who is picking up your child to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you will need to have someone else pick-up your child. We will not release a child to anyone believed to be under the influence.

S Emergency Procedures

First aid certified educators will treat children experiencing minor injuries or illness such as bumps, bruises, scrapes, bee stings and stomach while taking note of specifications on the child's health form. Educators will fill out accident report forms that detail the injury and the first aid provided to the child. We give copies of the form to the family and keep a copy for the program's records. If their child's symptoms persist or worsen, we will contact families so that they can pick up their child early.

In case of a major emergency such as a potential head injury or broken bone, the Y will contact emergency medical services (911) to take the child by ambulance to the nearest emergency medical facility. We will share health forms from DocNetwork with EMS that include child information, medical release to seek treatment, parent/guardian information and emergency numbers for authorized adults if the parents/guardians cannot be reached. A Y staff member will accompany the child on the ambulance and stay at the emergency medical facility until a family member or authorized adult arrives.

T Emergency Evacuation Plan

The Early Learning Center has evacuation instructions and routes posted at each exit.

- Children will walk escorted by their teachers to the nearest exit.
- Using daily attendance records, teachers check attendance to make sure all children evacuate safely and to confirm the location of all children. The Director and other administrators leave the building after going through each room and confirming that everyone has exited the space. Each classroom will bring the emergency contact information for all the children, first aid kit, and attendance records during an evacuation. Toddler classrooms keep extra diapers and wipes with the first aid materials so that they can be easily accessible in the case of a long term evacuation.
- Evacuation drills take place at least monthly for early learning programs. The Director/Assistant Director is responsible for assuring that evacuation/fire drills take place at various times of the program day so that all groups of children have practice. The Director provides information about each evacuation location and specific procedures to all the staff. The Director documents the date, time and effectiveness of each drill and maintains this documentation.

U Transportation

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Programs do not transport children on a regular basis. Children may take walks around the Y and the neighborhood with their teachers and classmates.

To keep your child as safe as possible, please make sure that you use a child restraint system for transporting your child that is installed correctly, designed for children of the same age and/or size, and in compliance with current Massachusetts law.

1 Parking

We encourage families to park near the Early Learning Center entrance in the back of the Framingham Branch where there are less vehicles and distance for young children to walk. Families must escort all children to and from their classrooms. Please let the Director or classroom teacher know if you or your child needs assistance with this process so that we can discuss assistance options. Please note you must park in established parking spots and turn off your car when no one is in the vehicle, even for short periods of time. Any cars parked in the fire lane will be towed at the expense of the driver. This can also result in the loss of key card access to the side of the building, which will require families to enter through the main door of the building.

2 Emergency Transportation Plan

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning emergency procedures are as follows: A child who is injured at the YMCA and needs emergency medical care will be transported to the nearest emergency medical facility by ambulance. Families will be immediately notified of the child's injury. If we cannot contact the child's family, we will call emergency contacts. An educator will accompany the child to the nearest medical facility to await the child's parent, guardian, or emergency contact person.

VII Health Policy

The focus of the MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center incorporates academic learning as well as the physical and emotional aspects of your child's development. We ask for your complete cooperation in accepting the rules we have made for the health and safety of each child, and in turn we pledge to you our diligence in maintaining good practices. Please remember that by protecting someone else's child, you will also help maintain a safe environment for your own. Our full [Health Care Policies with Emergency Procedures](#) includes our full policies and procedures including:

- Healthy Children and Staff Initiatives
- Injury Prevention and Responses
- Plans for Infection Control
- Plans for Managing Illness
- Health Records and Physical Examinations
- Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policies
- Emergency Information
- Plans for Meeting Potential Emergencies
- Health Emergencies and Illnesses

A Sickness

Please keep your child at home if they seem listless, unusually irritable, complaints of aches, is feverish, or seems to be unusually pale or flushed. It is better to be overcautious than to risk exposing the rest of the children and educators. The following is a guideline for you to follow in determining when to keep your child at home.

B When Children Should or Should Not Attend the Y

Keep children home when they have:

- Earache
- Fever over 100.4° F
- Strep throat
- Stomachache
- Anything that is contagious, i.e., chickenpox, conjunctivitis, COVID-19.
- The child is unable to keep up with the pace of the day
- Diarrhea (3 or more loose stools within one day. Child must be free of diarrhea for 24 hours before return)
- Vomiting (One or more episodes. Child must be free from vomiting for 24 hours before returning)
- Rashes that are contagious as confirmed by a physician
 - Head Lice (When returning to the Y, adult family members should allow extra time for educators to check the head of the child to ensure that there are no nits. If we find nits, the child will need to leave the Center.)

Child May Come With:

- Earaches, strep throat (provided they have been on medication for 24 hours)
- Colds
- Hay fever
- Anything that is not contagious
- The child can fully participate in the day

When a child stays home due to illness, he or she must be symptom free, on prescription medication, or off nonprescription medication, such as Tylenol and Motrin, for at least 24 hours before returning to school.

Each child responds and reacts differently to sickness, so please be advised that the teachers and Director may need to send children home if they are unable to participate and keep up with the pace of the day. Families will need to pick up children who become ill in the program. Please be aware that these guidelines are set forth to help maintain the health and safety of your child and other children as well.

Please notify the Y as soon as possible if your child is exposed to a contagious disease. The Director will notify you if it is necessary to keep your child at home. We will notify all families if a child in our program has a contagious disease. Notices will include information on symptoms and general information on the contagion.

C Administration of Medication

Parents and guardians must complete an Authorization for Medication Form any time their child needs medication while in care. Health care practitioners must authorize in writing all prescription, oral non-prescription, unanticipated non-prescription medications and topical, non-prescription medication used for treatment purposes. Additional information can be found in our [Health Care Policies with Emergency Procedures](#).

D Individual Health Care Plans

Regulations require Individual Health Care Plans for children with chronic medical conditions that a licensed health care practitioner has diagnosed. The plan must describe the chronic condition, its symptoms, any medical treatment that may be necessary while the child is in care, the potential side effects of that treatment, and the potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not provided. Additional information regarding our Individual Health Care Plan requirements can be found in our [Health Care Policy with Emergency Procedures](#).

E Allergies

Families MUST list any allergies to foods, chemicals, or other materials in the "Allergies" section of DocNetwork, our online child record system. Please include any reactions and treatments for the allergies. We compile allergy information on a reference list that we post in food preparation and distribution areas, the Director's and Associate Directors' offices and the child's classroom. Y staff refer to this list when preparing or serving food as well as working in a classroom.

F Infection Control

Our [Health Care Policy with Emergency Procedures](#) includes the full infection control procedures that are included in new staff orientation.

G Diaper Changing Policies and Procedures

1 Diaper Policies

- Families must provide commercially available disposable diapers or pull-ups unless they provide documentation from the child's health care provider indicating the medical reason that does not permit their use. If cloth diapers are necessary, an absorbent inner lining must be completely contained within an outer covering made of water-proof material to prevent the escape of feces or urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.
- Y staff change diapers when wet or soiled as well as when a child wakes from a nap. They are checked every two to three hours unless a child is sleeping and changed upon waking and immediately when soiling is discovered.
- Diapers and soiled clothing are only changed in the bathrooms.
- Changing tables can only be used for changing diapers and must not be used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, especially food.
- We partner with families to help children become toilet-trained in accordance with the requests of their family members and consistent with the child's physical, emotional, and developmental abilities.

2 Diapering Procedure (posted at changing stations)

1. Make sure all the supplies needed are available including diaper, wipes, changing table paper, gloves, plastic bags, and extra clothes, if necessary.
2. Put the child on the changing table covered with paper while being careful not to come in contact with the child's soiled diaper or clothing. Never leave a child on the changing table unattended and keep a hand on the child to prevent falling off the table.
3. Put a disposable glove on each hand and remove the soiled clothes and diaper.
4. Unfasten the diaper but leave the diaper under the child. Hold the child's feet to raise the child out of the soiled diaper and use disposable wipes to clean the diaper area. Remove stool and urine from front to back and use a fresh wipe each time. Put the wipes into the soiled diaper. Note and report any skin problems such as redness.
5. Remove the soiled diaper. Fold the diaper over and secure it with the tabs. Put it into a covered, lined, self-closing trash container. Do not rinse or handle the contents of the diaper.
6. Check for spills under the child. Remove any large amounts with a wipe, and then fold the disposable paper over on itself from the end under the child's feet so that a clean paper surface is now under the child.
7. Put soiled clothes in a double plastic bag to send home. Touch the soiled items as little as possible and do not rinse.
8. Remove gloves once the clean diaper is covering the child (not necessarily taped).
9. Finish diapering and dress the child, wash his/her hands in the sink with soap and running water or wipe their hands with a fresh diaper wipe. Assist the child back to the group.
10. Remove the changing table paper from the diapering surface and dispose of it in the self-closing trash container that is kept closed and is inaccessible to children. Assist the child back to the group.
11. Clean the diapering surface with soap and water. Wipe dry with disposable towels. Disinfect the surface by spraying it with a bleach solution. Let it air dry. Wash hands thoroughly with soap and running water.

H Nutritious Snack or Lunch Suggestions

MetroWest YMCA Early Learning Center provides nutritious snacks and lunches for all our children. The meals are in accordance with USDA guidelines our fruits and vegetable serving sizes will be between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup depending on age. Each snack and meal that the Y serves contains a fruit or vegetable along with another food group component(s). Grains are always 100% whole, and water and white milk are the only beverages we serve. In addition, the YMCA will follow parental or physician's orders in relation to special diets.

Families who choose to provide their own meals for their children must provide nutritious foods in food and beverage containers with the child's name. Teachers throw away all unused food. We suggest the following items for when your child needs to bring a lunch and/or snack. A nutritious lunch would include something from all major four-food groups.

Please note that the MetroWest YMCA cannot refrigerate or warm up lunches. We require using ice packs and thermoses.

Sandwich Suggestions: cheese, chicken, jelly or jam, tuna, meats (turkey, ham, etc.)

Sides: Orange, apple, pear, banana, peach, dried fruit, trail mix, cucumbers, pepper strips, crackers, unsweetened yogurt, muffins, granola bars, cheese sticks.

Beverage: water, 4-6 oz. 100% fruit juice (orange, apple, grape), milk (low-fat or non-fat for children ages two and older; children under two receive whole milk)

Please note that the Y does not allow the following types of foods: fried foods, sugar sweetened beverages, and foods high in sugar such as chips, soda, juice drinks, chicken fingers, cookies, and candy.

Due to a high number of children with peanut and tree nut allergies, the center has imposed a "no peanuts or tree nuts rule." This includes (but not limited to) foods that may contain nuts such as granola bars, trail mix, cereal, baked goods, peanut butter, and Nutella.

The Y does not allow any foods that may cause choking for children less than 4 years old such as peanut butter, celery sticks, popcorn, nuts, chicken or turkey on the bone, cherries with pits, sausages, gum, unpeeled apples, and sunflower/watermelon seeds. If you must send grapes, please cut them into small pieces.

I Animal and Pet Policy

Animals provide a large array of growth and learning opportunities for children. When they are classroom pets or visiting animals, they must appear to be in good health. Pets or visiting animals have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animals are fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and that the animal is suitable for contact with children. Educators supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when they are close to animals. We do not allow animals in areas where individuals with animal allergies are present. We do not allow reptiles as classroom pets because of the risk for salmonella infection.

VIII Child Protection Policies

A Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect Strategies

The Y designed these preventive strategies to protect the children in Y programs and to protect Y staff and volunteers from being wrongly accused of incidences of child abuse.

- The Y has in place a comprehensive pre-employment screening procedure to screen out staff not suited for working with children.
- The Y will take any allegation or suspicion of child abuse seriously and will respond accordingly.
- Staff understand the legal obligation to report suspected abuse.
- Policies, procedures, and training are available relating to discipline, supervision, staff/participant interaction, staff, and volunteer Code of Conduct, etc.
- Staff understands what practices may be considered abusive and the difference between what may be considered appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- Defensive strategies have been identified for avoiding unfounded allegations in our yearly abuse prevention training for staff.
- Staff communicate frequently with families regarding day-to-day activities and encourage families to report or question any behavior or event their child may share that appears out of the ordinary.
- The Y encourages families to visit programs that their children attend unannounced
- Staff try to identify stressed families and offer support and referrals for help.
- Staff have learned how to discuss sensitive issues with children such as toileting, sleeping and questions about sex.
- Staff protect themselves and the Y by agreeing not to be alone with Y youth or program participants outside of Y programs or facilities (i.e., baby-sit, take children on trips, have them in their homes when others are not present, etc.).

B Mandated Reporting

In order to ensure the well-being of the children in our care, our educators have a continuing duty under state law to report incidents of possible neglect or abuse, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, to the Department of Children and Families and Department of Early Education and Care, and to cooperate in any investigation of such possible neglect or abuse. (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 119, Section 51A). We do not have discretion in this matter but must make such referrals whenever we have reasonable cause to believe that a child might have been harmed by anyone, including non-family members, and we may be subject to criminal penalties if we fail to report such possible harm. Moreover, in grievous cases, we may refer the matter directly to the police or consult with the District Attorney as well.

As a licensed provider of early learning and out-of-school time programs, Massachusetts State Law mandate us to report all incidents of suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families. If a case of child abuse is suspected by a staff member or in the care of a staff member, the following procedures have been put in place.

C MetroWest YMCA Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

The MetroWest YMCA advocates a positive guidance and discipline policy with an emphasis on positive reinforcement, redirection, prevention, and the development of self-discipline. The Y will not tolerate the following disciplinary techniques at any time: physical punishment, striking, biting, kicking, squeezing, shaming, withholding food or restroom privileges, confining children in small, locked rooms or verbal or emotional abuse. Affectionate touch and the warm feelings it brings is an important factor

in helping a child grow into a loving and peaceful adult. However, YMCA staff and volunteers need to be sensitive to each person's need for personal space (i.e., not everyone wants to be hugged). The YMCA encourages appropriate touch; however, at the same time it prohibits inappropriate touch or other means of sexually exploiting children.

If there is an accusation of child abuse, the YMCA will take prompt and immediate action as follows:

1. At the first report or possible (probable) cause to believe that child abuse has occurred, the employed staff person it has been reported to will notify the Center Director, who will then review the incident with the YMCA President, or his/her designee. However, if the program director is not immediately available, the staff person should report to the senior staff member. This review by the supervisor cannot in any way deter the reporting of child abuse by the mandated reporter. Most states mandate each teacher or early education and care provider to report information they have learned in their professional role regarding suspected child abuse. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse/neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone, unless it is proven that the report was intended to do harm. In most states, mandated reporters are granted immunity from prosecution.
2. The YMCA will make a report in accordance with relevant state or local child abuse reporting requirements and will cooperate to the extent of the law with any legal authority involved. The person receiving the initial report will be responsible for confirming the facts reported and the condition of the child on the day of the first report.
3. After the information is secured and documented, the President or his/her designee will then determine if the Department of Children and Families (DCF) needs to be notified. If so, they will call DCF at (508) 872-8122 (8:00am to 4:00pm) or (800) 792-5200 (after business hours) and file a 51A report. Within 48 hours a formal 51A will be filed with the Department of Children and Families. If any of the individuals involved are enrolled in a licensed program, the appropriate licensing agency will be notified immediately that a 51A was filed.
4. In the event the reported incident(s) involve a program volunteer or employed staff, the President will use his/her discretion to either suspend the volunteer or staff person from the YMCA or give them administrative tasks away from children if available and appropriate.
5. If appropriate, the parents or legal guardian of the child(ren) involved in the alleged incident will be promptly notified in accordance with the directions of the relevant state or local agency.
6. Whether the incident or alleged offense takes place on or off YMCA premises, it will be considered job related because of the youth-involved nature of the YMCA.
7. Reinstatement of the program volunteer or employed staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared by DCF to the satisfaction of the persons named in #1 above and EEC, if relevant. At the time of reinstatement, the staff person will receive back pay.
8. All YMCA staff and volunteers must be sensitive to the need for confidentiality in the handling of this information, and therefore, should only discuss the incident with the people directly involved.

IX Parent Rights and Responsibilities

A Parental Rights

Chapter 28, Section 10 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates to the Department of Early Education and Care the legal responsibility of promulgating rules and regulations governing the operation of day care centers (including Nursery schools).

Section 7.04 of 102 CMR 7.00 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulations requires the MetroWest YMCA to inform all families of their rights and responsibilities at the time of admission of their child to the center., the regulations that govern early learning centers, contains more information.

B Parent Input and Volunteer Opportunities

The MetroWest YMCA encourages families to share their input in the development of program policy and procedures. They can bring their ideas and recommendations to their child's teachers, the Associate Director, or Director of Early Learning. If we are not able to implement their suggestion relating to the program or policy, we will provide an explanation as to why we will not be able to adopt the suggestion.

If families have a concern, we suggest discussing the issue with the classroom teachers first. If they are not comfortable approaching the educator, the family and the Director develop a plan together to work towards a resolution. If family members continue to feel that their concerns are not resolved, we encourage them to reach out to the Associate Executive Director of Education then the Executive Director of Education. We will provide a written response when requested.

In addition, we encourage family members to participate and volunteer in the center. We welcome short and long term volunteers in the classroom, for special activities and events, fundraising, administrative tasks, and more. Please contact the Director if you are interested in volunteering.

C Parent Visits and Conferences

To ensure a quality early learning program, we need your help. The Y encourages families to visit at any time. Families can also schedule a conference. Open and friendly communication is essential.

Please notify the Y if you are going to be away for several days and your child will be in the care of someone else since this sometimes affects your child's behavior. Also, it is important for us to know who is responsible when you are away. Throughout the year, if there is anything unusual going on in your home, please let the director or teacher know so that we can support your child, especially if it impacts their behavior.

Remember, your child may be a bit timid and shy at first, so encourage your child to get involved with the program activities. As you gain feedback throughout the year, keep us informed. We need to have open communication between the program and the home as to how your child feels, what they like and dislike. As your child arrives home each day, discuss the day. Find out what they enjoyed doing that day or with whom they played.

We welcome family participation and input. The children, educators and leadership appreciate your creativity, ideas, and leadership in activities. We would appreciate hearing from you in writing or email at earlylearning@metrowestymca.org as to what areas your child liked as well as those suggestions you may have. We encourage your feedback and incorporate it throughout the year as well as for future planning. With this feedback, we can continue to grow as one of the best early learning programs in Massachusetts.

Family concerns or complaints about our program should be immediately directed to the lead teacher or director. We review all the details surrounding your concern or complaint to determine different solutions and implement an action plan. Feel free to discuss any concerns or suggestions that you may have with the educators and/or the Director.

D Progress Reports

At least every six months, classroom teachers prepare a written progress report for each child. We share this report with families and discuss their child's activities, participation, growth, and priorities that the families have for the child. In addition, the Y provides written progress reports for children with disabilities for families every three months. We bring special problems or significant developments to the family's attention as soon as they arise.

E Children's Records

Information contained in a child's record must be privileged and confidential. The MetroWest YMCA will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without written consent of the child's parent. The Y will notify the parent if a child's record is subpoenaed. Framingham Public Schools and our center share information from the records for Partnerships for Early Learners (PEL) children to support individual and programmatic needs.

1 Access to the Record

The parent must have access to the child's record at reasonable times. In no event must such access be delayed more than two (2) business days after the initial request without the consent of the child's parent or legal guardian. We will make the entire child's record available upon request regardless of the physical location of the file.

When a child's record has been requested, the following information will be documented and recorded in the child's file: the name of the person who disseminated or released information contained in a child's record, in whole or in part; signature, position, the date of each instance of dissemination or release; the portions of the record which were disseminated or released; the purpose of the records which were disseminated or released; the purpose of such dissemination or release; and the signature of the person to whom the information is disseminated or released. Such log must be available only to the child's family and Y personnel responsible for record maintenance.

2 Charge for Copies

The MetroWest YMCA does not charge a fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.

3 Amending the Child's Records

Children's families have the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant materials to the child's record. Families have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. Such request must follow with the procedures described below:

If such parent is of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable material in the child's record, they must have the right to have a conference with the MetroWest YMCA to make his/her objections known; the MetroWest YMCA must, within one (1) week after the conference, render to such parent a decision in writing stating the reason or reasons for the decision. If their decision is in favor of the parent, they must immediately take steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

4 Transfer of Records

Upon written request of the parent or guardian, the MetroWest YMCA will transfer a copy of the child's record to the parent, or any other person the parent identifies, when the child is no longer in Y care. The

Center will ask the parent or guardian to sign a form documenting consent for transfer of records and/or verifying that the record was received.

F Parental Responsibilities

To maintain a comfortable and safe environment for children, families, and staff, we have the following guidelines that we ask all adults to model the Y Character Values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. The following are some examples of how these values can be implemented:

- Use appropriate language while in the program.
- Respect confidentiality by having personal conversations in private.
- Interact with others in a non-threatening and non-aggressive manner.

Failure to follow these guidelines may result in termination of care with families still responsible for all fees including tuition for the following 30 days.

X Responsibilities of the Program

A Providing Information to the Department of Early Education and Care

The MetroWest YMCA must make available to the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) any information required to be kept and maintained under these regulations and any other information reasonably related to the requirements of these regulations. This includes information in the child's records. Authorized employees of EEC are not to remove identifying case materials from the Center premises and are required to maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

B Reporting Abuse or Neglect

All educators are mandated reporters. They are required by law to report suspected abuse and neglect to either the Department of Children and Families or to the MetroWest YMCA's program administrator. The MetroWest YMCA must have written policies and procedures for reporting and must provide the written policy to you upon enrollment.

C Notification of Injury

The MetroWest YMCA must notify parents and guardians immediately of any injury that requires emergency care. They must also notify the parent, in writing, within 24 hours, if any first aid is administered to the child.

D Availability of Regulations

The Center must have a copy of CMR 102 7.00, Standards for the Licensure or Approval of Group Day Care and School Age Child Care Programs, on the premises, available to any person upon request. If you have questions about any of the regulations, ask the personnel at the Center for a copy.

E Confidentiality Policy

The MetroWest YMCA respects each family's right to privacy and confidentiality. As a result, information such as incident reports, portfolios, family specific supports including referrals regarding a child, and the child's health and safety file are confidential and will only be shared with the child's parents or legal guardians. Within the Center, child specific information is only available to Center leadership and the educators in the classroom where the child attends. Regulatory authorities such as the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) or the Department of Children and Families (DCF) may also review

children's files as part of an agency review or investigation. Written authorization from the parent or guardian is required to share any other component of the child's record. Families who would like additional restrictions on access or who have questions about the policy should contact the Director of Early Learning. In addition, the following EEC regulation Confidentiality and Distribution of Records and Information 7.04(12) provides additional information about our confidentiality practices.

Information pertaining to children and their families is privileged and confidential. No licensee or educator may distribute or release information about a child or his/her family to any unauthorized person or discuss with any unauthorized person information about a child or his/her family without the written consent of the child's parent. The child's parent, at reasonable times, must, upon request, have access to everything in his or her child's record.

(a) The licensee must not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without the written consent of the child's parent(s) or pursuant to a court order. The licensee must notify the parent(s) if the child's record is subpoenaed.

(b) The child's parent(s) or guardian(s) must, upon request, have access to their child's record at reasonable times. In no event may such access be delayed more than two business days after the initial request without the consent of the child's parent(s). Upon such request for access, the child's entire record must be made available regardless of the physical location of its parts.

(c) Upon written request of the parent(s), the licensee must transfer a copy of the child's records to the parent(s), or any other person the parent(s) identifies within a reasonable amount of time.

(d) The licensee must establish procedures governing access to, duplication of, and distribution of such information; and must maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record indicating each time a child's record has been released or reviewed.

1. Each time information is released or distributed from a child's record to someone who is not a program employee the following information must be recorded: the name, signature, and position of the person releasing or distributing the information; the date; the portions of the record which were distributed or released; the purpose of such distribution or release; and the signature of the person to whom the information is distributed or released.

2. Such log must be available only to the child's parent(s), to program personnel responsible for record maintenance, and to the EEC as part of its regulatory function.

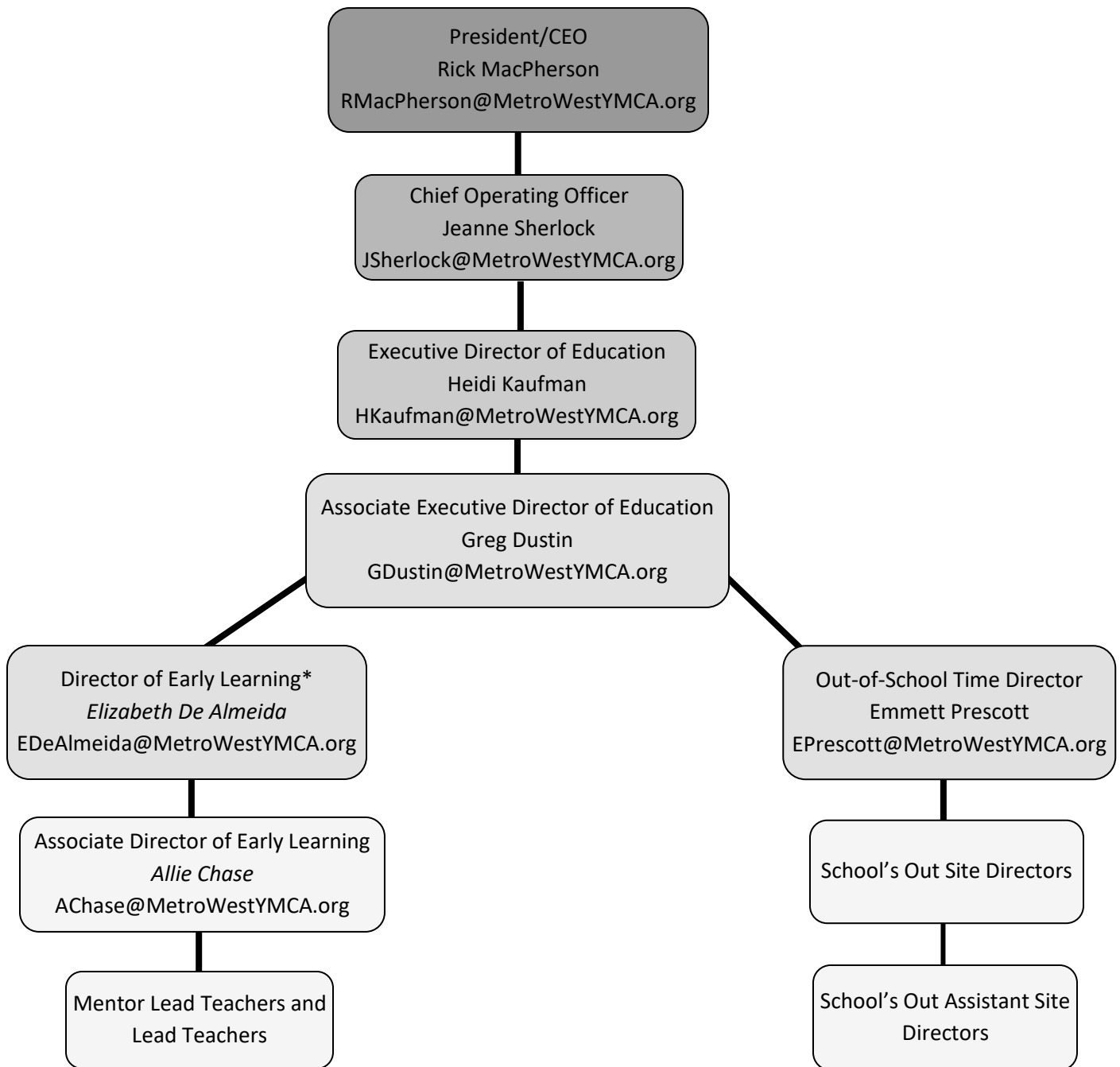
F Research, Experimentation, and Unusual Treatment Policy

The MetroWest YMCA will not conduct or allow any research, experimentation, or unusual treatment involving children without the written, informed, consent of the affected child's parents or guardian, for each occurrence. In programs where observations of children (by other than parents of the children in the center) are common, a general written parental consent may be used. Observations mean that there is no interaction between the child and the observers and no identification of the individual child. The MetroWest YMCA will not allow research, experimentation, or unusual treatment to take place in the programs that might harm a child. Research and experimentation shall not mean program evaluation or data collection for purposes of documenting services of the program which do not identify individual children.

G Unauthorized Activities Policy

The MetroWest YMCA will not allow children to participate in any activities unrelated to the direct care of children without the written, informed consent of the parent(s) or guardian. "Activities" shall mean, but not be limited to: fund raising and publicity, including photographs and participation in the mass media.

Appendix: MetroWest YMCA Staff, Lines of Authority & Supervision



**Framingham Public Schools Early Childhood Manager, Christina Shea, CShea@framingham.k12.ma.us, supervises the Partnerships for Early Learners (PEL) collaboration.*

Our Policies and Procedures are based in part by the guidelines established by Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Please see the Director of Early Learning or Associate Executive Director of Education for more details.