Phelps Ingersoll Center for ChildrenFamily Handbook
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Educational Philosophy

We believe that children learn best in an environment that respects their unique pattern of growth and development. Careful observation, evaluation, and positive, individual attention are important components of our program.

We believe that children enjoy and benefit from interactions with others. We encourage the development of social skills by arranging opportunities for small and large group activities and allowing time for conversation and play between children and adults.

We believe, for children to develop trust in the world, they need a physically and emotionally safe environment where they feel comfortable exploring, experimenting, playing, and learning.

We remain alert to potential dangers, guide children in safe behaviors and treat both children and adults with care.

We believe in children's desire for independence. We provide an environment rich with success to help children develop a positive self-concept. We teach problem solving and self-help skills. Children learn to care for materials and equipment. They take responsibility for many aspects of their classroom.

We believe that children's natural curiosity motivates them to learn about the world around them. We prepare the materials and environments to be stimulating. Through play-based activities, we encourage children to explore and reach their potential in all areas of development, cognitive, social, emotional, and physical.

We believe that children should be provided with many opportunities to see how reading and writing are useful before they are instructed in letter names and sounds. We teach children how useful letters and numbers are through everyday experiences.

We believe in families. We are responsive to the concerns and ideas of families and encourage family involvement in our program.

Goals for the Program

- To work in partnership with families, school personnel, and the community to support children's emotional, social, physical, and intellectual growth and development.
- To provide families with the assurance of safe, affordable, and nurturing childcare and developmentally age-appropriate education.
- To create an environment that fosters self-expression, social growth, and development, and skills for a healthy lifestyle.
- To guide children through positive discipline, reflective listening, logical consequences, and peaceful alternatives to make responsible decisions.
- To provide a variety of developmentally appropriate creative, physical, and intellectual activities, maintaining a balance of quiet and self-directed time.

- To meet the needs of children through careful observation, reflection, and respect of individuality, encouraging exploration of children's interests.
- To educate families about the community resources available to them.

To provide families, staff and others who have a stake in the program with a process of reflecting and assessing the quality of the program. Measurements such as those used by NAEYC, Early Start, CACFP, and CT Office of Early Childhood are used to judge the program's effectiveness.

Goals for Children

- To feel safe, comfortable, and respected as an individual.
- To learn, grow and have fun.
- To develop a positive sense of self and a foundation for a healthy lifestyle.
- To acquire the skills of conflict resolution, positive communication, and a respect for individual differences.
- To feel comfortable with oneself, one's accomplishments, and one's abilities.
- To develop self-help skills, independence, and a sense of responsibility for one's actions and behavior.
- To be curious, creative, competent, full of wonder, rich in ideas, keenly interested in the world, able to construct and co-construct their own learning to fulfill their dreams.

Learning through Play R.4.01

We believe that play is the foundation of learning. Playful experiences foster creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and social-emotional growth. Through play, children explore the world around them, build relationships, and develop essential skills that support lifelong learning.

How Children Learn Through Play:

- **Cognitive Development** – Play encourages curiosity, problem-solving, and early literacy and math skills.
- **Social & Emotional Growth** – Group play helps children develop communication, cooperation, and conflict-resolution skills.
- **Physical Development** – Active play strengthens fine and gross motor skills, coordination, and overall health.
- **Creative Expression** – Imaginative and artistic play allows children to express themselves and develop confidence.

Play Centers & Hands-on Learning Experiences:

Our classrooms are designed with a variety of play centers that provide meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities:

- **Dramatic Play:** Encourages creativity, role-playing, and social interaction.
- **Blocks & Building:** Supports problem-solving, spatial awareness, and teamwork.
- **Math Center:** Strengthens early math skills such as counting, sorting, and patterning.
- **Science Exploration:** Engages curiosity through sensory experiences, experiments, and nature discovery.
- **Art & Creativity:** Encourages self-expression through painting, drawing, and crafting.
- **Reading & Literacy:** Develops language, storytelling, and a love for books.
- **Puzzles & Fine Motor Skills:** Enhances critical thinking, dexterity, and hand-eye coordination.

Incorporating Play into Learning:

- **Hands-on Activities:** Sensory bins, building materials, and creative arts encourage exploration and discovery.
- **Dramatic Play:** Role-playing and storytelling help children practice language, social skills, and problem-solving.
- **Outdoor Play:** Physical movement and nature-based exploration promote well-being and gross motor development.
- **Guided Play:** Teachers create intentional, engaging experiences that align with learning goals while allowing for child-led exploration.

Every part of our day—from structured learning to free choice activities—incorporates play. We encourage families to embrace the power of play, supporting children's natural love of learning in a joyful and meaningful way.

NAEYC Accreditation

The program is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), which isthe standard for high quality early childhood education programs. Our staff meets the credential requirements set forth by NAEYC. All staff must take part in ongoing professional development activities. The full-time staff must have at least 20 hours of professional development each year, which includes mandates required by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC), Early Start and NAEYC.

Early Start

- Early Start funded slots will be prioritized for families who are working full-time and need childcare. The Early Start family weekly fee will be re-determined annually.
- Children enrolled in the Early Start program must have regular attendance to maintain their Early Start funded slot. Children must be here no later than 9:00 a.m. and leave no earlier than 3:00 p.m.

Enrollment

Children aged 3 years until kindergarten entry age, who are living in Connecticut can enroll in our Early Start preschool. All information provided in enrollment documents, behavior plans, and medical care plans is strictly confidential. This information is only shared with staff members responsible for childcare and will not be disclosed to unauthorized individuals without written parental consent, except as required by law.

Hours of Operation

The Union Street center is open year-round from 7:15 am to 5:15 pm, Monday through Friday, 12 months per year. Children may attend preschool for up to 10 hours per day.

The Hamlin Street preschool is open from 8:50am to 3:35 pm, Monday through Friday according to the MiddletownPublic Schools calendar.

Calendar

The YMCA Hamlin Street preschool site will follow the Middletown Public Schools calendar for holidays and weather closures.

The Union Street Center will be closed on the following days:

- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4th)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after
- December 25th – January 1st
- Three days in August for Staff Training (Dates to be determined yearly)

Cultural Awareness

The center is open to and accepts all 3- and 4-year-old children regardless of their ethnic, religious, economic, special needs or racial backgrounds. The center welcomes and embraces all 3- and 4-year-old children regardless of their ethnic, religious, economic, special needs, or racial backgrounds. We honor and support the uniqueness of each child and family. We do this by exposing them to a variety of learning experiences such as crafts, cooking, music, stories, and games. We also try to build confidence in our children by reflecting on their culture in our

programs. We appreciate input from parents/guardians to increase our awareness of the many cultures present in our program and community. Parent/guardians are strongly encouraged to share special traditions, recipes, songs, stories, etc. If at any time a parent/guardian has a language barrier, the Director will attempt to find a translator to facilitate between the parent/guardian and the center. The Class Dojo App translates messages into many different languages. Every effort is made by the center for non-English speaking families to feel welcome and for the center to understand the family's needs while their child participates at the center.

Orientation of New Children

The Director and classroom staff will provide parent/guardians with an orientation. At the time of the orientation, the Director will review policy and procedures, discuss program philosophy, the curriculumused, child assessment (why, when, the purpose of the results and the uses of the results), daily schedules, and assist parents with the enrollment packet and answer any questions the parent/guardians have regarding the program. To introduce children to the program, parents/guardians will bring their child with them to see the center. The child will visit their new classroom while the parent and director meet. The purpose of the visit is for the child to gain familiarity with the center and classroom, meet their primary teacher and the other teaching staff in the room, and get a feel for what a typical day in preschool will include before they are expected to attend a full day. It is important that the visit occurs just prior (usually within one week) to the child's first day of care. Parents or center staff may also request multiple visits if they feel that the child wouldbenefit from this or may start the child at reduced hours.

The teaching staff has been trained to assist children with separation anxiety. Parents/guardians are encouraged to ask for assistance with the morning transition. The common goal for families and staff is for the child's transition into the center to be as smooth as possible. The center has an open-door policy. At any time parents/guardians are welcome. The center encourages families to be active participants in the center whenever possible and encourages supporting each other.

Toilet Training Expectations for Preschool

To support a successful start in preschool, we ask that children are accustomed to using the toilet independently. Our classrooms are not equipped with diaper-changing tables. If your child is not yet fully potty-trained, we require that they wear pull-up style training pants that open at the sides and can be changed while standing. Please send your child to school with a supply of pull-ups and wipes each day.

Preschool staff will actively encourage and support toilet use throughout the day. Time for bathroom use is built into the daily routine—before outdoor/gym play, before and after nap, and as needed.

If you have concerns about your child's readiness or progress with toilet training, please speak with your child's teacher. We encourage families and staff to begin and reinforce toilet training before starting preschool and consistently from the first day of attendance.

Probationary Period

Children enrolled in the center begin with a probationary period. During this period, the teachingstaff and parent/guardians will observe the child's behavior, emotional needs, and his/her ability to adapt in ahealthy manner to the structure of the program. If during this period it is determined that the program does not meet the needs of the child, parents/guardians will be required to remove the child from the program.

Registration, Billing Procedure, and Payment Schedule

1. A deposit of one week's worth of fees is due upon registration in addition to the first week of payment.The one-week deposit is applied to the last week of preschool for your child.
2. A complete registration packet is due prior to the child's enrollment. If you have any questions regarding thepacket, please contact the Director at (860)343-6227.
3. All required information is due prior to starting the program.
4. Parent/guardian fees will be calculated prior to child's enrollment using the current CT State Office of Early Childhood's Early Start Fee Schedule. Parents/guardians provide paystubs (a month's worth of income information) for all working members of the household and documentation of any other additional family income. This will be used to determine the weekly tuition.We will review the fee calculation with the parent, obtain a parent signature, and provide the parent with a copy of the fee calculation form. Thereafter, tuition will be re-determined at least annually or upon request.
5. If families are planning to end preschool services, a two-week written notice is required. Failure to give proper notice will result in loss of your deposit. Tuition is due for the last two weeks of enrollment, regardless of whether your child attends the center.
6. Families will not receive a bill. Payments are to be made every Friday for the **following week's care**. If special arrangements are needed, please speak to the Director. We will contact parent/guardians who become delinquent on tuition payments to arrange a payment plan. Noncompliance with the plan will result in suspension or disenrollment until such payments have been made.
7. Tuition may be paid at the YMCA Welcome Center at 99 Union Street by cash, or credit/debit card. Credit card payments can also be made over the telephone. There will be a $10.00 fee for any payments returned for insufficient funds
8. At any time during your enrollment, the Director will be happy to assist families to apply for Care4kids subsidies
9. Tuition is calculated annually. Therefore, full weekly payments are required regardless of time missed due to sickness, vacation, holidays, professional development days, or weather- related closures.

Open Door Policy

We have an open door to parents/guardians. You are welcome to stop at any time. While no advance notice is required, it is beneficial if staff know ahead of time if arrangements are necessary.

Family Communication & Partnership R.2.01

Families play a critical role in the success and quality of our preschool program. Open communication and a clear understanding of expectations help foster a partnership between families and staff. We value family input and encourage open communication. Families are welcome to ask questions, raise concerns, or share feedback in several ways. They can speak directly with their child's teacher, request a meeting with the director, send messages through Class Dojo, or attend Family Advisory Board Meetings. We are committed to fostering a collaborative environment where families feel respected and supported.

To support this collaboration and create a climate of mutual respect and care, we have the following**: R.2.03**

- **Clear Program Expectations** – Upon registration, families receive a verbal review of policies and sign an agreement to follow program policies.
- **Family Handbook** – A comprehensive guide outlining program details, policies, and procedures is as given at enrollment
- **Daily Communication** – Parents are asked to check in with staff at drop-off and pick-up. If a private discussion is needed, a meeting will be scheduled promptly.
- **Class Dojo Updates** – Families receive daily updates on their child's activities through the **Class Dojo app**, where they can also communicate with staff and administrators.
- **Family Information Board** – lesson plans, announcements, forms, handouts, consumer recalls, and community resources are posted for families.
- **Family Engagement Events** – Special events are held to strengthen the preschool and YMCA community.
- **Annual Program Evaluation** – Parents complete an annual survey to provide feedback. The Director will communicate the results and any program improvements based on the findings.
-

Other Ways Parents Can Be Involved:

- Read to your child's class
- Share a special talent with the children in the program.
- Donate stuff for junk art.
- Help with decorating or cleaning up at events
- Offer song lists, loan favorite book, share ideas about community connections
- Introduce yourself to other parents in the program.

- Volunteering at the center in a capacity that you are comfortable with.

Family Advisory Board

The Family Advisory Board (FAB) with the Director will meet several times a year to give their input into the center's operation. The FAB members will serve in the following capacity:

- To provide feedback on new policies and procedures
- To discuss new program ideas
- To offer a parent prospective
- To give recommendations about activities and events.
- To review collected information about the program.
- Engage in a reflective process to assess the effectiveness of the program as measured by surveys, accreditors, and inspections.

All parents/guardians are members of the FAB. Upon enrollment, parents/guardians will be asked to take part in the board. Any decision-making policies must consider all involved, but all decisions must meet Early Start, NAEYC, and OEC standards.

Family Involvement in Curriculum Development and Programing

Families know their children best, and their input is invaluable in shaping a curriculum that supports each child. We encourage family involvement to ensure our program meets the needs of our children and aligns with family expectations.

- The Family Advisory Board periodically reviews curriculum plans to ensure they reflect program goals and family priorities.
- Teachers keep families informed about learning standards and classroom activities through daily Class Dojo Stories, individual messages, and conferences.
- During the enrollment process, families provide valuable information about their child, which is shared with teachers to support individualized learning.
- Families have opportunities to share insights into their child's developmental needs and goals, which are discussed during conferences and ongoing communication.
- Families are encouraged to participate in an annual preschool assessment, helping us evaluate our program's ability to provide high-quality care and education. The results guide improvements to better serve our children and families.

Family Complaint/Concern Procedure R.2.02 A.2.03

If a parent has a concern about their child's care, the following steps should be taken:

1. **Addressing Concerns with the Teacher**
    - Parents should first speak directly with the classroom teacher privately and respectfully.
    - Most concerns can be resolved through clear communication.
2. **Address Unresolved Difficulties with the Preschool Director**
    - If the issue is not resolved or requires further attention, parents should contact the preschool director or assistant director, in person, by phone, email or Class Dojo.
    - The administrator will facilitate a discussion and address any concerns related to YMCA policies and procedures.
3. **Address Continuing and Persistent Issues with the Vice President**
    - If the concern remains unresolved, the Vice President may be contacted.
    - A meeting will be scheduled with all parties to reach a resolution in the child's best interest.

Family Code of Conduct

All interactions between parents, staff, and other families must remain respectful. Parents are expected to:

- Communicate concerns calmly and constructively.
- Avoid yelling, threatening, or harassing staff, children, or other parents.

Any parent/guardian/guest who engages in verbal or physical abuse will risk their child's removal from the program. If a parent exhibits inappropriate behavior, they will be asked to stop or leave the premises. If the behavior escalates, YMCA staff will contact 911.

If a parent/guardian is suspended from entering the center due to threatening or aggressive behavior, the child may continue attending, but alternative drop-off and pick-up arrangements must be made. While our goal is always a peaceful resolution, the center reserves the right to suspend or expel a child if a parent’s behavior poses a risk to the safety and well-being of our community.

Family Education Programs

The center hosts Family Workshops throughout the school year. Workshops give families an opportunity to meet, make connections, and share with each other. The topics and themes of the evening are topics such as behavior and discipline, setting bedtime routines, mealtime challenges, sibling rivalry, stress management, and fun etc. Here we ask for ideas for topics of discussion and feedback.

The center provides fun and educational events including interactive literacy activities and other events held throughout the school year. Notices of these events are posted in Class Dojo app. Parent/guardians with suggestions for topics are asked to share their ideas with the Director. Parent events are held throughout the school year. We believe children who have a literature rich home, become lifelong readers. There are many benefits to early literacy. We encourage families to consider a book a day, storytelling, and writing activities at home. There are books to borrow for bedtime stories at the entrance of the preschool. We will be happy to offer support and resources for those interested in gaining further literacy skills. The center will link families to the Middletown Adult Education Family Literacy program and Literacy Volunteers if needed. These are free resources available to help adults learn to read.

Family-Teacher Conferences A.5.08

We offer family-teacher conferences at least twice during the school year, typically in early winter and late spring. Copies of *Ages and Stages questionnair*e are sent home so families can complete them and consider the goals they would like to mention. During the meetings, families and teachers discuss the child's progress, address concerns, a*nd collaborate on learning goals*. Families are encouraged to provide feedback on the assessment form. Teachers will post a conference schedule for parents to select a convenient time, and virtual or telephone conferences are also available. These meetings help families to take part in their child's education.

Assessment & Family Participation R.5.01

We believe that every child is a unique learner who develops at their own pace. To support their growth, we use a variety of observations and assessment tools to track progress, identify strengths and needs, and shape individualized learning experiences. We see assessment as more than just measuring progress—it is a tool for understanding children's needs, individualizing curriculum, and improving our program. By using assessment data, we create an environment where every child can thrive.

Assessment is an ongoing process that includes both formal and informal methods. Formal assessments are conducted three times a year, allowing teachers to monitor developmental progress across learning domains. Informal assessments occur daily through teacher observations, play-based interactions, and documentation of children's emerging skills and interests. A key tool we use is the **Documentation Observations Teaching System (DOTS)**, which enables teachers to systematically record learning progress. R.5.03

To further support individualized learning, we utilize the **Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**, a screening tool that evaluates development in areas such as communication, motor skills, problem-solving, and social-emotional growth. Families play a vital role in this process by completing the ASQ questionnaire to compare with the data teachers have collected. This collaborative approach ensures that assessment data reflects a well-rounded view of the child's development, incorporating both classroom and home perspectives.

Family participation is essential in the assessment process. Upon enrollment, families provide insight into their child's interests, strengths, and developmental history. Throughout the year, families engage in goal setting, parent-teacher conferences, and ongoing communication via ClassDojo and in-person meetings. Teachers use these discussions, along with assessment data, to refine their teaching practices and create meaningful learning experiences.

R.5.02

Beyond individual child assessments, we use assessment data to inform overall program improvements. By analyzing trends and outcomes from DOTS, ASQ, and observations, we make data-driven decisions about curriculum development, staff training, and resource allocation. Family feedback is also a key component—each year, we conduct a program evaluation survey, allowing families to share their experiences and insights. The results directly influence enhancements to our curriculum, classroom environments, and overall program quality.

Transportation

The YMCA does not provide transportation for students to and from the center.

Parking A.6.14

YMCA site:
The YMCA parking lot is behind our building. You can park in the lot and walk up the sidewalk on Union Street to enter through the main entrance. There are a limited number of 10-minute parking spaces, located on Union Street, directly in front of the main entrance. These spaces are for quick drop-offs or pick- ups. If you will be in the building longer than 10 minutes, please park in the parking lot or in public street parking

If you are picking up a child on our playground, you may park in the lot or pull up alongside the yellow curb behind the playground. There is a limited amount of parking on the curb- if spaces are full, please use the parking spaces in the lot. Double parking and/or blocking the entrance/exit to the lot is not allowed. We also ask that vehicles are not left idling and emitting fumes during drop off or pick up. Please note that parking is more limited during the summer months due to increased traffic from camp and camp buses. Parking along the yellow curb is not allowed during camp drop off/ pick up time.

At Hamilin Street:

Families should park in a parking space in the lot. (Please do not park along the curb by the door.) Double parking and/or blocking the entrance/exit to the lot is not allowed. We also ask that vehicles are not left idling and emitting fumes during drop off or pick up. Please note that parking is more limited during the summer months due to increased traffic from camp and camp buses. Parking along the yellow curb is not allowed during camp drop off/ pick up time.

Entrance

Entering the YMCA building:

1. Families can enter the YMCA building from the main entrance on Union Street
2. Walk to the left of the reception desk
3. Through the hallway, past the gym,
4. Continue down the hall to the doors of the Preschool at the very end of the hall on the right.
5. Please press the doorbell and wait to be let in by a staff person. Please accompany your child into the center to the door of the assigned classroom. We ask that families walk in the hallways, keeping the child close by. Children are not allowed to open doors.
6. Parents/Guardian's (or parent/guardian designate) must sign in and out at every arrival and departure. A sign in/out sheet is in the hallway and will be brought outside when pick up is from the playground.
7. Please check the Class Dojo messages and check your mailbox each day.
8. We ask that parents talk with staff at drop off and pick up, so that the exchange of caregiving responsibility is clear to all parties, especially the children. Parents/guardians with more than one child enrolled in the center should speak to both children's teachers. Please advise the staff of any concerns or changes that may affect the child's needs or behaviors. We enjoy hearing any family news or accomplishments
9. Please leave a phone number where you can be reached during the day if it differs from the one on file.
10. It is important that you inform the staff if someone other than a parent/guardian will be picking up the child and confirm that they are listed on the release form.

We have a video monitoring system at the door. If staff do not recognize the person, they will not open the door. The intercom will be used for staff to communicate with the person to be sure the person is authorized to be in the preschool**. Please do not hold the door open for other people**

If accommodation is needed to enter the building, people may go past the main entranceway, up the sidewalk, following it around the corner to a side entrance with an ADA accessible ramp.

At Hamlin Street:

1. Families should park in a parking space in the lot. (Please do not park along the curb by the door.)
2. Families will bring children to the side door at 8:50 am, where preschool teachers will be waiting to greet them
3. The door is locked and will be opened by staff when they can see who is at the door. We have a video monitoring system at the door. If staff do not recognize the person, they will not open the door. The intercom will be used for staff to communicate with the person to be sure the person is authorized to be in the preschool.
4. Parents/Guardian's (or parent/guardian designate) must sign in and out at every arrival and departure. A sign in/out sheet is on a cart brought to the door and will be brought outside when pick up is from the playground.
5. We ask that parents talk with staff at drop off and pick up, so that the exchange of caregiving responsibility is clear to all parties, especially the children.
6. Please advise the staff of any concerns or changes that may affect the child's needs or behaviors. We enjoy hearing any family news or accomplishments
7. Please leave a phone number where you can be reached during the day if it differs from the one on file.
8. It is important that you inform the staff if someone other than a parent/guardian will be picking up the child and confirm that they are listed on the release form.
9. If you need to bring your child to school outside the regular drop-off window, please contact the classroom in advance through the Class Dojo app or by phone. Upon arrival, go to the side door and press the buzzer. A staff member will respond and ask you to wait there while they gather the children and come to the door. We kindly ask that alternate drop-offs remain occasional and not become a regular routine.

Daily Sign – Out

A Parent/guardian (or parent/guardian designate) must sign the child out of the center each day. Parent or guardian should also check the class story and any messages on the Class Dojo app at the end of each day. There may be a note about wet clothes to take home, or any items needed the next day

Pick up By Someone Other than a Parent/Guardian

- Staff can only release children to a parent/guardian or another designated person that has been previously authorized in writing on a preschool release form

- Parents/guardians may authorize people to pick up their child in the enrollment paperwork or by completing a change-of-information-form with the person's full name and phone number. Authorized persons must present picture identification (such as a driver's license) to the staff before they can remove the child.
- We ask that parents tell designated pick-up people they will be asked to present their ID.
- Parent/guardians may add or remove people from the list at any time during the year by completing a "change of information form." Additions must be in writing and in advance of the person picking up the child.

Late Pick – Up

Parents/guardians are expected to be prompt. We realize that emergencies do happen. Parent/guardians will be allowed one late pick-up without a late charge. Continued late pick-ups may result in a late charge. This late fee will help to cover the expense of keeping staff at the center beyond their scheduled departure time.

The late fee is $5.00 for any part of the first 7 minutes a parent is late. After the first 7 minutes, there will be a $1.00 a minute charge. For example: If a child is picked up at 5:37, the late fee will be $5.00. If a child is picked up at 5:46, the late fee will be $14.00.

Please notify the center if they are running late. If the parent/guardian has not called, staff will attempt to call the parent. If we get no answer, or a returned call within 5 minutes, we will try again and then call those listed as emergency contacts. Please be sure all contact information is up to date.

If the parent/guardians and emergency contacts cannot be reached by one hour after assigned pick up time, the staff will contact the local police department and /or the Department of Children and Families.

If the child is removed from the center by anyone other than the parent/guardian, a note will be left at the entrance of the center/school, and the YMCA front desk staff will be notified. At MacDonough, the front office will also be notified.

Alcohol/Drug Policy

State law prohibits staff from releasing a child to an adult that is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If a person arrives to pick up a child and the staff believes that there is cause for concern, the person will be asked to call someone else to pick up the child. If the person becomes uncooperative, the police will be called. Please know that we want to help find you a safe alternative to driving.

Absences

If you are not planning to bring your child to preschool, please communicate with the classroom teacher by dojo text or by calling the classroom in the morning and leave a message for their

child's teacher. All absences (excused or unexcused) and tardy arrivals are recorded. Phone numbers can be found at the end of this handbook.

Vacations

Parent/guardians are asked to give advance notice concerning vacations. Parent/guardians are responsible for payment of weekly tuition while they are on vacation. Children should miss no more than 2 consecutive weeks of school.

Inclement Weather Late Openings/Early

Closings the Center at Union Street and Hamlin:
The YMCA President determines the operating hours of the childcare center during inclement weather. In theabsence of the YMCA President, the YMCA Vice President will make the decision. The Director will be notified of any decisions made regarding a change of hours and will inform families on Class Dojo. The YMCA preschool site hours are not determined by the public-school schedule. We do, however, realize that your family's schedule may be affected. Please communicate any changes in schedule to your child's teacher on Class Dojo.

The center will be closed if the YMCA is closed due to inclement weather. If the YMCA is going to open **after** 10 am, the preschool will be closed for the day.

If a decision is made to close the childcare center early due to threatening weather conditions, parents/guardians will be contacted by phone. If a parent/guardian is unable to be reached, emergency contact persons will be called and asked to pick up the child. A voicemail and a Class Dojo text will be left for the parent/guardian telling them that their child has been picked up by their emergency contact. A note containing this information will also be posted on the door, and the front desk of the YMCA will be informed. Please make sure we have your updated contact information.

Daily Schedule at the YMCA site

7:15 Arrivals and free choice - all children in the jungle room
8:45 Wash hands and eat breakfast. (Open breakfast, some are eating some are playing
9:30 Toileting (get ready to go outside for some children).
10:00 Small group activities and Centers (activities include fine motor, math, science dramatic play, creative art/expression, etc.).
11:00 Large motor activities and outside play (activities include but are not limited to organized games, bike riding, dancing, mud kitchen or sand box sensory play and creative movement, climbing, etc.).
11:55 Hand washing and preparing lunch.
12:00 Lunch
12:30 Clean up, toileting, nap preparation
1:00 Rest and nap time
2:30 Toileting and hand washing for snack.
2:45 Snack time.

3:30 Outside
4:30 Free choice activities- all children in the Ocean room
5:15 Dismissal and sign up

Daily Schedule at Hamlin Street

8:50 Arrival, sign in, quiet activities in cafeteria
9:00 Enter classroom, check in, wash hands
9:15 AM snack served
9:45 Morning Circle
10:00 Center time activities in classroom
10:45 Transition to clean and use bathroom
11:00 Outside play/ Gross motor activities
11:45 Transition, wash hands, prepare for lunch
12:00 Lunch
12:30 Quiet activities, use bathroom, prepare for naptime
1:00 Nap/Quiet Rest time
2:30 Clean up, bathroom
3:00 PM snack served
3:35 Dismissal and sign out

Rest Time Policy

We recognize the importance of resting during a child's busy day. While some children fall asleep quickly, others may simply need quiet time to relax. All children are expected to rest quietly. To support individual needs, teachers may offer gentle back rubbing to help children settle or provide quiet toys for those who are not tired. Staff-child ratios are always maintained during rest time, and no group is ever left unsupervised. For children preparing to enter kindergarten, we begin gradually reducing nap time during the summer months to help ease the transition to full school days without designated rest periods.

Rest Time Guidelines:

1. All preschoolers are given a designated rest period.
2. Children rest quietly on their assigned cots.
3. The room is darkened, and soothing music is played.
4. Children who do not sleep after 30 minutes may engage in quiet activities on their cot.
5. Cots are spaced at least three feet apart or separated by a vertical barrier, following Office of Early Childhood (OEC) and NAEYC guidelines.
6. Cots and blankets are provided.
7. Cots are sanitized daily, and blankets are laundered weekly or as needed.

Rest time is structured to provide a calm and relaxing environment while respecting each child's individual rest needs.

Clothing

To keep children safe and comfortable during daily activities, please follow these guidelines:

1. **Footwear** - Children must wear closed-toe shoes with backs and rubber soles. Please avoid sandals, flip-flops, and dress shoes without proper traction.
2. **Play Clothes** - Dress children in clothes suitable for messy play, as they may get paint, glue, sand, or food on them.
3. **Skirts and Dresses** - Shorts or leggings should be worn under skirts or dresses for comfort and ease of movement.
4. **Seasonal Clothing**
    - **Cold Weather:** Send children hats, mittens, snow pants, and boots. We go outside daily unless it is pouring rain or below 20°F.
    - **Warm Weather:** Apply sunscreen before arrival and dress children in lightweight clothing and a sun hat.
5. **Extra Clothes** - Keep seasonally appropriate extra clothing in your child's cubby, including several bottoms for those who are toilet training. Staff will let you know when items need to be replenished.

Personal Belongings

We ask that families only bring what children truly need for the day — and leave the rest at home.

What to Bring:
Each day, your child will need just a few essentials:

- Extra clothes in a labeled zip lock bag (in case of spills or accidents) —that can be left in cubby until needed.
- Outdoor gear that matches the weather — like a coat, boots, hat, or mittens
- Closed-toe shoes for safe play indoors and outside

What to Leave at Home:

- Water bottles — we have water available all day
- Snacks or meals — we provide nutritious food for every child
- Backpacks, toys, pacifiers, or stuffed animals — we have everything they need here!

We appreciate your help in keeping things simple. It helps us keep track of children's belongings and reduces distractions during the day and allows us to do pick up from the playground.

About Toys from Home

We know that children sometimes want to bring something special from home, but we ask that toys stay at home or in the car. Toys from home can get lost or cause disagreements, and we want every child to feel included and focused on the activities here. Please also note that **play weapons and war toys are not allowed** in our program.

Thanks for helping us keep the classroom a peaceful, shared space for everyone!

Supervision of Children R.6.06

Ensuring the safety and well-being of all children is our top priority. Our staff follows strict supervision guidelines to create a secure environment for learning and playing.

- Maintain Proper Ratios: A 1:10 staff-to-child ratio is always upheld, with a maximum group size of 20 children.
- Active Supervision: Children must always be within sight and sound of staff members. No child is left unattended.
- Regular Name-to-Face Counts: Staff conduct frequent headcounts, especially:
    - Upon arrival and departure
    - During transitions between activities
    - Before, during, and after outdoor play and field trips
- Strategic Positioning: Staff are responsible for placing themselves in positions that allow them to observe all children, ensuring active engagement and immediate response when needed.

Preschool Screen Time Policy

We recognize the importance of hands-on, interactive learning experiences for young children. While we acknowledge the benefits of technology as an educational tool, we are committed to minimizing screen time and ensuring that all technology use aligns with developmentally appropriate practices.

Screen Time, Technology, and Media Guidelines: (A.4.13#1,2) tec (A.4.13#3)

Philosophy and Purpose
Technology is used intentionally and sparingly, only when it supports children's learning and development. It must be developmentally appropriate, educationally valuable, and always balanced with hands-on, active experiences.

Approved Uses of Technology
Technology may be integrated into the classroom only when it enhances curriculum goals and supports developmental areas (language, math, social-emotional, etc.). Examples include:

- Digital read aloud stories to support literacy.
- Music and movement activities that encourage participation.
- Interactive content that engages children directly.
- Virtual field trips that extend real-world learning.
- Passive screen use (e.g., video clips) requires Director approval and must serve a clear, purposeful learning goal.
- Screen Time Guidelines Screen exposure should not exceed 30 minutes per day and often should be much less.

Not Permitted During:

- Transitions
- Meals or snacks

- Nap/rest time (except calming music or timers)

Technology must not replace active play, teacher-child interaction, or hands-on exploration.

Supervision and Content Safety

- Children do not use devices independently and must be actively supervised during all screen time.
- Only pre-approved apps, websites, or digital materials may be used.
- Devices must have proper privacy and safety settings enabled.

Please, report any concerns or incidents immediately to the Director

Food

We participate in the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Children are provided with nutritionally balanced meals and snacks. We are unable to accept food into the center- unlessstaff have approved it for a special occasion. Please read the menus posted weekly in the class dojo and on the bulletin board by the entrance. There are also copies of the menu available upon request. If your child has any food allergies or restrictions it should be discussed with the director during enrollment. We can only make substitutions to our weekly menu for medical or religious restrictions- after appropriate food program paperwork has been completed and there has been a meeting with the Director.

We strongly encourage all children to eat the nutritionally balanced breakfast, lunch, and snacks provided daily.We believe children will try new foods not familiar to them if they see their friends and teachers eating it too. Staff will encourage children to try all foods served but children will not be forced to eat things they do not want. Alternative meals will not be provided.

Health, Nutrition, and Dental Health are important components of our curriculum. These are topics of study for several weeks annually and are discussed regularly as part of our daily routine (i.e.: hand washing, nutritious foods, etc.).

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days at the center, and we enjoy celebrating them with the children. Birthdays are celebrated at afternoon snack time 2:45. Parents/guardians may sendin a special treat for the occasion. Please speak to the teacher in advance to arrange for their child's special day. Please no goody bags or balloons. However, we would love to have you join us. Maybe read your child's favorite book to the class or show us a baby picture.

For safety reasons, all items served must be store bought items. Due to allergy concerns, food must be labeled with ingredients. No homemade items are allowed. The center will serve the "special treat" along with the required components of the snack being served.

Field Trip and Other Events off the Child Care Property A.6.19

All parent/guardians are notified in writing prior to any field trip sponsored by the center. If a field trip requires transportation, there will be a permission slip that only a parent/guardian can sign. Parent/guardiansare asked to sign a permission slip prior to the event and parent/guardians are asked to put a phone number down if it will be different from those that the center has on file for that day. The permission slip will indicatewhere the child will be going, the time the event will start and end, and the mode of transportation being used. Staff will be responsible for their primary groups of children while on the field trip. Head counts will be taken prior to, during and returning from all field trips based on attendance for that day. An extra staff member will always accompany those going on a field trip. This is for emergency purposes. Lastly, all staffaccompanying children on a trip will have a conversation with the children prior to the field trip on safety measures.

For all field trips; walking trip or bus trip, teachers will carry the "Field Trip Backpack" with all the permission slips, parent contact information, and first aid kit. Teachers will also carry cell phones to be used incase of an emergency, so that they may contact the Director and get verbal instructions on how to proceed.

If the field trip requires the center to use a school bus, the Director will call and set up the transportation with the contracted bus service. All buses are equipped with two-way radios as well, so if anything goes wrong with the bus while on the trip the driver can call the dispatch and alert the bus service of a problem.

If a problem or emergency comes up, the staff will call the Center and alert the Director or a designee. They in turn will take the necessary steps needed to handle the issue at hand. If at any time a childgoes missing, the following steps will be taken:

1. The teachers whose group the child went missing from will alert the extra staff person who will in-turn seek help or coordinate a search for the missing child.
2. A search will ensue and if needed the Police will be called in to help.
3. The YMCA will be called next and alerted, so that the parent/guardian can be notified of the situation, and
4. Lastly, DCF will be contacted by the center to self-report the incident.

If a search ensues all remaining staff members and children will converge on the bus while those aiding in thesearch look for the missing child. If warranted, the staff and children may be sent back to the center, and arrangements would be made to collect the staff members behind to aid in the search.

While safety precautions are put in place, it is the center's hope that they will never have to be institutedregarding this. Staff are trained upon hire and again yearly on protocol for field trip emergencies.

Medical Emergencies A.6.19

All staff members are trained in first aid and CPR. The staff will handle minor medical concerns using proper first aid. Depending on the nature of the injury or illness, parents/guardians may be notified by phone and/or in writing. If there is an injury to the head or face, or an injury that requires further medical attention parents/guardians will be called. There will also be an incident oraccident report filed. If a child has a "booboo" such as a scrape or hang nail, etc. the staff will write an injury report and parents will be notified at the end of the day.

Children who need professional medical care due to a life-threatening emergency will be transported by ambulance to Middlesex Hospital. Parents will be notified immediately. A staff member will go to the hospital with the child (if staffing ratios allow) and stay with them until the parent/guardian arrives. If a parent cannot be reached, the child's emergency contacts will be called.

Fire Emergency and Evacuation Plan A.6.19

1. Fire drills are essential to responsible handling of actual emergencies and will be held regularly. We practice fire drills and emergency evacuation from various evacuation points at various times of theday.
2. If the building must be evacuated for an emergency, the children at Union St. will be taken to SouthCongregational Church. Children at MacDonough will be taken to St. John's Church.
3. If the building must be left evacuated for a significant length of time, parents and our emergency contactswill be called to pick their children up.

Health and Safety Policies

Construction Safety

All renovations to the center such as painting, carpeting, tiling, or renovations resulting in dust flying about will be done while no children or adults are present. These types of renovations will be conducted over a weekend, an evening after closing, extended center holiday closings or shutdowns, so that windows can be opened and proper ventilation and clean up has been achieved prior to children and adults entering the space.

Pet Policy

Personal pets are not allowed in the center or the playground. The only pets allowed in the center areclassroom pets that belong to our center. A care plan for the pet will be determined, posted, and followed.

Health Prevention

Our center is continuously monitored for health and safety standards. To prevent illness of teachers and children, we engage in the following recommended childcare hygiene practices:

1. Children are taught and assisted with proper hand-washing techniques.
2. Children and staff wash their hands when they enter the room, after toileting, nose blowing, coughing in their hand, touching any bodily fluids, before and after they play in a sensory table, after any contact withan animal, after touching garbage, and before eating and serving meals and snacks.
3. Tables are sanitized before meals and snacks.
4. Toys and equipment are cleaned and disinfected regularly and as needed.
5. Toilets and sinks are disinfected daily and as needed.
6. Liquid antibacterial soap is provided for hand washing.
7. Universal precautions are used when handling any bodily fluids.

Children's Health Records

Parents are asked to provide an authorized list of people who wish to have access to health information about their child. This list is in the enrollment application in the child's file.

Illness & Exclusion Policy R6.01

Children in group childcare settings are likely to experience illnesses throughout the year, with an average of 8–10 illnesses annually. Parents/guardians are encouraged to arrange backup childcare for days when their child is too ill to attend preschool. To participate in school, children must be able to engage fully in daily activities. Parents will be contacted if their child is inconsolably crying, excessively sleepy, or showing signs of illness.

If a child becomes ill at the center, they will be provided with a comfortable resting area. Parents/guardians must pick up their child within one hour if:

- The child is too ill to participate in activities
- Their condition appears contagious

If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called.

Exclusion Criteria

If sick, children need to stay home and may only return when they have been **symptom-free for at least 24 hours** without medication. This includes:

- **Fever over 100°F** (must be fever-free for **24 hours without fever-reducing medication**)

- Undiagnosed rash
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Severe pain
- Green/yellow eye discharge
- Severe nasal congestion with persistent coughing
- Any contagious illness (e.g., head lice, chickenpox, pink eye)

Reporting Illnesses

If your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness, notify the teacher immediately so we can inform other families while maintaining confidentiality. A doctor's note may be required for your child to return to school.

Parents will be informed if a contagious illness is identified in the center, including details on symptoms, transmission, and prevention measures. The center will consult with health authorities, or our nurse consultant as needed.

Immunization Requirements

Per Connecticut state regulations, all children attending licensed childcare must receive an annual influenza vaccine between August and December. Children without documentation of this vaccine will not be allowed to attend school after January 1, unless they have a medical exemption in accordance with state guidelines.

In the event of a vaccine-preventable disease outbreak, under-immunized children (per state immunization records) will be excluded from school until the outbreak has ended.

Administration of Medication

All medication administered by staff must be accompanied by:

1. A completed Administration of Medication form signed by a physician and parent/guardian. Forms can beobtained from the Director. Medication authorization forms must be renewed before their expiration date. An action plan for administering medications must accompany the medication orders.
2. Medication must be delivered to a staff member in the original container labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, and directions for the administration of the medication. Prescription medications must have the original prescription label attached. We cannot accept expired medications.
3. Written permission forms must accompany non-prescription medications such as sunscreen or insect repellent to be applied by staff. Any non-prescription medications (such as ointments) that have the wording: "Medicated" must have a medication administration form that is used with prescription medication accompanying it.
4. Staff cannot administer the first dose of any medication.

5. All expired medication will be returned to the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian is responsible for replacing expired medications with a current prescription.
6. All staff members are trained in medication administration and injectable per state regulations.

All unused medication shall be returned to the parent/guardian or destroyed if not picked up within one week after the order's termination.

Health Insurance

All children enrolled in the Early Start program must have current health insurance. We need to keep acopy of the child's insurance card on file. Please speak with the Director if your child does not have health insurance, is at risk of losing their health insurance, or needs assistance in locating a health service provider. The center would be happy to provide you with HUSKY information and assist your family with finding the appropriate health care for your family. The center also has written information on the HUSKY plan in the parent resource library on the hallway bookshelf.

Outdoor Policy

Taking children outdoors is a healthy, integral part of our daily schedule and curriculum. Children benefit fromactive outdoor play by releasing energy and developing large muscle coordination. Children will participate in routine outdoor play when the temperature is above 20 degrees. When the temperature is below 32 degrees and the conditions are not extreme, outdoor activity will be limited to 20 minutes. When the temperatures drop below 20 degrees, there will be no outdoor play. Lastly, generally, children too ill to play outdoors are too ill to be in childcare. In the event of inclement weather conditions, teachers will takechildren to the gym or another large space so that they can still have large motor activity opportunities.

If the Weather Service or public health authorities put out an alert and deem the air quality unhealthy, staff and children will not be allowed outdoors. Teachers will check daily during the summer months to see if any alerts for poor air quality have been issued and will then alert all staff that they are to stay indoors with children or applyrepellent.

The staff will only work with plants that are not poisonous when planting any type of plants in theplayground. No chemicals will be used on the plants.

Children must come to school with appropriate clothing for the seasons.
Winter months: hats*/gloves/mittens/boots/snow pants.*
Summer months: *wear sunscreen with a minimum of SPF15 applied by the parent in the morning and the center staff will reapply in the afternoon (if Topical Medication form completed)/comfortable lightweight clothing/sneakers for playing on equipment/a hat*
Spring and Fall months: *appropriate clothing and lightweight jackets/sweatshirts for cool mornings and warmer afternoons.*

Guidance and Discipline
Children come to our preschool to learn and grow. They are beginning to learn skills such as self-regulation, how to function as part of a group, taking turns and sharing, and all about their own feelings and the feelings of others.

Children will make mistakes, and it is the adult's responsibility to help them learn from their mistakes. The goal is to help children develop the skills they need to express their feelings and learn social skills. The safety of all children and staff is our number one concern. Children cannot learn best in an environment where they do not feel safe.

The teaching staff use positive methods of discipline which provide children with the structure, support, and problem-solving skills they need. Our classrooms follow a predictable daily schedule so that children know what to expect, and we keep rules and routine changes to a minimum. It is our goal to minimize the use of exclusion, suspension, or expulsion from preschool.

We define children's behavior as unacceptable:

- Inflicting physical or emotional harm on another child or staff member.
- Using abusive language or threatening the well-being of another child or staff member.
- Purposefully leaving an area and adult supervision.
- Not consistently following the program's rules and expectations of appropriate behavior.

Core Principles of Our Guidance and Discipline Policy
1. Safety and Respect: The safety and well-being of all children and staff is our highest priority. Children learn best in an environment where they feel safe, respected, and valued.
2. Positive Guidance and Skill Building: We approach discipline as an opportunity for teaching, helping children understand appropriate behavior and learn strategies for self-regulation.
3. Predictable Structure: Our program follows a predictable daily schedule with minimal rules and routine changes, creating a secure environment where children know what to expect each day.
4. Prevention and Proactive Management: Prevention is key to effective behavior management. We strive to maintain a program that allows freedom of movement, offers choices, and sets clear boundaries to minimize behavioral issues.

Positive Guidance & Behavior Support Policy

At the Phelps Ingersoll Center for Children, we are committed to using only **developmentally appropriate**, **respectful**, and **proactive behavior guidance strategies**. Our approach promotes social-emotional development, self-regulation, and a nurturing learning environment for all children.

Positive Discipline & Proactive Behavior Strategies

Role Modeling
Staff model respectful communication, emotional regulation, and problem-solving to set clear expectations for behavior.
Clear Expectations & Consistent Boundaries *(A.6.15#2c)*
Use visual aids, posted rules, and regular review with children to create predictability and structure. Reinforce through consistent language, routines, and follow-through.
Structured Environment & Predictable Routines
Classrooms are arranged to minimize overstimulation and ensure clear sightlines. Materials are age-appropriate, accessible, and engaging. Predictable routines help reduce anxiety and increase a sense of safety.
Guided Problem-Solving & Conflict Resolution
Children are supported in recognizing their emotions, identifying problems, and working through solutions. Staff use reflective listening, coaching, and visual tools to help children succeed.
Natural & Logical Consequences
When guidance is needed, staff use respectful, related consequences that teach cause and effect rather than punish.
Teaching Self-Regulation Skills
Children are introduced to calming techniques such as deep breathing, counting, using visuals, or taking a break in a quiet area. These skills are modeled and practiced daily.
Active Supervision & Positive Engagement
Staff maintain constant supervision and stay actively engaged with children. Proximity, redirection, and positive reinforcement are used to prevent and address challenging behaviors.
Preventing Unsafe or Disruptive Behavior *(R.6.05#2)*
Staff are trained to recognize common triggers like fatigue, frustration, or sensory overload. They provide sensory tools, emotional coaching, and supportive strategies to help children cope.
Private, Constructive Conversations
Behavior is addressed respectfully and privately once the child is calm. Staff guide the child to reflect and identify better choices for next time.
Reflective and Active Listening: Staff engage in open communication, using reflective and active listening techniques to support children in expressing their feelings and needs.

Relationship-Based Care
Strong caregiver-child relationships are central to our philosophy. Responsive interactions, emotional support, and secure attachments create a foundation for positive behavior. Approaches like *Circle of Security* are used to promote trust and well-being.

Collaboration with Families & Support Staff
Partnerships with families and specialists (e.g., social workers, special educators, consultants) are key to consistent behavior support. Individual care strategies are developed when needed and shared respectfully.

Ongoing Staff Training
Staff receive regular professional development in positive behavior support, trauma-informed care, and de-escalation strategies to ensure best practices are followed.

Through positive guidance, developmentally appropriate practices, and family collaboration, our preschool program aims to create a nurturing environment where children learn social/emotional and self-regulation skills. We want to help children grow and provide a safe and positive environment for everyone.

Discipline Policy and Best Practices

1. Children will be treated with respect and dignity.
2. Staff will provide clear explanations of the rules and role-play and model expectations.
3. Program rules will be posted so both children and parents can see them.
4. Staff will review the rules as needed with the group and with individual children.
5. Staff will be positive role models of behaviors we want children to display.
6. Staff will give children choices but set and enforce clear boundaries, rules and expectations
7. Staff will remain calm and get to the child's level when speaking with or disciplining a child.
8. Staff will use appropriate language (no sarcasm).
9. Children will be guided through the steps of problem solving.
10. Children will be introduced to ways of positively dealing with anger (deep breathing, counting to ten, writing about feelings, drawing, etc.)
11. Staff will use reflective and active listening techniques (open versus closed communication)
12. Confidentiality and discretion will be used during all discussions about behavior concerns

Prohibited Discipline Practices (R.6.05)

The following are practices that are prohibited at the center:

1. Corporal or any type of physical punishment. This includes hitting, shaking, pinching, hair pulling, or any other measure, which produces physical pain.
2. The use of coercion is the practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats. This includes rough handling, forcing a child to stay in a certain position, or performing an action.
3. Withdrawal or threat of withdrawal of food, rest, or bathroom privileges.
4. Abusive, profane, or derogatory language.
5. Any form of humiliation, including threats of physical punishment, writing on children, or name calling.
6. Any form of emotional abuse including rejecting, terrorizing, ignoring, isolating, or
7. Corrupting a child is not allowed.

Definitions and Examples

***Physical Abuse (*A.6.15#1)**

Physical abuse involves any intentional act that causes physical harm or discomfort to a child. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Hitting, slapping, shaking, pushing, or pinching.
- Forcing a child into an uncomfortable or painful position.
- Pulling hair or ears.
- Excessive restraint or forceful grabbing.

Psychological (Emotional) Abuse (A.6.15#1)

Psychological abuse involves actions that harm a child's self-esteem, emotional well-being, or sense of safety. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Yelling, screaming, or using a harsh tone.
- Shaming, ridiculing, or humiliating a child.
- Using threats, intimidation, or name-calling.
- Ignoring or isolating a child as punishment.
- Making derogatory comments about a child or their family.

Coercion (R.6.05*1) (A.6.15#1)
Coercion is the use of threats, force, or manipulation to control a child's behavior. Examples include

- Forcing a child to eat or drink
- Using fear or intimidation to make a child comply.
- Withholding basic needs as a form of control.

Physical Restraint

Motivations of Misbehavior
There are many reasons why children misbehave. Think back to when you were a child and remember all the reasons you did something you were told not to do. These motivations offer good insight into why children make bad choices. We look at misbehavior as a clue to a child's inner world. To respond in a way that helps the child you must understand why the child is doing what you have asked him/her not to do and what the child needs to make better choices.
There are various lists and frameworks that psychologists and educators use to categorize the reasons behind behavior. One widely recognized framework is the ABC model, which stands for Antecedent, Behavior, and Consequence. In this model, behaviors are analyzed in terms of what happens before the behavior (the antecedent), the behavior itself, and what happens after the behavior (the consequence). When considering why a child is acting out, think in terms of the 'big picture' categories listed:
1. Getting something: A child may misbehave to get something. For example, a child might throw a tantrum to get a toy or to make a connection with another person.
2. Avoiding something: A child may misbehave to avoid something they find unpleasant. For instance, a child might refuse to do a task to avoid feeling frustrated. Also, children may misbehave to avoid requested tasks.
3. Sensory stimulation: Some behaviors are driven by sensory needs, such as seeking sensory input or avoiding sensory overload. For example, a child might engage in repetitive behaviors like rocking or spinning to fulfill sensory needs.

4. Social connection: Behaviors aimed at getting attention, such as seeking approval or interaction from peers or adults, can be a significant motivator for children.

These categories are not mutually exclusive, and behaviors can often serve multiple functions simultaneously. Understanding the underlying function of a behavior can be crucial for developing effective strategies to address it.

Other Motivations for Misbehavior

Testing boundaries: Preschoolers are learning about rules and limits and may misbehave to test how far they can push those boundaries.

Lack of communication skills: If children struggle to express their needs or emotions verbally, they may communicate it by misbehaving.

Emotional distress: Feelings of frustration, anger, fear, or sadness can lead to misbehavior as children try to cope with their emotions.

Imitating others: Children may mimic the behavior of their peers or older siblings, especially if they see it as a way to fit in or gain approval.

Attention deficits: Children with attention difficulties may struggle to focus on tasks or follow instructions, leading to behaviors that disrupt the classroom.

Need for sensory stimulation: Some children misbehave because they are seeking sensory input or stimulation, such as touching, moving, or making noise.

Lack of understanding: Preschoolers are still developing their understanding of social norms and expectations, which can lead to unintentional misbehavior due to misunderstanding. And this may be exasperated when there are developmental delays,

Response to changes or transitions: Changes in routine, new environments, or transitions between activities can be unsettling for children, leading to misbehavior to cope with uncertainty.

Response to family stress or crisis: Home life that is difficult, caregivers in their own crisis, abuse or neglect issues, or past trauma may affect a child, even when away from or after a crisis has resolved.

Medical issues: Allergies, illnesses, or mental illnesses may cause a child emotional distress.

Addressing typical behaviors that require correction

When behavior issues arise, staff follow these steps:

1. Approach the child calmly and remind them of the rules. Be Kind, Be Safe and Follow Directions
2. Intervene as needed, offering redirection or alternatives if behavior continues
3. If necessary, redirect the child by gently guiding them (or offering to take their hand)
4. to another activity or a quiet space to reflect.
5. Document behavior incidents and notify parents as required with what was happening before the incident, during and following.

6. When lesson planning and setting up activities – reflect on the recent behavior struggles. Is there something that can be done to reduce the number of incidents, such as putting out 3 trucks instead of one? Consider the preferences of children who are struggling and put out something they enjoy. Are there enough stimulating activities? Is there too much or too little accessible to children?

Dealing with Repetitive Inappropriate Behaviors

The following steps will be taken to deal with inappropriate behavior:

1. A teacher will walk closer to the child displaying inappropriate behavior.
2. A teacher will get down to the child's level and remind the child of the rules in a clear, sensitive manner.
3. If inappropriate behavior continues, staff will intervene. Staff will give children the support necessary to have success. A teacher may decide the child needs to be redirected to another activity, problem solving strategies may need to be taught, or more choices are needed for children.
4. If a problem behavior continues or persists, staff will continue to give support. Children may be asked to play in a different area or may be asked to take a break, offering them a cozy corner.
5. If problem behavior persists, a child may be removed from the group for a while so he/she can calm down and reflect with staff support.
6. Every attempt will be made to resolve any problem in a brief time.
7. Parents will be notified of any behavior issues or concerns in writing and/or in verbal conversations -
8. Any behavior incident that causes harm, or threatens to cause harm, will be documented in a behavior incident report. This includes any:
    - any type of sexual behavior
    - temper tantrums or throwing furniture
    - Inflicting physical or emotional harm on another child or staff member,
    - Using abusive language or threatening the well-being of another child or staff member.
    - Purposefully leaving an area and adult supervision, running away from the group
    - Not consistently following the program's rules and expectations of appropriate behavior.
9. Any time a behavior incident report is written there will be a discussion between teachers and the child's guardian, and the director will receive a copy.
10. Confidentiality and discretion will be used during all discussions about behavior concerns
11. Physical restraint will only be used **as a last resort**, and only when necessary to protect the child, other children, or staff from immediate harm. If a situation arises where a child's behavior poses a serious risk to themselves or others, a staff member may gently yet firmly hold the child to prevent injury. The restraint will be administered calmly and supportively and will last only until the child regains self-control. A second staff member should be present during the restraint to assist and ensure safety for all involved. Parents

will be notified of any such incident **in writing on the same day it occurs**. Documentation will include the reason for the restraint, the duration, and the staff members involved. **(R.6.05)**

If significant behavioral issues are not resolved using steps outlined above in the "***Dealing with Inappropriate Behaviors"*** section, the staff will discuss further behavioral interventions with the Director or Assistant Director. These interventions include but are not limited to sharing the child's behavioral concerns confidentially during the monthly city wide case consultation meetings, an observation by our program social service consultant, sending a referral to Child First, requesting ECCP services, requesting the child be seen by a pediatrician or specialist, sending a child for a special education screening with the board of education or referring to Family Advocacy. If any of these are needed – please follow the steps listed below.

Identifying and Making Referrals on Children with Special Needs or Challenging Behaviors

If a teacher is concerned about a developmental delay or a challenging behavior of a child in the classroom,

1. The Director should be made aware immediately.
2. Once a concern is communicated, Teacher will develop an observation method and evaluate the behavior to verify or refute it. Most likely an ABC chart (Antecedent, Behavior, and Consequences).
3. From this series of data, the teachers and director/assistant director will assess the possible functions of behavior:
    a. To obtain a preferred item or activity.
    b. Escape or avoidance.
    c. To get attention, either from significant adults or peers.
    d. To communicate.
    e. Self-stimulation when the **behavior** itself provides reinforcement.
    f. Control or power.
4. Options are discussed with the Director or Assistant Director, including developing a behavior plan or making referrals for further evaluation or support services. When possible and if it is within our scope of practice, the director and teachers will work with the child to develop a behavior plan to teach a replacement behavior that still meets the same need as the problem behavior and reinforce the replacement behavior. We hope that understanding the behavior's function helps us decrease the problem behaviors and increase appropriate or desired behaviors. The YMCA will refer to our positive discipline policy and use positive behavior support strategies to help the child develop new skills.

If after observation and evaluation, the Director and Teacher together determine that the child needs additional support services, the following steps are followed.

1. A meeting will be held with the families to discuss the concerns and results of the observations and evaluation.
2. A decision will be made by the family and teacher as to what will happen next:

3. Address the concerns through a Behavior Care Plan developed with input from an appropriate consultant.
4. Make a referral to the School System or Social Work Consultation for further evaluation and support services.
5. If a referral is made, the teacher, family, and director will monitor compliance by the service agency and be a partner in developing a plan for support of the child while they are enrolled in the program.
6. The referral and all information regarding the referral and eventual services will be documented. All records and discussions about special needs and referrals are confidential.

Children with Special Needs

The Phelps Ingersoll Center for Children adheres to guidelines set forth by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA states that daycare programs must provide equal access to all children regardless of disabilities. There are children in our program who fall within the ADA guidelines. Children with special needs are important members of our program. It is every staff member's responsibility to provide opportunities for each child in the program to be assimilated and to feel welcomed. Children with special needs may at times demand extra attention, special care, and ongoing communication with family/guardians, school, and professionals. For some children, staff will need to consider environmental factors within the program that will inhibit the child from equal access to the daily activities. The YMCA will provide training, literature, and available resources to help staff meet the needs of the children in our care.

Enrollment Policy for Children with Special Needs

1. Director contacts relevant professionals working with the child.
2. The director determines whether the program can meet the needs of the child at the present time. Determination is made and a plan to accept the child is put in place.
3. When the child is accepted into the program, information will be provided to all staff members. Training opportunities will be scheduled if necessary, and staff will have a chance to ask questions and meet with support service personnel.
4. An individual educational plan and/or behavioral plan will be developed by the teacher, director, consultants, and family/guardians.
5. The educational plan should be signed by all staff and reviewed after the first month and then again when changes or updates are necessary.
6. A conference with family/guardians should be held at the end of the first month and when needed thereafter.

Suspension, Expulsion

At the YMCA, we prioritize safety more than anything else. Children with consistently challenging or unacceptable behaviors may be at risk for suspension, expulsion, or seclusion from our program if such behaviors pose a risk to the safety or well-being of themselves, other children, or staff. Our commitment is to work with families and staff to address behaviors

proactively and with compassion, aiming to reduce the need for exclusionary measures. In compliance with federal and state civil rights laws, the following protocol will be followed to manage behavior issues while striving to keep children within the program whenever possible:

1. Environmental and Program Assessment

Staff will first evaluate any environmental or program factors contributing to the behavior and make necessary modifications. When appropriate, more resources and training will be provided to support staff in managing these behaviors.

2. Family Collaboration and Behavior Plan Development

We will arrange a meeting with the child's family to discuss the behavior and collaboratively create a behavior plan. This plan will include clear expectations, positive behavioral goals, potential consequences, and any terms related to suspension or expulsion. Both family members and staff will review and sign the plan to ensure shared understanding and commitment.

3. Consultation with Support Services

We may involve external professionals, including school personnel, social work consultants, and family advocacy or therapeutic support services, to provide additional insights and recommendations as needed.

4. Ongoing Review and Adjustment

Staff will hold regular follow-up meetings with the child's family to discuss progress and adjust the behavior plan as needed to support the child's success.

5. Documentation and Behavior Tracking

All interventions, observations, and steps taken will be thoroughly documented, including ongoing behavioral assessments. Staff will keep this documentation to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs and responses to various strategies.

6. Consideration of Exclusion as a Last Resort

Only after all other measures have been exhausted, and if it is decided that continued attendance is not in the best interest of the child or the program, exclusion from the program may be considered. This decision will be made with careful consideration and as a final option.

7. Notice Period for Termination: Families will be provided with a two-week notice period to arrange alternative care arrangements. However, the YMCA reserves the right to terminate care without notice in cases where the safety of children or staff is at risk due to the child's attendance.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Children need a safe, nurturing environment to grow and learn. If children's minimum needs for good nutrition, medical care, clean and appropriate clothing, shelter, appropriate discipline, intellectual stimulationand feeling of importance are not met, they cannot grow. Should a parent/guardian have difficulty meeting those needs, they are encouraged to ask for help. The staff can help find community resources that can help.

All our staff are mandated by Connecticut state law to file a report of any concern about child abuse orneglect with the Department of Children and Families. The CT DCF Hotline number is 1-800-842-2288.

If there is ever a concern about child abuse or neglect involving a member of our staff, it should be brought to the immediate attention of the Preschool Director. The YMCA takes safety seriously. If a member of our staff issuspected or accused of child abuse or neglect the administration at the YMCA will act immediately by following the policy and procedures listed in the Middlesex YMCA Employee Handbook. The YMCA administration will start an investigation into the claim. This may involve taking statements from other staff members, family members, or participants, reviewing video surveillance footage, and addressing the staff member. It could also involve the center making a self-report of abuse or neglect to DCF, OEC or law enforcement. While an investigation is being conducted a staff member will be put on administrative leave.All efforts would be made to protect the rights and privacy of all involved. Reinstatement of a staff person will occur only after all allegations have been cleared to the satisfaction of the YMCA administration and any investigating agency.

Confidentiality of Children's Files R.9.04

All information in children's files shall be considered privileged and confidential. This information will be accessible only to appropriate staff, personnel from the State of Connecticut Office of Early Childhood, the center's consultants, and childcare professionals for collaborating and reporting purposes. Any family wishingto see their child's file may do so by contacting the Director and setting up a time to do so. All confidential information is kept in the Director's office and the Director and only appropriate personnel as described above have access to the files.

Transition and Support to Kindergarten

The Director and the child's primary teacher will collaborate to provide the necessary support for children and their families to ensure the successful transition to kindergarten.

An annual transition plan will include:

1. The primary teacher will provide a variety of classroom experiences that help a child prepare forkindergarten
2. Middletown School kindergarten teachers will visit each classroom to chat with children and staff.

3. Information will be shared with parents regarding registration and parents will be given assistance ifneeded.
4. Parents will be asked if they would like the preschool teacher to share their child's developmental profile with the kindergarten. The parents will also be given a copy that can be shared with the kindergarten teacher.
5. For students who have special needs or challenging behaviors, a transition meeting with kindergartenstaff will take place to ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten.

Family Support and Referral Systems

The Phelps Ingersoll Center Early Start Preschool program works with community agencies to support the diverse needs of families. While the day-to-day emphasis is on the growth and development of the child, the program also serves to support and nurture the wellbeing of the family. Our linkage with community agencies provides families with easy access to resources such as parenting support services, adult education and job training, child nutrition, and health and wellness. As a mandate of Early Start funding, all preschool parents are asked to complete a Family Intake Form and Nutrition Questionnaire at the time of enrollment. The questions asked help us determine if families need services outside of the preschool program. Family information is confidential, and parents' completion of the questionnaire is strictly voluntary.

Families are encouraged to request a referral for community services at any time. Program staff will also suggest services to families struggling with issues that negatively affect their well-being. Referrals for services will only be made with the written consent of the parent. All information shared between agencies is confidential. Referrals will be made with respect to the family's cultural or languageneeds. To request more information, please speak to the director or your child's teacher.

Community Resources for Families R.2.05

We are committed to supporting our families by connecting them with valuable local resources. Below is a list of organizations and services available in Middletown, CT, that help in various areas:

- **Family Resource Centers**
  Offers educational, recreational, and supportive programs for parents, children, and youth in the area.
  Phone: 860-638-3742
  Website: https://www.middletownschools.org/page/family-resource-centers
- **Child First Program**
  Provides intensive, home-based services for families with young children who have experienced trauma or significant stress.
  Phone: 860-358-3401
  Website: https://middlesexhealth.org/locations/child-first

- **Family Wellness Centers of Connecticut – Community Health Center**
  Offers free classes and activities for families with children ages 0-5, focusing on wellness, early literacy, and child development.
  Phone: 860-347-6971
  Website: https://www.chc1.com/locations/middletown/
- **Connecticut Family Support Network (CTFSN)**
  Assists families raising children with disabilities and special healthcare needs, providing resources and advocacy.
  Phone: 860-346-4845
  Website: https://www.ctfsn.org/
- **2-1-1 Child Care**
  Assists families in finding childcare that best meets their needs and maintains current listings of licensed and license-exempt childcare programs in Connecticut.
  Phone: Dial 2-1-1
  Website: https://www.211childcare.org/ity Renewal Team
- **Amazing Grace Food Pantry**
  Offers groceries to families in need.
  Address: 16 Stack Street, Middletown, CT 06457
  Phone: 860-347-3222 ext. 200
  Website: https://svdmiddletown.org/food-pantry/
- **St. Vincent de Paul Soup Kitche**n
  Provides free hot meals daily for individuals and families in need.
  Address: 617 Main Street, Middletown, CT 06457
- **Phone:** 860-344-0097**Middletown Works – Community Resources**
  Connects families to a range of community services, including parental support and wellness programs.
  Website: https://middletownworks.org/connect-to-resources
- **Community Health Center, Inc.**
  Provides comprehensive primary care services, including medical, dental, and behavioral health, to families in Middletown.
  Phone: 860-347-6971
  Website: https://www.chc1.com/locations/middletown/
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**
  Assists eligible individuals and families in purchasing food. Applications can be submitted online or by calling.
  Phone: 1-855-626-6632
  Website: https://portal.ct.gov/DSS/SNAP/Supplemental-Nutrition-Assistance-Program---SNAP
- **Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)**
  Helps residents afford heating costs during the winter season. Benefits are usually paid directly to utility companies or fuel suppliers.
  Phone: Energy Assistance - Commun

  Website: https://svdmiddletown.org/soup-kitchen/

And Justice for All

In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases applyto all programs.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice andTDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Phone Numbers

Main YMCA Number	860-343-6907
Director	860-343-6227
Orchard Room	860-343-6226
Ocean Room	860-343-6243
Jungle Room	860-343-6225
Fax Number	860-343-6254