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FOR HEALTHY LIVING
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BUILDING STRONG BRIGHT FUTURES

2023-2024

Parent Handbook

EARLY LEARNING CENTER



PIEDMONT FAMILY YMCA
EARLY LEARNING CENTER
233 4th Street NW, Suite Y
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Table of Contents

PHILOSOPHY	3
HOURS OF OPERATION	3
ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES.....	3
HEALTH AND SAFETY (ILLNESS AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA)	3
MEDICATION POLICY	4
MEDICAL EMERGENCY	5
PARENTAL NOTIFICATIONS.....	5
ENROLLMENT	5
PAYMENT	5
BABYSITTING	5
MEALS AND SNACKS	5
CLEANLINESS/HYGIENE	6
INFANT AND TODDLER ITEMS	6
BEDDING AND PILLOWS	6
SUPPLIES.....	6
SCHOOL READINESS	7
A TYPICAL DAY IN OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM.....	7
CONDUCT AND GUIDANCE	7
TOILET TRAINING.....	8
SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS.....	8
DISCIPLINE	8
INDOOR/OUTDOOR PLAY.....	9
DAILY ATTIRE & EXTRA ITEMS FROM HOME.....	9
CONSISTENT CARE.....	9
GROUP SIZE	10
FIRE DRILLS	10
INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY CLOSINGS.....	11
HOLIDAYS.....	11
PARENT ENGAGEMENT/VOLUNTEERS/CONFERENCES	11
CONCLUSION.....	11
PARENT STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING	12

WELCOME!

At the YMCA, healthy child development starts early. That's why we offer early care and learning programs that help children learn the essential skills they will need to be ready for school. Our trained, supportive staff works to help children receive the best possible start to their education.

PHILOSOPHY

The YMCA is a community leader in the development of the whole child. Children will learn through discovery and play. Our goal is to encourage a love for lifelong learning in a caring community.

School Readiness for all children is a core component of YMCA early care and learning. Our Early Learning Center has chosen the STREAMin3 Curriculum to ensure that our children are prepared for school. Designed using the latest developmental and early education research, the STREAMin3 Curriculum Model provides an innovative and effective curriculum, assessments, observation guidance, coaching and professional development, and daily activities/routines for ECE programs for ages infancy-preschool.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Our program provides full-time care for children aged 6 weeks through 5 years and operates Monday-Friday from 7:00 am to 5:30 pm. Children must arrive no later than 9:00am each day. If you plan to arrive later than 9:00am, please contact the Center to arrange drop off.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Parents/guardians must sign their child in and out each day. For your convenience, a sign in/out sheet is located in the front lobby so that we will have a daily written record of your child's attendance, hours, and the person who brought/picked up the child. Child **MUST** be dropped off prior to 9am unless staff are notified in advance. Your child will only be released to the persons listed on the emergency or authorized pick-up section of the enrollment form. This person will be requested to show proper identification. Please bring your ID to the program. Only those designated on our enrollment form will be allowed to modify your information. All changes must be made with the program director. In any case concerning a custody clause or dispute, court documents must be provided.

HEALTH AND SAFETY (ILLNESS AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA)

In order to ensure the health and safety of all, employees who work directly with children will follow required procedures to prevent the spread of exposure to disease to include:

- Wearing gloves when handling or cleaning body fluids, such as after wiping noses, mouths, or tending sores
- Specifying that an employee with open wounds and/or any injury that inhibits hand washing, such as casts, bandages, or braces, must not prepare food or have close contact with children
- Removing gloves and washing hands immediately after each task to prevent cross-contamination to other children
- Excluding the employee from direct care when the employee has signs of illness

In an effort to maintain a healthy environment, the following guidelines must be followed very strictly. Staff perform daily health checks to ensure children are healthy and to note any illness or injury. Children who become ill may not remain at the program, nor will an ill child be admitted. If a child becomes ill during the day, a parent will be notified to pick up the child immediately. If we are unable to reach the parents, we will then begin calling the persons listed on your enrollment form.

Under no circumstances may a parent bring a sick child to the Early Learning Center if the child shows any signs of illness (see symptoms requiring removal of care below) or is unable to participate in the normal routine and regular activities. Sick children will expose all children and staff members they come in contact with.

The following symptoms will require removal of the child from our care:

- A fever above 100.4 degrees
- Fever AND sore throat, rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability, or confusion
- Diarrhea: runny, watery, bloody stools, or 2 or more loose stools within last 4 hours
- Breathing trouble, sore throat, swollen glands, loss of voice, hacking or continuous coughing
- Runny nose (other than clear), discharging eyes or ears
- Frequent scratching of body or scalp, lice, rash or any other spots that resemble childhood diseases, including ringworm
- A communicable disease
- Child is irritable, continuously crying, or requires more attention than we can provide without hurting the health, safety or well-being of the other children in our care

For the benefit of our staff and other children in our care, a sick child will not be permitted to return to care for 24 hours after condition has returned to normal. The child may return 24-48 hours (depending upon illness) after they have received the first dose of an antibiotic. If a child receives an antibiotic for an ear infection, he/she may return to preschool immediately if he/she has been free of other symptoms for at least 24 hours. Allergy related symptoms and non-communicable diseases do not require exclusion if you have a note from your doctor.

Please notify us if your child will be absent from the program.

All children must be able to participate in their normal daily schedule (outdoor play included). Weather permitting, children will go outside every day. We cannot keep one child inside due to illness.

Please let us know as soon as possible if your child has a communicable illness or infection. This will allow us to notify the parents of children attending our program. Children with communicable conditions may not return to care without a note from their physician. For the success of our programs please respect the health of the other children in our care by cooperating with us on these state mandated rules.

MEDICATION POLICY

If your child needs medication while at the program, you must complete an "Authorization to Administer Medication" form. The medication must be given to YMCA staff, and:

- Be in its original container
- Labeled with child's name (we cannot share medications among siblings)
- Labeled with the date that the prescription expires
- Labeled with the dosage and directions on how to administer the medicine
- Include the name of the physician prescribing the medication

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Minor bumps and scratches are inevitable, but we make every effort to keep the children safe through supervision and childproofing. Minor injuries will receive appropriate first aid. In the event of an emergency injury or illness that requires immediate medical attention, we will call 911, provide first aid and/or CPR, and then contact parents or guardians. Responding emergency medical personnel will make determinations as to whether the child should be transported to the nearest hospital.

PARENTAL NOTIFICATIONS

Parent notifications may be made in writing via letters, emails, fliers and/ or signage at the classroom door or reception desk. Notifications may also be made by phone calls or in person by site staff. Open communication is very important to the success of your child's Y experience. Activity schedules, menus and other pertinent information will be available for your review. Please check daily for new information. Any policy changes will be provided to the parent or guardian in writing.

Occasionally children will be absent due to illness or family vacations. Please let our staff know when your child will not be present at your earliest convenience. You may contact the center by phone (434.202.0118) or email (childcare@piedmontymca.org).

ENROLLMENT

A YMCA Early Learning Center enrollment packet must be completed and in our possession before we can assume the responsibility of caring for your child. This is to ensure that your child will get the very best care possible and satisfies our record keeping requirements set forth by state licensing guidelines. All forms will be reviewed periodically for accuracy and completion. A new enrollment packet must be completed prior to each school year and submitted with your \$100 registration fee. If you need to make and updates/changes to any of the forms, please notify the front desk to update your records.

PAYMENT

The YMCA Early Learning Center operates solely on tuition fees so please ensure payments are made promptly. Tuition reminders and accounts due are the sole responsibility of the parent and reminders are not sent out unless payments are overdue or a return/late fee has been added to an account. All payments are due on Monday each week. A \$25.00 fee will be added for all returned or late payments. Children will not be allowed to return on Monday if payment is not received for the previous week. Spots will only be held for 2 weeks due to non-payment.

LATE PICK UP

Please call the Center if an unexpected emergency will cause you to be late picking up your child. There is a \$5 per minute charge for children not picked up by the program's closing time. In the event that a child has not been picked up within one hour of the stated closing time, Y staff members have been instructed to call Children's Protective Services and local police. In the event that a child is repeatedly left past the closing hour, the Y reserves the right to terminate the child's enrollment in the program.

BABYSITTING

We are pleased that you feel comfortable and confident in our employees and that want them to babysit or transport children after hours; however, it is against the YMCA's policy and employees may be terminated.

MEALS AND SNACKS

The YMCA Early Learning Center participates in the USDA Food Program and provides all meals at no additional cost. Meals consist of morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack. A monthly menu will be posted on the

bulletin board in the lobby. Copies of the menu are provided to parents upon request and will be included in the monthly electronic newsletter.

All food is prepared in our kitchen that is inspected by local health department officials. All foods meet USDA guidelines and are served family style to help enhance the social skills of your child. Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach of children. Meals will include milk, fresh fruits and vegetables and water is always available throughout the day. Cups will be provided for all rooms however parents must supply bottles for infants. No outside sippy cups or food are allowed as all must be provided by the Center.

Staff are educated and take proper precautions regarding any allergies that a child in their classroom may have as long as it is noted on the child's enrollment form. Staff are trained regarding common food allergies and common symptoms of food allergies.

Staff will not use food to reward children. Rewards will not be given to children for cleaning their plate at mealtime.

CLEANLINESS/HYGIENE

The YMCA Early Learning Center teachers and staff do our best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed before and after meals, entering the classroom from the playground and after toileting. We use paper towels for drying hands, so children do not have to use the same towel. All employees are required to wash their hands frequently.

INFANT AND TODDLER ITEMS

Parents are responsible for diapers, wipes, and any diapering supplies. Parents are also responsible for any lotions or creams that your child may need. The Center will provide an area for nursing mothers, and we are able to store frozen breast milk a week's supply at a time. All milk bottles, pacifiers, lunches and drinks must be labeled with the child's full name and date.

Keeping children safe and comfortable is a priority of YMCA programs. Infants will not be left to sleep in car seats, bouncers, or swings. Infants will be placed in their designated crib on their back to sleep. Children will be placed in designated areas when resting. YMCA staff work with each infant at his/her level of development and individual schedule. The different activities that staff do with your child help develop hand-eye coordination, promote language development, motor development and sensory development.

BEDDING AND PILLOWS

Children (except infants) sleep on cots that are wiped down and disinfected weekly. Parents are to provide their child with a sheet and blanket that are washed weekly. Sheets and blankets should go home every Friday and return every Monday.

SUPPLIES

Parents must supply the following items in their child's cubby:

- Formula, diapers, wipes, pull-ups, powders/ointments (if need)
- Blanket and Sheet for rest time
- 2 complete sets of clothes
- Sunscreen and bug spray (if necessary)

Written consent must be provided for all creams, ointments, powders, drops, and gels. All personal belongings should be clearly marked with your child's name.

SCHOOL READINESS

The STREAMin3 curriculum is designed for children from birth through kindergarten. The curriculum is based on 5 Core Skills (Relate, Regulate, Think, Communicate, Move) that form the building blocks for later learning and 6 STREAM Skills (Science, Technology, Reading, Engineering, Art, & Math) to prepare children for success in kindergarten and beyond. All components include a focus on:

- Children's interests and experiences
- Active engagement & direct experiences
- Being in the context of play (fun!)
- Encouraging Problem-Solving & curiosity

A TYPICAL DAY IN OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Preschoolers enjoy a structured schedule that allows for flexibility. A schedule helps the day to flow more smoothly and allows the children to anticipate upcoming events. We will adhere to our written schedule to the best of our ability. There will be times when we have to make adjustments to the schedule. We appreciate families considering our schedule when picking up or dropping off children. It is better if arrivals and departures do not occur during quiet time, but when they do, please take note of the fact that children may be sleeping. Come and go as quietly and quickly as possible. Children who arrive during quiet time will be expected to rest or play quietly until the rest period is over.

A typical day will provide a balance between child-directed and teacher-directed activities. Core content curriculum areas include literacy, math, science, social studies, art, character development and healthy eating and physical activity.

- Arrival
- Free Play Centers/Small Group Time
- Breakfast
- Literacy/Creativity Activity
- Circle Time/Group Time
- Learning Centers/individual activities
- Outdoor Time
- Lunch
- Rest Time
- Self-Serve PM Snack
- Outdoor Time
- Free Play Centers
- Departure



CONDUCT AND GUIDANCE

Self-management skills and positive social interactions among children and adults are encouraged and maximize everyone's enjoyment of the program. Y programs use positive guidance methods including reminders, distraction, logical consequences and redirection. Self-management skills are taught according to the following guidelines:

- Consistent rules are clearly stated. Children are expected to work and play within known limits.
- Behavior expected of children is age appropriate and based on developmental level.
- An atmosphere of trust is established in order for children to know that they will not be hurt nor allowed to hurt others.
- Staff members strive to help children become acquainted with themselves and their feelings. This will help them learn to cope with their feelings and control them responsibly.

Children grow and develop as individuals during the early years. Challenging behaviors are a part of growing and learning. Our goal as we work through these periods of time will be for directors and teachers to have regular, ongoing conversations to express concerns and to discuss strategies for challenging behaviors with you to ensure that we are working together as partners to help your child. Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress.

For the safety and well-being of everyone, all children are taught and expected to follow these Center rules:

- No running permitted in the center.
- Hitting, pushing, biting, grabbing, kicking, spitting, or pinching other children or adults will NOT be allowed.
- No use of obscene, derogatory, or disrespectful language.
- Children may not walk around the center with food or cups.
- Respectful treatment of other people and all property/toys/furniture is expected.
- Willful destruction of property will be charged to the parent at the cost to replace the item.

Child safety is the most important concern of the program; therefore, children whose behavior is dangerous or repeatedly disruptive must be immediately picked up from the program by someone designated through the departure and release procedures. Repeatedly disruptive or dangerous behavior will be discussed with the child's parent and will result in loss of privileges or activities, suspension, or termination from the program.

TOILET TRAINING

When you feel your child is ready to be potty trained, we ask that you begin teaching them at home at least two to three weeks before you ask the preschool to continue this task. We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. The child must be showing signs of readiness before we start this process. When a child is ready, the process should go quickly and smoothly. The child must be always kept in pull-ups or 5-ply training pants. Putting a child in diapers part time, and training pants part time, can be confusing and delay the training process. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the potty, more so than at your home. Therefore, we may continue to use diapers or pull-ups until your child can and will announce that he/she must use the bathroom (not just at home, but here, as well) and can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond that announcement.

During toilet training, we ask that the child be dressed in "user friendly" clothing, as much as possible. The best items are shorts and pants with elastic waists, or dresses. Try to avoid tight clothing, pants with snaps and zippers, and overalls. These are difficult for children to remove "in a hurry".

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

In order for us to provide the best care for each child, it is important that we have as much information as possible on all participants. If your child has any special concerns or needs including allergies, existing illness, injuries, disabilities, long-term, continuous use medication, any limitations or need for special provisions etc., please set up a meeting with the Director, and if we can accommodate the special provision, we will be happy to enroll your child.

DISCIPLINE

We maintain a positive discipline policy, which focuses on prevention, redirection, love, consistency, and firmness. We stress two main patterns of behavior: respect for other people and respect for property. The children are explained the rules of the center frequently, so they are all familiar with the guidelines. Please keep in mind that there WILL be disagreements between children. Young children have a hard time expressing their feelings. Sometimes they hit, throw toys, bite, etc. We will try to prevent problems, redirect when appropriate, discuss inappropriate behavior, encourage making amends when offense involves another person, and sometimes

withdraw privileges based on the principle of "natural consequences". An example might be where a child is misusing a toy then he/she will not be allowed to play with the toy for a period of time. Sometimes when children are fighting or throwing toys, we will put the toy in a short chill out area, and then bring it back into circulation a little later.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, name calling, or isolation used. Neither food nor sleep will ever be withheld from children as a means of punishment. If a discipline problem arises that does not respond to the above-mentioned techniques, we will hold a conference with the parents. Together, we will try to find a solution. You may be called to remove your child if his/her behavior prevents us from being able to properly care for the other children. If the problem continues, other arrangements for the care of the child will have to be made for the safety and well-being of all.

INDOOR/OUTDOOR PLAY

Indoor play: We provide a variety of age-appropriate toys for indoor play. Toys may be rotated or placed temporarily out of use so that the children do not become bored. Younger children have less-developed organizational skills and can get easily frustrated or upset when there are too many toys to choose from. It is also more difficult for them to help with clean up when there are toys everywhere, because it is so overwhelming to them. For this reason, during free play times, each child may select one or two things at a time to play with. They will be shown how to put those things away before selecting something else.

Outdoor play: We will be playing outdoors every day that weather permits. Please make sure that your child is appropriately dressed (see Clothing/Attire section) for outdoor play at all times. Our activities will include walks, playground time, and water play (sprinkler and pools in the summer). We do not go outside when temperatures are below 32 degrees (including wind chill), or 90 degrees and above (including heat index). We are mandated by state law to take the children outside. Parents who feel that their child is not well enough to participate in outdoor activities must keep them out of preschool until they are able to participate in all activities.

DAILY ATTIRE & EXTRA ITEMS FROM HOME

Children should be dressed for active play as we like to have fun! Having fun involves outdoor play and lots of messy activities, so make sure that your child is dressed appropriately. You will be expected to supply an art smock to protect clothes from paint or other art materials, and bibs to keep food stains to a minimum. Please don't dress your child in nice clothing and expect them to be spotless when you arrive to pick them up. Clothing should be comfortable and seasonally appropriate for outdoor play. For the Winter months please make sure to include coats, hats, mittens, boots. During the summer months, please do not dress your child in flip flops or open toed sandals as these types of shoes can cause children to fall. Please remember that shoes are a requirement for our Center.

Please refrain from bringing toys and other items from home unless it is something that can be shared with the entire group (i.e., books, videos, etc.). Children sometimes have a difficult time sharing with others, and it is even harder with their own special toys. If toys are brought, please note that your child's teacher will return them before your child enters the classroom. Exceptions to this policy will be that a child may bring in toys for show and tell activities. We are not responsible for any loss or breakage of personal items. All personal items must be clearly marked with the child's name.

CONSISTENT CARE

Consistent care represents consistent, dependable relationships, which helps children build secure attachments. Children need consistent caregivers in order to build a sense of security and trust. Our goal is for children to have a limited number of caregivers each day. To ensure we maintain this continuity at our Center, we maintain the following practices:

- Assigning full-time teachers to each classroom
- Unless a developmental need arises, transitions between classrooms for ages 2-5 will only occur during beginning/end of school year every August
- Job descriptions for lead and assistant teachers to include continuity of care practices
- Providing annual professional development to all teachers that addresses the continuity of care systems and practices

GROUP SIZE

The number of children assigned to a staff member or team of staff members occupying an individual room or area is referred to as group size. The group size represents the maximum number of children that should be grouped together, distinct from the larger population of children, in a room or area with specific staff members. Child Care Program Regulation 22VAC40-665-650 states the following maximum group sizes:

Age	Maximum Group Size
6 weeks- 16 months	12
16 months – 24 months	15
2 year olds	24
3-5 year olds	30



The following table represents the classrooms and maximum group sizes of YMCA Early Learning Center at the Jefferson School.

Infant (6 weeks – 16 months)	12
Infant 2 (6 weeks – 16 months)	8
Toddler (17-24 months)	14
2 year olds	18
3 year olds	20
PreK (4-5 year olds)	21

FIRE DRILLS

We are required by state law to do one fire drill per month. We vary the time of the day to help the staff and children prepare to evacuate the building quickly and safely. We will not do fire drills or have outside time when the temperature is below 32 degrees or above 90 degrees. At least one teacher from every class must take their cell phone, first aid kit, student emergency contact binder (this binder will have parent names and contacts so that all parents can be reached in case of an emergency). The director will remain in the building to do a sweep of the classrooms, bathrooms, and kitchen. After the sweep has been completed the director should then turn off the lights and shut each door to indicate that everyone is out of the building and is safe.

The purpose of doing fire drills is to make sure that the children are educated on knowing what to do in case there is a fire in school or in their home, we also want to make sure that the kids will not panic and can walk quickly but safely in a single file line to the designated area to ensure that they are away from a building, home that may be burning or have some type of potential harm. Once we have exited the building children or staff will not re-enter the building until each teacher has read off the names of their children on the classroom roster and all children have been accounted for. Children will be expected to re-enter the building the same way they exited the building quickly, safely, and quietly. Once children are back in their appropriate classes, the teacher will call roll again to make sure that all children are accounted for. At all times, our emphasis will be on keeping children safe.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

Please understand that we close only when absolutely necessary. In the case of inclement weather, please check your local news stations, the Piedmont Family YMCA website, ELC Facebook page, or BrightWheel app for cancellations or delayed opening changes. If poor weather develops during the day, parents/guardians may be contacted to pick up their children early due to school closing early. We contact all parents by phone about early school closings.

HOLIDAYS

Our program will be closed on the following holidays:

September 4, 2023 - Labor Day

January 15, 2024 – Martin Luther King Day

November 11, 2023 - Veteran’s Day (Teacher Workday)

February 19, 2024 - President’s Day (Teacher Workday)

November 23-24, 2023 – Thanksgiving Holiday

May 27, 2024 - Memorial Day

December 25 & 26, 2023 – Christmas Holiday

June 19, 2024 - Juneteenth

January 1, 2024 - New Year’s Day

July 4, 2024 - Independence Day

PARENT ENGAGEMENT/VOLUNTEERS/CONFERENCES

We welcome parents as visitors to our program! Open communication is very important to the success of your child’s experience. Parent conferences may be arranged at any time with teachers or the director. We appreciate your input regarding suggestions, ideas, and comments on ways to improve our service to you and your family. You may direct suggestions, concerns, compliments, or complaints to the immediate caregiver or one of the directors.

As your child learns and grows with us, we hope that you will choose to participate in parent engagement activities three-four times a year. We will plan activities to help our families be physically active, have healthy eating/nutrition habits and enjoy quality time together. Please read our newsletters and watch for tips for helping your family be healthy and active.

Volunteers will need to have clear criminal background and FBI checks as well as complete our YMCA child abuse prevention training to volunteer in the program. Parents and volunteers are never left alone with a group of children and will always have a staff member with them.

CONCLUSION

The YMCA Early Learning Center staff takes great pleasure in creating a safe, healthy, exciting and stimulating learning environment. Our staff take pride in the classes they teach and students they nurture. We encourage you to contact the teachers and director with comments, questions, concerns, or praises about your child or the school. We hope that this YMCA Early Childhood program will be the first “step” in your child’s involvement with the YMCA. Thank you for letting us be a part of your family.



The Piedmont Family YMCA Early Learning Center is licensed by the Virginia Department of Education. The regional office responsible for the program is located at the Office of Child Care Licensing, PO Box 2120, Richmond, VA 23218 and can be reached at 833.778.0204.



AFTER READING THIS HANDBOOK, PLEASE SIGN THIS PAGE AND RETURN IT WITH YOUR ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK TO THE FRONT DESK STAFF.

PARENT STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

I understand that YMCA staff and volunteers are not allowed to baby-sit or transport children at any time outside of the YMCA program. Immediate disciplinary action will be taken by the YMCA toward staff volunteers if a violation is discovered.

I understand that I am not to leave my child at the YMCA or program site unless a YMCA staff or volunteer is there to receive and supervise my child.

I understand that my child will not be allowed to leave the program with an unauthorized person. Any person authorized to pick up my child must either be listed with the YMCA or other arrangements must be made by calling the YMCA office to inform them of a change.

I understand that should a person arrive to pick up my child who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, for the child's safety, staff may have no recourse but to contact the police. Please do not put staff in a position where they have to make this judgment call.

I understand that YMCA is mandated, by state law, to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

I have received a copy of the 2023-2024 YMCA Early Learning Center Parent Handbook and have read and understand the statements above.

_____ Child's Name

_____ Parent/Guardian 1 (Please Print Name)

x _____ Parent/Guardian 1 Signature

_____ Date

_____ Parent/Guardian 2 (Please Print Name)

x _____ Parent/Guardian 2 Signature

_____ Date