

CAMBRIDGE FAMILY YMCA PRESCHOOL

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CAMBRIDGE FAMILY YMCA PRESCHOOL

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

Hello! Welcome to the Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool. This is our parent handbook and it will contain all of our information about our center and our policies. We are licensed by the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services (O.C.C.S.). Our program is for ages 2 years nine months to 5 years old. The Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool shall not discriminate in providing services to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or disability.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Cambridge Family YMCA is a non-profit, community service organization whose mission is to build strong kids, strong families, and strong communities, by offering programs that develop a healthy body, mind and spirit for all individuals.

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PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy of our center is to provide a safe and loving environment in which children can learn and grow. Children will learn through exploring their environment and through play. Your child's play is his/her most important work! We emphasize caring, safety and fun. We want to offer your child every opportunity to do that through their play. Children learn by doing, playing, sharing, observing, and talking. Our program is designed to maintain and deepen your child's natural curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.

Our classrooms are set up so children can have the freedom to make their own choices and direct their play. We also include, as part of our program, a diverse range of open-ended activities geared so that each child may feel the satisfaction of personal accomplishment and success. We also encourage our staff and parents to share their cultural backgrounds with us by bringing in family photographs, food, clothes for dramatic play, or anything else they would like to share.

Our goal is for our staff, parents, and children to work together to make the center a special place for all.



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EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Our program is designed to help children have a pleasant experience through developmentally appropriate activities. These activities provide opportunities to develop the following goals:

- Positive self-image
- Independence
- Positive communication skills
- Social skills through large and small group activities
- Respect for individual and cultural differences
- Increase fine and gross motor skills



GENERAL INFORMATION

REGISTRATION

Before your child starts at our preschool, you must make an appointment to visit the center with your child and fill out all the required forms. Documentation of a complete physical, including immunizations and lead screening must also be submitted. You must also speak with the child care administration office to go over the tuition for the day care.

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At this age, transitions into a new environment are very important, especially for children who have never been to pre-school. We have set up the following transition schedule for every new child starting into our program:

- 1st day- visit with his/her parent(s)
- 2nd day- your child may come in anytime before 9:30am, but he/she will need to be picked up by 12pm
- 3rd day- your child may stay until 3pm. Any change to this arrangement would need the approval of the Day Care Director.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool is open Monday-Friday from 7:30am- 5:45pm. We are a full year, full day program.

VACATION/ABSENCE DUE TO ILLNESS

If you take a vacation with your child or if your child is out sick for the day, you will still be responsible for tuition for those days. If your child is unable to attend school on any given day, please call our office @ 617-661-9622 ext. 722 to let us know. Unfortunately, if you fail to notify us that your child will be out for an extended period of time, we will not be able to ensure a space for your child- and you will risk losing your child's slot for day care.

EMERGENCY WEATHER CONDITIONS

The Cambridge YMCA Preschool will be open on most snow days. We do not follow the Cambridge Public School System for school closings. Please call the YMCA (617-661-9622) in the morning or visit the website (www.cambymca.org) for information about delays or closings. In the event that we need to close during the day due to weather, we will call you or your emergency contact person to come and pick-up your child.

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HOLIDAYS

We are closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Day
Presidents' Day
Patriots Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Columbus Day
Thanksgiving Day
Christmas Day

Please check the monthly newsletter for additional holiday closings.

TUITION/METHOD OF PAYMENT

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Full Time Preschool | 7:30am – 5:45pm | \$895 per month |
| Part Time Preschool | 7:30am – 12pm | \$500 per month |

Tuition for the Childcare Program is a FLAT monthly fee and will NOT be prorated for days not attended (i.e. sick, vacation, staff training, special holidays, and snow days).

All tuition fees are due in full, on or before the first day of the month for which Childcare is to be provided. A reminder note will be mailed on the 15th day of the previous month.

A three (3) class day “grace” period will be granted to pay tuition without penalty.

A \$20 late fee will be assessed on the 4th day on any unpaid fees due.

Tuition and late fee must be paid, in full, on or before the sixth day of the month. A child cannot be permitted to attend his/her program after the sixth class day until full payment has been received.

If tuition and late fee are paid in full before the end of the month, the child will immediately be reinstated.

Failure to pay tuition or late fee on or before the end of the month will result in the child being terminated from the program as well as the slot being reassigned.

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DAILY ROUTINES

ARRIVAL

Our center opens at 7:30am. We ask that you have your child at school no later than 9:30am. This is so your child can start his/her daily routine with friends and teachers. The children are on a schedule most of the morning, and it helps the whole classroom when children can come in by 9:30am. If your child will be late, please let the teachers know the day before the appointment. If the teachers and children are not in the classroom, there will be a sign on the door as to where they are. The front desk can give you directions if you are unsure how to find our location.

WHAT TO BRING

Toys from Home

A small soft toy, doll or stuffed animal to snuggle with at naptime is always welcome. We prefer that children keep their toys at home unless it is something special to share or talk about with others. Please keep in mind that if your child does bring a toy from home, it must be small enough to fit in their cubby. The toy should not promote violence. We cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of toys.

Snacks and Lunches

The center will provide a small breakfast, a morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack, all given with milk and/or 100% fruit juice. Menus are posted on the Parent Board monthly. Please let us know if there are any dietary restrictions, and we will post a note to inform our staff of these restrictions. Check our allergy list located on the refrigerator: if there is something missing from this list, please let us know right away.

Please note that hot and cold lunches are supplied by Children's Chef, an outside food service, and are delivered to the YMCA daily. Children's Chef provides nutritional lunches as required by OCCS and recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. We ask that you check the menu

daily so that if there is a meal that you do not wish your child to have, you may send in a lunch from home on that particular day.

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Extra Clothing/Diapers

All children should wear comfortable clothes, which allow them to participate in all activities at our center. We recommend children wear sneakers or rubber-soled shoes, which are safe for climbing and running.

Every child should have, in their cubbies, at least two complete changes of clothing. This includes: underwear, socks, pants/shorts, shirt and bathing suit. All clothes should be labeled with your child's name. If your child borrows some of our center's extra clothing please wash and return it as soon as possible.

For children who are still toilet training and wear diapers, parents need to provide a daily supply of diapers and wipes (labeled with child's name). Staff will inform you if your child needs more diapers and/or wipes.

TOILET TRAINING

Before beginning the transition from diapers to underwear at school, children should have an understanding of the potty, and start to master the skills of wiping their own bodies clean. Also, please understand that children will have accidents during this transition.

REST TIME

Children, at rest time, will be provided with their own cots by the center. For comfort, we ask that you send your child in with a standard size crib sheet or twin sheet to cover their cot and also a small blanket (pillow is optional). All bedding is kept at the YMCA and is washed regularly by the teachers.

SWIMMING

Children use the YMCA pool for swimming lessons. Each lesson consists of 20 minutes of swimming instruction followed by 20 minutes of free swim. Lessons are once a week and twice a week in the winter. Bathing suits are kept at the preschool and washed regularly by the teachers.

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CHOICE TIME

Choice time is a time when children are able to move freely throughout the classroom to different areas of play. Examples of these areas are: dramatic play area, block area, art area, sensory area, math/science area and listening/library area. In addition to these learning areas, children are also involved in swim, gym.



BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

The center will celebrate your child's birthday with you at school. If you wish to bring a cake or special snack for your child to share with the class, please let the teachers know in advance.

The children in our program represent many different religious and ethnic groups. If there is a holiday that you and your family celebrate, that you would like us to share in, please feel free to do so. We plan our curriculum around the interest of the children (however we do not emphasize on religious themes or on particular tradition). However, we do welcome your input and ideas.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

The Cambridge Family YMCA does not provide transportation. Transportation to and from the Cambridge Family YMCA is solely the responsibility of the parent(s)/family member of the child. If trips are taken to nearby parks, the teachers and children will walk there, holding a “safety rope”. On occasion they might take a bus or ride the T to a destination in a nearby city. In the event of a far away trip, transportation will be available by a charter bus. The families will be notified, by the center, of any trip by public transportation, or by bus, in advance.

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DEPARTURE

The center closes at 5:45pm. We ask parents to be at the center between 5:30pm and 5:45pm. This allows parents to speak with teachers about their child’s day, and gather their child’s belongings.

For the full day preschool program, your child needs to be picked up by 5:45pm. For the half day preschool program, your child needs to be picked up by 12pm.

If you pick up your child after 12pm (half day) or 5:45pm (full day) a late fee will be assessed for \$1.00 per minute. The late fee must be paid to the front desk. If the late fee is not paid within 1 week, your child will not be permitted to continue in the program until it is paid. When the fee is has been paid your child will immediately be reinstated in the Preschool Program.

You need to call the Preschool as soon as possible at 617-661-9622 ext.722 or ext.723 if you are going to be late. Please note: the late fee will not be excused. If we have not received a phone call and/or have been unable to reach emergency contacts and your child is not picked up by 7pm, the Cambridge Police will be notified. Your child may be handed over to the Cambridge Police Department.

Please make sure that when you are filling out the emergency contact form, you list anyone else authorized to pick up your child from school. We will not be able to allow your child to leave with anyone who is not on this form or does not have proper picture identification with him or her. If there is someone new picking up your child, you must give us written or verbal consent.

PARENT COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool feels very strongly about parent/teacher communication between parents and staff at all times. Daily notes are posted on the Parent Board by the door; these notes inform parents of what activities their child did that day. There are also monthly newsletters, curriculum webs and special announcements posted on the board.

Each child will have a portfolio; the teachers will carefully observe the developmental progress of the child by keeping notes and samples of their work in this portfolio. All information gathered will be

used to write individual progress reports. Teachers will meet with parents to discuss these progress reports twice a year. In addition to this, the staff and director are always made available for individual conferences at the parent's request. Any significant concerns about your child's development will be shared with you, as soon as they arise, by the lead teacher and director.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

To ensure a safe and healthy environment, all areas of play, and bathrooms, will be checked daily for any hazards. Opening staff will inspect these areas before the children arrive. The staff will remove any broken or hazardous materials at once. All toxic substances (i.e. cleaning materials, medications, sharp objects, or first aid supplies) will be kept out of the children at all times.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH RECORDS

Physical Examinations

A physical examination, within 12 months prior to enrollment and regular updates, is required for each child who attends the center.

A school health record, required by the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services, must be completed by your child's physician and submitted to the director prior to enrollment, or within three days after enrollment begins.

The school health record must be updated annually.

Please keep the director informed of any changes in your child's medical needs or health status.

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Screenings

Lead screening- children must provide evidence that they have had a lead poison screening prior to enrollment. Children who are currently enrolled in the program must provide evidence of a lead screening.

Immunizations

Before enrollment begins, parents must provide a physician's certificate, which verifies that their child has been successfully immunized in accordance with the current Department of Public Health guidelines.

Parents can provide a written statement to the center if these immunizations are in conflict with their religious beliefs, or a physician's statement to verify that they are contraindicated for their child.

ILLNESS

Children should not be brought to school if they are experiencing any of the following symptoms (unless accompanied by a physician's note indicating that the child is able to return to a group setting):

Fever of 100.5 degrees or higher

Diarrhea- 2 or more instances close together

Vomiting

Pronounced or persistent coughing and the child is feeling uncomfortable

Any contagious condition of any kind including but not limited to:

Strep throat, flu, respiratory infections, conjunctivitis, infectious rash, chicken pox, measles, scabies, lice, etc.

For fever, diarrhea and vomiting, children must be free of symptoms for at least 24 hours. When a child develops signs of illness during the day, a parent will be called and expected to pick up their child as soon as possible within a reasonable amount of time. In the meantime, the child will be made comfortable in a quiet, supervised location away from the other children.

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Chronic illness (i.e. asthma) shall be treated according to the instructions of a doctor and parents. If the instructions are contradictory, no medications shall be dispensed to your child. Staff will contact parents before administering medications for ongoing illnesses.

MEDICATION POLICY

Adults must handle all medications at all times. Please do not leave medications in lunch boxes or bags. The center will maintain a written record of any medication that is administered to your child; this will include the date, time, dosage, name of staff member and child and the name of the medication. The completed medication record will then be kept in your child's file.

Prescription Medication

The Cambridge Family YMCA will only administer medication to a child if there is a written parental consent and an order form from a physician (this can be the label on medication from the pharmacy). No child will be given any medication unless it is in its original container and lists the child's name as the patient.

Non-prescription Medication

The Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool will keep all medication either in a refrigerator or the office first aid kit. All unused medication will be disposed of or returned to the parent when no longer needed.

The child's doctor must provide written authorization for internal non-prescription medication (i.e. Tylenol, cough medicine, etc.). Non-prescription medication forms will be valid for no more than 1 year from the date signed. Parents must write their child's name on the original non-prescription container.

Topical medication must be accompanied by written parental authorization. This signed statement will list specific topical non-prescription medication (i.e. Vaseline, lip balm, rash ointment, etc.) to be administered to the child.

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REDUCING THE SPREAD OF ILLNESS

Universal Precautions

1. Latex gloves will be worn when bodily fluids are present.
2. All blood spills/fluids- contaminated surfaces or toys will be cleaned and disinfected with a solution that is EPA registered or a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water.
3. Soiled clothes or contaminated/ bloody clothing will be placed in a plastic bag, labeled, kept away from children, until the parents come at pick up time.
4. All staff and children will wash their hands with liquid pump soap and running water.

Hands will be dried with disposable towels:

- Upon arrival for staff
- Before any meal time
- After toilet training or diapering
- After playtime, inside and outside
- After sand or water play
- After cleaning

The Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool will ensure that specific equipment, items and surfaces are washed with soap and water regularly and sprayed down with a bleach and water solution and then air dried. The bleach and water solution is kept in a labeled and sealed bottle in a secure place and will be made up daily. Other EPA approved disinfectants may also be used at times. Water and sand toys will be washed and disinfected daily.

Tables will be washed and disinfected after each use. Mats will be disinfected at the end of each week or as needed. Blankets will be washed weekly or when needed. Toys, shelves, and other equipment are washed on a rotating schedule bi-weekly or when needed.

ON AND OFF SITE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Cambridge Family YMCA will notify parents immediately of any injury that requires emergency care. A written accident report will be available that day if any first aid was administered to your child. OCCS will be contacted in the event that a child is taken to the hospital due to an accident at the center.

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EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF THE CENTER (FIRE DRILLS)

The plan for evacuation of the center in an emergency is that the preschool will go out the emergency exit door located at the front of the classroom (Massachusetts Avenue) and go to the left across Sellers Street and wait in front of the church.

In case of a power outage, loss of heat, or loss of water during regular program hours, we will try to keep the center open and maintain our regular routine. In the event that one or more of the above circumstances persists for more than 1 hour, parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child as soon as possible.

Emergency shelter will be available at the church on Sellers Street or the senior center on Massachusetts Avenue (next to the YMCA), if needed for the preschool.

Fire drills will be done every other month, so that the children become familiar with the sound and know what to do in the event that there was a real fire emergency.

MANAGING A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool is committed to understanding the individual needs and development of each child. Strategies for classroom behavior management include redirection, distraction, and separation. Children are encouraged regularly "to use their words" and teachers help them find more appropriate and safe play opportunities when children have difficulty controlling their behavior.

Teachers use vocabulary that is easy for children to understand. We feel it is important for the teachers to explain why and what the child is doing or that how they are acting is not acceptable, but at the same time using lots of positive reinforcement for behavior that is acceptable.

No hitting, shaking, yelling or pushing of children is ever allowed.

No child shall be subject to Corporal Punishment, including spankings.

No child shall be denied food as a form of punishment nor will any child be forced to eat.

Time-out will not be used in our classrooms, although for severe aggressive behavior, children will be removed from others by a teacher, until that child can

control his/her behavior. A relaxing quiet area will be used for this time.

Behavior problems of a serious matter, or behavior that persists over a matter of time, will result in a conference between director, teacher and the parents to talk about a behavior management plan. This may include outside resources and follow-up meetings.

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Referrals to Outside Agencies

Whenever any of our staff members are concerned about a child's behavior, or a child's development, an observation will be performed by one of our classroom teachers. The teacher's observation should be recorded in a classroom log and read by the director. The director will notify the child's parents, and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss the concerns. The center director will be present at all parent/teacher conferences regarding referrals for special services. At the meeting, the director will provide the parent with a written statement, including reasons for recommending the additional services and a brief summary of our teacher's observation.

The Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool has connections with agencies in Cambridge, like the Bureau of Pupil Services, to refer parents to social, mental health, but not limited to dental check-ups or hearing and vision screenings for families.

FAMILY RIGHTS

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Reports to Parents

The YMCA shall, periodically, but at least every six months prepare a written progress report of the participation of each child in the center's records. The licensee shall provide a copy of each report to the parent(s) or meet with them at least once every six months to discuss their child's activities and participation at the center.

Parent Conferences

The YMCA shall make the staff available for individual conferences with parents at parental request. However, parent meetings will be scheduled every three months for parents to come and meet with the classroom teachers, and our director where they may discuss program issues.

Children's Records/Confidentiality

Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. The YMCA shall not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone, not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child, without written consent of the child's parent(s). The YMCA shall notify the parent(s) if a child's record has been subpoenaed.

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The child's parent(s) shall, upon request, have access to his/her child's record at reasonable times. In no event shall such access be delayed more than two business days after the initial request without the consent of the child's parent(s). Upon such request for access, the child's entire record, regardless of the physical location of its parts shall be made available. The YMCA shall establish procedures governing access to, duplication of, and dissemination of such information; and shall maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record indicating any persons to whom information contained in a child's record has been released. Each person disseminating, or releasing, information contained in a child's record, in whole or in part, shall upon each instance of dissemination or release, enter the following into the log: his/her name, signature, position, the date, the portions of the record which were disseminated (or released) and the signature of the person with whom the information is disseminated (or released). Such log shall be available only to the child's parent(s) and center personnel responsible for record maintenance.

(20) Charges for copies: The YMCA shall not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.

(21) Amending the child's record

(a) A child's parent(s) shall have the right to request deletion or amendment of any other relevant materials to the child's record.

(b) A child's parent(s) shall have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. Such requests shall be in the accordance with the procedures described below:

If such a parent(s) is of opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify or correct objectionable materials in the child's record, he/she have the right to have a conference with the licensee to make objectives known.

The YMCA shall, within one week after the conference, render to such parent(s) a decision in writing, stating the reason(s) for the decision. If his/her decision is in favor of the parent(s) he/she shall immediately take steps as may be necessary to put the decision into effect.

(22) Transfer of records upon written request of the parent(s) the YMCA shall transfer the child's record to the parent(s) or any parent(s) identifies, when the child is no longer in care.

(23) Notification to Parent: the YMCA shall notify the parent(s) in writing of the provision in writing of the provisions of 7.05(24) at the time of admission to the center and thereafter, in writing, at least once a year.

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(24) Availability of information to the office not with standing 103 CMR 7.05(19) upon request of any employee, authorized by the regulatory process, the licensee shall make available to the office any information required to be kept and maintained under these regulations and any other information reasonable related to the requirements of the regulations. Authorized employees of the offices shall not remove identifying case material from the center's premises and shall maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

(6) Meeting with Parent(s): The YMCA shall assure that the administrator or his/her designee shall meet with the parent(s) prior to admitting a child to the center.

At the meeting, the YMCA shall provide to the parent(s); center's statement of purpose, services, procedures for parent conferences, visits, and inputs to the center's policies, procedures relating to children's records, and procedures for providing emergency health care.

Section 7.03(23) requires the YMCA to have a copy of the regulations on the premises of the center, and made available to any person upon request.

SUSPENSION/TERMINATION OF ENROLLMENT

Suspension

The Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool does not use suspension with young children. We believe that it sends a negative message to children that they have been bad and that we send children away who are not good. We do not want to make a child feel bad, or negative, about himself/herself. However, we will call parents at work, and suggest picking up their child who is aggressively acting out, and cannot be controlled by teachers, or refuses to follow the rules of safety.

Termination Policy/Parental Termination

The Office of Child Care Services require that when any child is terminated from the center; whether initiated by the center, or the child's parent(s); the center shall prepare the child for termination from the center, in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand, and shall provide

information, and referrals, for other services to the parents, upon the request of the parents. The center shall inform parents of the availability of information, and referral, should the parent wish to request it.

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If for any reason you decide to remove your child from our program, we ask that you give a two (2) week notice. We also ask that your tuition be paid in full before the actual date your child leaves.

Termination Policy/ Center Termination

We will use the following procedures, for terminating a child from the program, after all referral procedures (when appropriate) have been followed.

- Prepare documentation of behavior and services, if any, that the child has received during the school year.

- If the parents have found outside help, and the child's behavior has not improved, or this particular center is an inappropriate placement, parents will be given a list of centers and/or programs and a 2-3 week before termination.

- The child's termination from the school will be treated in the same way as a child who would be leaving for any other reason.

In the extreme circumstances, we reserve the right to waive the 2-3 week notification period. The following may require immediate termination:

- Severe behavioral problems, which cannot be controlled and/or endangering that child, other children or staff

- Parents refusing to get professional help for their child as identified in the referral process

- Excessive non-payment of fees

- Failure to comply with center's policies

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CONCLUSION

We hope that you and your child will enjoy being a part of the Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool Program. In addition to our handbook, our child care director and our staff will be happy to go over any policy or answer any questions you may have about our center. Thank you for choosing the Cambridge Family YMCA Preschool for your child. We look forward to working with you to make the preschool years enjoyable for your child!



