



**CHILDWATCH**

# **GASTON COUNTY FAMILY YMCA PARENT HANDBOOK**



# Welcome to Childwatch!

The Y's program is so much more than fun and play. Through a holistic approach to youth development, all activities focus on social-emotional, cognitive or physical development that children need as they progress through childhood.

**Mission Statement: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all!**

## YMCA CORE VALUES

The Gaston County Family YMCA is committed to a value-based Character Development. The following core values are incorporated into all youth activities:

- Caring: Show a sincere concern for others
- Honesty: Be truthful in what you say and do
- Respect: Treat each other as we'd all like to be treated
- Responsibility: Be accountable for your promises and actions
- Faith: strengthened by a belief in God and the importance of building a strong moral foundation.

Parents, we know how important it is for you to feel confident in the care and guidance your children receive. That's why we maintain open lines of communication and encourage your active involvement in our program. Together, we can create a supportive network that nurtures our youth and helps them thrive.

## Zero Tolerance

The Gaston County Family YMCA has zero tolerance for all forms of abuse or mistreatment at our Ys or in our programs. Ensuring the safety and well-being of children and teens in our care is foundational to everything we do at the Y to help them learn, grow, and thrive.



### Reporting

If you have concerns, see something, say something. Use the QR Code to report a concern.



### Learn more

Visit the YMCA website to review the Y's Abuse Prevention Policies, please refer to this link: <https://gastonymca.org/our-commitment-child-safety>

**Thank you for choosing Gaston County Family YMCA Childwatch!**

# OUR COUNSELORS

Our staff work hard to create a welcoming environment focused on group-cohesiveness and the inclusion of children. They are expected to lead by positive example, promote caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and faith in each environment, and follow the practices of each program that keep children happy and safe.

## WHO WE ARE

Our staff is as diverse as our children and comprised of men and women who want to make an impact on their community. We hire amazing staff that consist of high school students, college students, graduates and working professionals. Our staff are people who love the chance to make a positive impact on the children in our programs. They are amazing people with good hearts!

Prior to employment, all staff have had a criminal background check and completed 3 reference checks. All of our staff are required to be CPR and basic first aid certified within their first 90 days, Child Abuse Prevention training is required before staff begin working, and participate in program specific training focused on providing quality services in each program area through a child centered approach. Developmental ages and stages, behavior management techniques, positive reinforcement, and quality risk management reviews, are just a few examples of trainings our staff teams go through over the course of a year.

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

The YMCA believes that the best way to ensure a great experience for your child is for parents and staff to have a relationship with the best interests of your child in mind. We want to work together to learn about your child. Please come to the Director with any questions or concerns. The staff treat families and visitors with professionalism, and we ask that they be treated in the same manner. Behavior that is inappropriate, disrespectful, threatening or abusive in nature will not be tolerated.

## RATIO AND SAFETY

Y Childcare programs (including Afterschool, Camp, Childwatch) adhere to the following staff to participant ratios:

6 Weeks to 11 months - 1:3 ratio

12 months to 24 months - 1:6 ratio

3 years to 5 years - 1:8 ratio

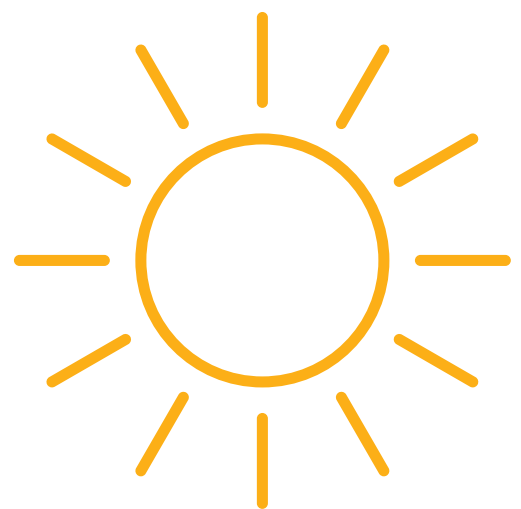
6+ years - 1:12 ratio

## SNACKS

Outside food and snacks are not permitted in our Childwatch areas. Please plan to bring children with full bellies.

## EXCESSIVE CRYING

It is normal to see some tears when a child is transitioning into a new environment, and our staff is committed to helping your child adjust quickly and easily. However, if a child is inconsolable for more than 15 minutes, we will come and get a parent for assistance.



## **OUR SERVICE**

Our Childwatch areas are considered “drop in” and no advanced registration is required. It is a “members only” service and we provide childcare for members as young as 6 weeks through 11 years old. For the safety of all our participants, we do enforce maximums in each room or area. Please know that we understand the commitment it takes to work toward and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and it is our goal to accommodate you and your children when you arrive. Please see the specific hours of operation at your branch, along with the timeframe of care each location.

## **COMMUNICATION**

We want you to feel comfortable leaving your child in our care. If your child has any special needs or if you have any other concerns or updates regarding your child’s care, please share those with staff upon drop off. Additionally, our staff are always happy to provide an update on how your child did while he or she was in our care. Please speak with someone when you pick up.

## **WHAT TO BRING**

Please bring extra diapers and wipes for non-toilet trained children, a change of clothing for toddlers and/or children who are potty-trained. Parents/Guardians may pack a leak-proof cup of water. Personal items like toys, phones, electronics, trading cards, stuffed animals, money and other similar items are not permitted. All bags and water bottles should be labeled with child’s name.

## **WHAT TO WEAR**

Children should be dressed appropriately for active play. Girls in dresses should wear a pair of shorts underneath and all participants should be wearing socks, or should bring a pair of socks with them. Seasonal clothing, like a coat or a jacket and a hat, is necessary for outdoor play.

## **DIAPERING / TOILET TRAINING READINESS**

Our staff members will change diapers as needed. Under age 3, if your child has an accident while in our care we will change into their change of clothing (if provided). If over the age of 3, we will locate you and have you change them into their change of clothing. Once they are clean and dry, they are welcome to stay with us. Staff training for diapering and toilet training are included in our child abuse prevention ongoing trainings.

## **Children may transition out of diapers or pull-ups once they are consistently demonstrating the following:**

- The child is able to remain dry for extended periods of time
- The child is able to independently communicate the need to use the restroom under YMCA care before an accident occurs
- The child is able to participate in basic toileting routines with minimal assistance appropriate for their age

For health, safety, sanitation, and supervision reasons, our program is unable to support the beginning stages of potty training in the classroom setting.

# BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS & DISCIPLINE

Our discipline policy is youth-centered and designed to achieve a positive outcome to misbehaviors and conflicts. We acknowledge good behaviors.

We respond to misbehaviors and conflicts in an appropriate manner. We have zero tolerance for violence and bullying (see chart below). We hold the right to suspend or expel children from our programs if they or their family threatens safety or interferes with the sustainability of a quality program.

The Y makes every effort to help parents and children understand clear definitions of acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

## The YMCA does not condone and will not permit:

- Corporal punishment
- Ridiculing, threatening, using an inappropriate loud voice
- Leaving children unsupervised
- Use of profanity

## A child's behavior is expected to be consistent with the following:

- Use appropriate language at all times
- Cooperate with staff and follow directions
- Respect other children and staff, equipment, facilities, and yourself
- Stay in the program areas - running away is not acceptable.

## BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

If a child is unable to comply with behavior expectations, they will be redirected and expectations will be reviewed by a counselor. Depending on severity, the child will be given a consequence.

- Verbal warning given : reminder of rule/expectation
- Loss of activity time or partial loss of activity time - time to refocus and redirect. Parent/guardian will be notified
- If child continues to be unable to comply with the behavior expectations, or redirection takes longer than 5 - 10 minutes, behavior will be documented and the parent/guardian will be notified in writing.

If the child's behavior continues to be disruptive and/or unsafe, the child will be subject to suspension or dismissal.

## Behaviors that may result in immediate dismissal

Included but not limited to:

- Any action that could threaten or pose a direct threat to the physical/emotional safety of the child, other children or staff
- Fighting (including shoving, pushing, hitting and/or any intimidating act towards a counselor or program participant).
- Possession of a weapon of any kind
- Vandalism or destruction of property of any kind
- Inappropriate conduct
- Swearing or cursing
- Running away
- Biting

## IS IT BULLYING?

When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's... **RUDE.**

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once, that's... **MEAN.**

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it - even when you tell them to stop or show them you're upset that's... **BULLYING.**

# CREATING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL

If a child cannot participate in the program due to illness, the child must be kept at home. Children who are ill may not return until they are symptom-free for 24 hours. They must also be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever reducers.

If your child becomes ill during program hours, you will be notified and requested to pick up your child immediately.

Our staff will administer first aid for minor injuries. You will be notified if your child needs prompt medical care.

Children with lice must use a doctor-approved treatment and be free of nits (un-hatched eggs) before returning to the program.

## WHEN TO STAY AT HOME

- Temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Rash (if unknown cause)
- Suspected communicable disease
- Severe cold with fever, coughing, unclear mucus
- Bronchitis or other throat infections such as strep
- Nits or lice in hair

## MORE IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Babysitting, Cell Phones, Group Assignments and more!

### BABYSITTING/FRATERNIZATION

YMCA staff are not allowed to fraternize with, babysit or transport your child outside of the YMCA program. We request that you not ask any staff to care for your child outside of the YMCA. If a relationship exists outside the YMCA which predates the staff employment with the YMCA, staff should notify their supervisor in writing so that it can be noted in the staff's records.

### CELL PHONE USAGE

Children will not be allowed to use their cell phones during the Y program. If a student is found with their cell phone, we will confiscate it. We will only return the cell phone to the parent/guardian.

### SPECIAL NEEDS

Y Childwatch is open to all children, and the YMCA aims to work with children of all abilities. Parents have a duty to disclose significant medical, physical, or behavioral needs at the time of enrollment. Due to the large-group format of our programs, the Y is unable to provide one-on-one care. Children must be able to participate with the stated student/staff ratios as well as scheduled activities.

### NONDISCRIMINATION

The Gaston County Family YMCA embraces values and beliefs which support and reflect the inclusion and appreciation of all individuals, regardless of race, color, physical or mental ability, religion, medical conditions, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and age. We are proud to be an equal opportunity employer and provider of services to the community.



**Mission Statement: To put Christian principles into practice through programs that build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all!**

**Cherryville Family YMCA**  
215 N Mountain St.  
Cherryville, NC 28021

**McGill Family YMCA**  
196 YMCA Dr.  
Belmont, NC 28012

**Warlick Family YMCA**  
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Gastonia, NC 28054