

Child Watch Parent Handbook



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Welcome

Welcome to the Foothills Area YMCA. We've developed this Manual to provide you with information on the guidelines and procedures for the Child Watch program. Please read this Manual thoroughly as it contains many important policies that pertain to the care of your child.

Y Mission

The Foothill Area YMCA is a charitable organization dedicated to developing the full potential of every individual through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all.

Y Vision

Our vision is comprised of five core mission strategies that create: a healthier and more socially engaged community; children who are successful through purposeful programs; a work environment that is inclusive, fun, and rewarding; and a Y that's financially viable for future generations.

Y Core Values

At the Y, it's deeper here. We challenge our associates, members, participants, and volunteers to accept and demonstrate our four core values:

- Honesty
- Caring
- Respect
- Responsibility

What is Child Watch?

The Child Watch program is a drop-in childcare program serving children ages 6 weeks to 10 years old. It is a benefit to those with a Foothills Area YMCA family membership and can be used for up to 60 minutes at a time. This service adds value to the family membership and provides parents with the peace of mind knowing their child is in a safe, quality environment while they achieve their health and wellness goals - all in one convenient location.

For many of you, this may be your child's first experience with the Y. Our goal is to provide your child with a safe, caring environment designed to stimulate intellectual, emotional, and physical growth.

The Child Watch Environment

Typically the Child Watch program area is designed to separate the youngest participants from the older ones. An infant/toddler area for children ages 6 weeks to 18 months is sectioned off from the remainder of the program area. The remainder of the room is designed for a mixed age group, including children over 18 months, preschool and school-aged children.

Children of all ages love to play and it gives them opportunities to develop physical competence, understand and make sense of their world, interact with others,

express and control emotions, develop problem-solving abilities, and practice emerging skills.

Research shows that an effectively designed program space has the potential for positively influencing all areas of children's development: physical, social/emotional, and cognitive. Our Child Watch program areas will:

- Be aesthetically pleasing
- Provide opportunities for both group play and independent play
- Contain a variety of age-appropriate equipment and materials
- Provide meaningful activities
- Have designated centers or play spaces
- Provide a quiet center (area in the room where a child can sit and read)
- Be safe, warm, and inviting
- Provide organization and consistency
- Provide pleasant sounds/music
- Provide opportunities for light, moderate, and vigorous physical activity

Planned Activities

Like most philosophies on childhood development, the Y philosophy stresses the importance of play, hands-on learning, and the development of the whole child - spirit, mind, and body. Our Child Watch environment provides activities that support this philosophy. Child Watch staff will initiate activities to engage children in a variety of experiences, including arts and crafts projects, music and movement activities, and projects focused on building with the use of blocks and manipulatives.

Hours of Operation

Monday–Thursday: 8:00am-12:00pm | 4:30pm-8:00pm

Friday: 8:00am-12:00pm | 4:30pm-6:30pm

Saturday: 8:00am-12:00pm

Sunday: Closed

Holiday Closures

The Child Watch program area will be closed on the following holidays:

- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

**Hours may be adjusted on days surrounding holidays. Updates to any Child Watch hours will be posted on our website, as well as in our Child Watch program space.*

General Policies

Toys and Other Personal Items

The Y recommends that toys, tablets, and electronic devices are NOT brought from home. However, if these items are brought in, then please abide by the following guidelines:

- The items should be clearly labeled with your child's name
- DO NOT bring in any items that pose a choking hazard to smaller children
- The Y is not responsible for lost, broken, or stolen items

Also, please note that if your child brings in a tablet or electronic device, he/she will not be permitted to watch any videos or log in to any web sites that are not appropriate for small children. Our staff will monitor these devices to ensure that children are only watching 'G-rated' movies or child-friendly websites. If our associates discover that your child is logged on to or watching any inappropriate material, then he/she will not be permitted to bring the item back to the Stay & Play area.

Proper Attire

Child's play can be messy work. Your child may be painting and participating in other messy activities. As such, please don't send your child in their Sunday-best outfit. Water-based paint and markers still leave stains. For safety reasons, we recommend sturdy shoes that cover the entire foot. Flip flops and sandals aren't safe for dancing and rigorous physical activity on the playground.

Behavior Expectations of Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians are asked to remember that this is a child-centered program. Our children are easily influenced by our language and actions. The Y challenges staff and participants to accept and demonstrate our four core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. If a dispute arises, we ask that you move the discussion into a private area. At no time should any disputes be carried out in front of the children or other parents/guardians. We have a zero tolerance policy regarding threats of any type or rude, aggressive behaviors. Inappropriate behavior or failure to follow the expectations in this Manual may result in expulsion from Y programs.

Behavior Expectations of Children

We encourage children to share our materials and to care for them accordingly. We do expect the children to clean up after themselves, and we ask that you encourage them to do so before they leave the Child Watch area.

We encourage the children to model our Y core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility; and to refrain from fighting, bullying, wrestling, or gunplay.

Late Pick-up Policy

Members with a family membership can utilize the Child Watch program for up to 60 minutes at a time. If a child is not picked up within that 60 minute period, then the parent is considered late. In the event that your child is picked up late, then

you will be reminded of the 60 minute allowance. Parents/guardians who repeatedly pick up their child after the 60 minute period has expired, risk losing their option to use the Child Watch program.

Discipline Policy

For many people, discipline has only negative connotations. Some may regard it as punishment. If we look at the source of the word 'discipline', however, we find it has a very positive meaning. To discipline means "to teach." Through discipline, we teach self-control and responsibility which in turn minimizes disruptive behavior.

If a child is having difficulty following the rules, we will follow the steps below:

1. Redirection: provide other choices for the child that will allow them the opportunity to succeed in another center or activity.
2. If redirection does not work, we will give the child a 'cool down': allowing the child to sit at a table away from the activity for a short time until they regain control. Once the child calms down, we will sit and talk with them about the choice they made and provide examples of how they can make better choices next time.
3. If the child does not de-escalate during the 'cool down', we will offer them a puzzle or play-doh to work with while they are sitting. This may help calm their emotions. Once they are calm, our staff will talk to them about making good choices.
4. If none of the above strategies work, and the negative behavior escalates, the child may need to be removed from the area - in which case, a staff will get the parent/guardian and document the behavior on a Behavior Report. The behavior will be discussed with the parent/guardian and the parent/guardian will be asked to sign a Behavior Report.
5. If a child's behavior threatens the safety of themselves or others, or is consistently an issue in the Child Watch area, then they may not be permitted to use the Child Watch program.

Screen Time Protocols

Engaging with children is important in their development and in ensuring great service. As such, we will minimize the use of videos in our Child Watch program area, in order to enhance a lesson for educational purposes. We may also promote the occasional use of videos to encourage physical activity with follow along games, dances, and movement activities.

Cell Phone and Smoking Policy

Transitioning into and out of the Child Watch area can be both overwhelming and exciting for your child. As such, we ask that you put your cell phone aside and provide your child with your full attention. The staff may have information to discuss with you and will need to know that you're available to talk without the distraction of a cell phone. Furthermore, for the safety and the privacy of the other children in the program, please refrain from using your cell phone.

Smoking is not permitted on Y property.

Safety Procedures

Sign In and Sign Out Process

Sign-In Process:

1. When entering Child Watch, please scan your card or give your name and your child's name to the staff to sign your child in
2. Indicate your arrival time, your intended location in the facility, and indicate if another parent/guardian will be picking your child up
3. You must remain in the building while your child is in Child Watch

Sign-Out Process:

1. When picking up your child, please sign your child out with a Child Watch staff and indicate your departure time
2. A staff member will validate your identification on our computer system
3. Our associates will only release the child to the same parent that signed them in unless noted otherwise (if another parent/guardian is picking up the child, it must be noted under 'special instructions')

Ratios

Child Watch ratios are set to ensure the utmost safety of our program participants. For the purposes of our programs, infants are defined as those children ages 6 weeks to 18 months. Whenever possible, infants will be separated from mobile toddlers and preschoolers to ensure their safety.

The ratio for infants is 1 staff person to 4 infants. The ratio for preschool children is 1 staff person to 8 children, unless the majority of the children are toddlers and two year olds (in which case the ratio will decrease per the supervisor's discretion). The ratio for school-aged children is 1 staff person to 14 children.

Maximum Capacities

Child Watch areas should be bright, clean, safe, well-equipped and spacious enough for staff to adequately care for the maximum number of children allowed in the room. Maximum occupancies are set based on space and local codes and our staff will ensure that this number is adhered to on a consistent basis to ensure the safety of our participants.

Wait List Procedures

When our Child Watch areas meet maximum capacity, our staff will let you know that we can no longer admit any more children at that particular time. However, a wait list should be started. As space becomes available, an associate will locate the next family on the wait list (in person or via the intercom system) and let them know that they can drop their child off.

Child Abuse Prevention

In addition to extensive training requirements, our staff are required to take training on the Prevention and Identification of Child Abuse.

Procedures for Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

South Carolina law requires anyone working directly with children to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to Child Protective Services (CPS). Our staff will look for the following signs of abuse:

- Unexplained bruising or other physical markings;
- Abrupt changes in behavior (i.e. – anxiety, clinging, aggressiveness, withdrawal, depression);
- Fear of a certain person; discomfort with physical contact;
- A child who abuses other children

If abuse or neglect is suspected, staff must immediately contact CPS and allow CPS to conduct an investigation. Our staff will not be permitted to discuss the incident with anyone other than the local authorities and Y risk management personnel.

Babysitting/Outside Contact

Employees are often asked to provide babysitting and other services on their own time to Y members and families. The Foothills Area YMCA does **NOT** permit employees to provide babysitting or other services to families or children they meet in Y programs. In addition, our staff cannot provide transportation in a personal vehicle or be in contact with children outside of Y programs. This includes non-program related emails, texting, phone calls, letters, and contact over the internet. Such policies are designed to protect children and staff from child abuse and/or false allegations. Parents/guardians are asked to report any violation of this policy to Y management at the Foothills Area YMCA.

Bathroom Breaks

Y staff are not permitted to accompany a child one-on-one for a bathroom break. This policy is to protect both children and staff alike from child abuse and/or false allegations.

Diaper Changing

Child Watch associates are **NOT** permitted to change diapers for Child Watch participants. If your child needs a diaper change, a Child Watch staff will locate you and you will need to report to the Child Watch area.

Injuries, Illness and Emergency Procedures

Injuries and 'Ouch Reports'

Unfortunately, even with the best safety guidelines in place, accidents do happen. In the event that your child is injured while in our Child Watch program area, Child Watch staff will notify you at pick up and ask you to sign an 'Ouch Report'. The 'Ouch Report' will provide you with a short description of the incident and details on the time, date, description of the injury, and first aid administered.

In the event of a medical emergency, you will be immediately notified and will be responsible for all medical treatment necessary for the well being of your child.

Sick Children

Our Child Watch program is not equipped to handle sick children. We cannot permit children to remain in our care if they show symptoms of a communicable disease. Children who are ill should be excluded from care until:

1. a physician has certified the symptoms are not associated with an infectious agent (doctor's note may be required)
2. they are no longer a threat to the health of other children
3. symptoms have subsided

Children with a minor illness may attend Child Watch at the provider's discretion. It is important to realize that if a child is unable to participate in their normal routine or needs one on one care, then the child must stay home. Some illnesses/symptoms which would exclude a child from care include, but are not limited to:

- Fever - an axillary (under arm) temperature of 100 degrees or higher
- Respiratory symptoms - difficult or rapid breathing or severe coughing
- Diarrhea (child cannot return to care until he/she is symptom-free for 48 hours)
- Vomiting (child cannot return to care until he/she is symptom-free for 48 hours)
- Eye/nose drainage - thick mucus or pus draining from the eyes or nose
- Sore throat
- Rashes or infected sores (ringworm, chicken pox, etc.)
- Persistent itching or scratching of body or scalp (scabies and lice)
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Impetigo
- Scarlet Fever
- Hepatitis A, B, or C

If your child shows any signs of illness while in our care, then you will be asked to remove your child from the area immediately. In some cases, if your child needs to be seen by a doctor, then you will be required to submit a signed release from your doctor before your child can return. This is to ensure that a child does not return when he or she may be in danger of exposing others to an illness.

Hand-washing and Cleaning Procedures

In order to reduce the spread of illness, we adhere to strict daily guidelines when cleaning the Child Watch program area. In addition, our staff are required to follow stringent hand-washing procedures for themselves and the children in their care.

Medications

Only parents/guardians can administer medication to the children in our care. Child Watch staff can **NOT** administer medications to our participants; and the medications cannot be stored in our Child Watch program space.

Fire and Emergency Drills

Staff will perform fire and emergency drills on a monthly basis to ensure they are adequately prepared for emergencies such as fires, tornadoes, earthquakes, bomb threats, armed intruders, missing children, and active shooters. You will be notified when we are performing these drills and the details of each drill will be recorded on our fire and emergency drill log.

In the event of an actual emergency, the Childcare Director will provide Y staff with specific instructions according to our emergency preparedness plans. DO NOT enter the Child Watch area to retrieve your child. Instead, meet the staff at the designated evacuation area and sign your child out. Please check with your Child Watch staff for the designated evacuation area.

Snacks and Food

At this time, no snacks or beverages are permitted in the Child Watch program area. Older children will be provided water as needed.

Requirements for Stay & Play Associates

Qualifications and Training Requirements

To Foothills Area YMCA, the protection and safety of children is our first concern. Our Y Child Watch staff undergo criminal background checks and reference checks. In addition, all staff must agree to random drug and alcohol testing.

Staff development is a central focus of the Y program enabling staff to provide comprehensive services for children and families. Because we are strongly committed to providing quality programs, the Y offers our staff the opportunity to grow both personally and professionally through ongoing staff development and training. Child Watch staff have the opportunity to participate in ongoing training each year on topics which focus on working with children. In addition, our staff are certified in CPR and First Aid and are required to complete a training on bloodborne pathogens and the prevention of child abuse.