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## Child Watch Parent Handbook



### WELCOME!

This handbook is designed to provide you with specific information about our program. During your visit to the YMCA, our Child Watch staff will provide fun and safe, age appropriate activities for your child.

**VISIT TIME LIMIT:** The YMCA of Greater Houston's Child Watch Program is not a state licensed program and has an exemption from child care licensing. Therefore there is a 2 hour time limit per child per visit for a maximum of 12 hours per week, Sunday through Saturday.

**AGES AND HOURS OF OPERATION:** Ages and hours vary by location. Check with your local YMCA at [www.ymcahouston.org](http://www.ymcahouston.org) for more information.

**ACCOMODATIONS:** The YMCA strives to meet the needs of all children and families in our programs. If your child needs any accommodations we ask that you speak with the Director of the program to ensure that you and your child have a great experience in our program.

## **RATIOS:**

<b>AGE</b>	<b>STAFF TO CHILD RATIO</b>
6 weeks-17 months	1:4
18-35 months	1:8
3-4 years	1:15
5-12 years	1:20
Older Youth: 10-14 years	1:20

**REGISTRATION FOR CHILD WATCH PROGRAM:** Each child who participates in our Child Watch program must be registered through our check-in system, Alaris. Registration is quick and easy. To begin you will need your membership card to verify your family members, emergency contact information and SMS text information. The final step is to have a photo taken of the parent and child/children. Photos will be individual head shots.

**ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE POLICY:** When dropping your child off, you are welcome to stay for a few minutes to get your child acclimated, however, for safety reasons, we cannot allow parents/guardians to stay in the room. Children will be grouped according to their age and older siblings will participate with their age group. Parents/guardians must remain on the premises at all times or participate in a YMCA program to ensure they are easily and readily accessible in case of emergency.

After you complete your visit to the YMCA, our friendly Child Watch staff will check your child out of our program. Children are never released to an individual who did not sign the child in unless:

1. Permission is given by the parent/guardian before they leave and proper identification is shown.
2. Permission is given for their child age 10 years or older to sign themselves out of the program.

Children who are guests should not be brought to Child Watch program unless they have a Facility membership and are registered in the YMCA's member management system and the Child Watch Alaris program.

**DAILY ATTIRE:** Children should be dressed for active play. Toddlers and infants need a change of clothes. Close toed shoes are recommended. Please refrain from sending your child with jewelry or items that may pose a choking hazard.

**PLAY AREAS:** Children may be divided into smaller age groupings during peak times and will be in areas with age appropriate activities. Activities vary by center and include:

- **CREATIVE MOVEMENT**-Dance, music, instruments, parachutes, beanbag games, and more
- **ARTS & CRAFTS**-Art projects, craft projects, painting, play dough, science
- **STRONG MINDS OR IMAGINATION STATION**-All coordinated learning such as ABC's, 123's, colors, shapes, puzzles, puppets, dramatic play and themed activities such as back to school, wild kingdom, under the sea, transportation, the seasons, weather, holidays, etc.

- **HEALTHY BODIES**–Fitness fun, Zumba® Kids, CATCH®, climbing wall, physical play and nutrition
- **INSIDE OUT**–Outdoor play or active gym games
- **KIDS CHOICE**–Center based play
- Television and movies are not utilized in our programs.

**CONDUCT & GUIDANCE:** Our program uses positive guidance methods including redirection, distraction, reminders and logical consequences. Self-management skills are taught using consistent rules that are clearly stated so that children are expected to play within known limits. Behavior expected of children is age appropriate according to developmental stages. The YMCA reserves the right to restrict children’s activities, have parents pick up immediately, suspend or terminate care when children are displaying behavior that is dangerous to themselves or others, or for repeatedly being disruptive or failing to follow program rules.

Our staff make every effort to keep your child happy and content within our Child Watch program. In the event that your child is not able to be consoled and has consistent crying for a period of over 15 minutes, we will seek you out, as the parent/guardian and ask for your assistance in soothing the child.

**BABYSITTING:** We are pleased that you feel comfortable and confident in our employees and that you may want them to babysit or transport children after hours; however, it is against the YMCA’s policy and could be grounds for employee termination.

**FOOD:** In order to keep our Child Watch area safe for all children, including those with food allergies, there will be NO food, gum, candy or drinks permitted in the Child Watch area. If your infant will need a bottle please make sure that the bottle is clearly labeled with your child’s name. Each YMCA center has a designated location for mothers who desire to breastfeed their infant.

**ILLNESS:** In an effort to maintain everyone’s health and well-being, the following guidelines MUST be strictly followed. Please respect the health of the other children in our care by cooperating with us. An ill child will not be admitted and children who become ill may not remain in Child Watch. For the safety of your child as well as the other children in Child Watch, you may not bring a child to our program for one business day after having any of the following symptoms:

- A fever
- Intestinal disturbance accompanied by diarrhea or vomiting
- Any undiagnosed rash
- Sore or discharging eyes or ears
- Profuse, colored nasal discharge
- A communicable disease

Children must be free of all of the above symptoms and show no signs of illness when entering the program. All children must be able to participate in the normal daily schedule (outdoor play included). Caregivers cannot administer medication.

**ITEMS FROM HOME:** We provide activities for the children and ask that you not bring toys or electronics from home. All bottles, cups, pacifiers and other infant items must be labeled. Diapers and wipes are to be provided by the parent. Please note, not all centers offer diaper changing of infants within their program. We are not responsible for any lost, stolen, or broken belongings.

**STAFF & SAFETY:** Our staff are certified in CPR and First Aid as well as Child Abuse Prevention. Additional trainings include:

- Child Watch Pre-service
- Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Universal Precautions
- Bullying

**SAFE SLEEP PRACTICES:** The Texas Department of Health and Human Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Service have shared research related to Safe Sleep Practices for Infants. Research that impacts the care of children in Y Child Watch programs include swaddling and children sleeping in car seats or swings. It is recommended that infants sleep on their backs in a crib or on another firm surface. YMCA Child Watch programs will practice recommended safe sleep practices by not allowing infants to be swaddled or left sleeping in their car seats.

**INJURY/ACCIDENTS:** Although, precautions are in place to ensure the safety of all our children, there are times when typical childhood accidents do occur. Thus in the event that your child is injured while in the care of our Child Watch program the following steps will be followed:

- Y staff will assess the injury and provide the necessary first aid
- If immediate medical attention is needed, we will call 911
- Parent/guardian will be notified (major concern: immediate notification or minor concern: notified at sign out)
- The appropriate reporting documents will be completed
- Additional follow up with the family will be made

The YMCA takes head injuries seriously. Suspected head injuries will require a 911 call. Bumps, jolts or blows that cause the head and brain to move rapidly back and forth can be serious, even if it appears to be minor.

**YMCA CHILD WATCH OPERATING HOURS:** Please check with your local YMCA for days and hours of operation.

The YMCA of Greater Houston is proud to serve our community by offering quality care for our children. We hope that our program will meet the needs of your family and that your children will learn, grow and thrive.