



# Hamilton Area YMCA

# Y's Owls Preschool

## Parent Handbook And Policies and Procedures

"Committed to providing a quality program that is safe, educational, child-friendly and fun!"

Revised August 2021

## **Introduction**

The Y's Owls Preschool Program at the Hamilton Area YMCA is a state-licensed program serving children 3 to 5 years old. Y's Owls Preschool provides a warm, nurturing environment in which your child can discover and develop his or her individual potential for physical, social, emotional, and intellectual growth.

The Hamilton Area YMCA is committed to ensuring the safety and health of our youth, families and employees in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This Parent Handbook outlines the policies and procedures that will be implemented during the Reopening Phase of our Preschool Programs. These standards are based on the current guidelines and recommendations set forth by the Center of Disease Control (CDC), NJ Department of Children and Families (NJDCF) Child Care Licensing, the Hamilton Township Department of Health, as well as the Hamilton Township School District, **and are subject to change.**

## **Mission Statement**

The YMCA is a charitable association dedicated to building a healthy spirit, mind and body. Part of a world-wide movement, it puts Christian principles into practice through programs that promote good health, strong families, youth leadership, community development, and international understanding. YMCA's are open to men, women and children of all ages, incomes, abilities, races, and religions.

## **Program Goals**

- To help your child develop a positive self-image.
- To provide an environment that is warm, caring, encouraging, consistent, safe, and full of respect for each individual.
- To provide experiences and activities which will encourage the developmental state of your child physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, and creatively.

- To help your child relate comfortably to peers and adults.
- To provide opportunities for development of gross and fine motor skills, using music, art and physical activities.
- To implement a curriculum based on age appropriate activities to develop skills in self-help, language, math readiness, reading readiness, science exploration, dramatic play, creative arts, and social studies.

## **Enrolling Your Child**

### Eligibility

To enter the Three Year Old Preschool Program in September, the child must be 3 by October 1<sup>st</sup> of that school year and potty-trained.

To enter the Four Year Old program in September, the child must be 4 by October 1<sup>st</sup> of that school year and potty-trained. October 1<sup>st</sup> is the cut- off date implemented by the Hamilton Township School District and will ensure that your child will not be refused admission to Kindergarten because of age requirements.

### **Registration**

All registration will be completed on line. Please visit [hamiltonymca.org/Childcare/Y's Owls](http://hamiltonymca.org/Childcare/Y's%20Owls)

### **Fee and Payment Policy**

Y's Owls Preschool enforces the following policies and procedures for tuition payments:

1. Person signing enrollment application will be held responsible for tuition payments.
2. Monthly tuition is due by the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month of service. All late payments received after the 1<sup>st</sup> will incur a \$10 late fee.
3. The same monthly tuition rate is charged for each month regardless of sickness, behavioral/disciplinary removal, vacations, weather-related closings or holidays.
4. The Hamilton Area YMCA does not bill for services. It is the parents/guardians responsibility to make sure tuition payments are made on time each month.

5. Child Care Tax Credit –Please save your receipts for tax information. Our tax ID number is 21-070-2879.
6. Late Pick Up -There will be a \$10.00 charge per child for every fifteen minutes elapsed after your scheduled pick-up time. If alternative arrangements are unavailable, we are required to notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if a child is not picked up within one hour of closing.
7. Financial Assistance- Y's Owls Preschool Program accepts New Jersey state subsidy through Child Care Connection.
8. A schedule change or withdrawal from the program requires written notice. Please use the Schedule Change/Drop Request Form, located under Resources on our website page and submit to the Childcare Registrar by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the prior month of service.
9. The Hamilton Area YMCA reserves the right to increase tuition with thirty (30) days advance notice and to change the times and sessions of the programs offered.

## **Health and Safety Measures**

### **Masks**

Masks will be worn by all staff and children during the Preschool Programs. On days when the heat index exceeds 80 degrees, children may remove their masks while outdoors. Enrolled children are required to bring their own mask. Additional masks are available should a child lose their mask or one become soiled.

### **Cleaning and Disinfecting**

In accordance with the CDC guidelines, the Y's Owls staff will be responsible for all cleaning and disinfecting during Program hours. The frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of equipment and surfaces will be increased to minimize the potential for the spread of germs. Equipment that is not easily cleanable has been temporarily removed. Equipment that is out at any one time will be rotated so that it can be adequately cleaned and sanitized.

### **Hygiene Practices/Handwashing**

The Lead Teacher will ensure that staff and children adhere to the hand washing schedule. Staff and children will wash their hands upon entering the program, prior to snack and lunch, after snack and lunch, after each activity,

prior to going outside, when coming in from outside, after coughing/sneezing, etc.

Signs will be displayed in bathrooms and in program area on how to properly wash hands. Hand sanitizer will be available to staff and children within the program areas.

## **Daily Health Screening**

As a state-licensed program, The Y's Owls Preschool Program must comply with the Health and Safety Requirements on COVID-19 as mandated by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF).

## **Screening at Entry**

Health Screenings will be done daily at Entry to the program by a trained staff member. Questions will be asked of the parent/guardian at Drop Off. Children who exhibit any of the following symptoms will not be admitted to the program:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Children showing any signs of illness will not be admitted to the program. It is a danger to other children and staff members in our program. If Parents/Guardians have any doubts about their child's health, they are asked to call the classroom phone (609-581-9622 x 106) to be sure their child may attend. If a child becomes ill while attending the Program, we will notify the parent or guardian immediately, and it is necessary that the child be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Daily temperature checks are also taken of Staff and Children. Temperature may not exceed 100.4 F. Temperature will be taken with a no contact thermometer at Screening.

### **Exclusion from Program**

Any staff member, child, parent or guardian showing symptoms consistent with COVID-19 such as fever, coughing, shortness of breath or they have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days, they are excluded from the program.

We ask that all parents and staff let us know of any potential exposure immediately. A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes. If there is a positive case of COVID-19 in a child or an adult who has been present in the Preschool program, we will immediately inform the Hamilton Township Division of Health and our parents.

### **Response Procedures for COVID-19 Symptoms or Exposure**

Any confirmed or suspected exposure to COVID-19 occurring in the Y's Owls Preschool program will be immediately reported to both the local department of health and the Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing.

### **Isolation Area**

A designated isolation area will be used for children who develop symptoms during the program and are waiting to be picked up by a parent or guardian. If the child has symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, shortness of breath), the staff member waiting with the child will remain as far away as safely possible from the child, preferably, 6 feet. The ill child's parent is instructed to inform the Program immediately if the person is diagnosed with COVID-19. To return to the Program, the child will need a Negative COVID Test.

### **Children or staff members who test positive for COVID-19**

If a staff member or child has tested positive for COVID-19, we will immediately contact the Department of Health for guidance. Health officials will provide direction on next steps.

All areas and equipment used by the infected person, and persons potentially exposed to that person, will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with CDC guidance referenced above.

### **Returning to the Y's Owls Preschool Program After COVID-19 Diagnosis or Exposure**

If a staff member or child contracts or is exposed to COVID-19, they cannot be admitted to the Program again until the criteria for lifting transmission based precautions and home isolation have been met. Those criteria are included in the Department of Health's guidance available here: [https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID-QuickRef\\_Discont\\_Isolation\\_and\\_TBP.pdf](https://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/topics/NCOV/COVID-QuickRef_Discont_Isolation_and_TBP.pdf)

## **Program Policies & Procedures**

### **Days and hours of Operation**

The Y's Owls Preschool Program will be offered Monday – Friday.

- Three Year Old Program – Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
- Four Year Old Pre-Kindergarten Program – Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

### **Grouping/Social Distancing of Children**

Maximum class size will be 15 children per group not including the adult staff members. Activities will be modified for Social Distancing. There will be individual and limited contact activities provided. Children will have their own set of pencils, crayons, erasers, etc. in a zip lock bag labeled with their name. Sharing of items will be limited following proper cleaning and disinfecting procedures.

During **Outdoor Time**, Social Distancing will be observed. Staff will use open outdoor space for non-contact outdoor activities.

### **Procedures for Morning Drop-off**

Upon arriving at the Y, parents will proceed to the "Pool Side" doors for Drop Off. All parents/guardians and children must be wearing the proper face

covering at this time. Drop off time is staggered from 8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. A designated staff member will come to the entrance to greet the parent and child. The staff member will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness and then conduct a temperature screening. If the child's temperature is below 100.4 F, and there are no visible signs of illness, the staff member will initial the sign-in sheet and the child will proceed to the Program area to put away their personal belongings and wash their hands.

### **Procedures for Afternoon Pick Up**

Upon arriving at the Y, parents will proceed to the "Pool Side" doors for Pick Up. All parents/guardians must be wearing the proper face covering at this time and follow Social Distancing procedures. Pick up time is staggered from 12:45 – 1:00 p.m. A designated staff member will escort child out to Parent and staff member initials sign out sheet.

### **Children's Personal Belongings**

No toys or personal items from home will be permitted in the Program. Each child will be assigned a cubbie to store their personal belongings.

### **Meals and Snack Time**

There is a scheduled Lunch time. Parents are asked to send in a lunch box lunch. All food, utensils and drinks MUST be disposable. We do not have the ability to refrigerate or heat up food.

A morning snack will not be provided. Parents are welcome to send in a morning snack for their child to enjoy. Individual packaged snacks are preferred.

*The Y's Owls Program is a nut-free program. Absolutely no products containing peanuts, peanut butter, or tree nuts of any kind are allowed. This includes products made in a facility that processes tree nuts/peanuts.*



## **Visitors**

Visitors will not be permitted to enter the program during operating hours, with the exception of emergency or law enforcement personnel in the official capacity, Department of Children and Families personnel for child protection or child care licensing purposes, and school personnel.

## **Special Events**

There will be no assemblies, gatherings, outside Enrichment or performances at this time.

## **Parental Notification Policy**

The Parental Notification Policy lists the procedures on how and when we contact parent/guardians of our Y's Owls program participants.

Emergency Closings – If there is an Emergency Closing, The Y's Owls program staff will contact the parents or guardians listed as the child's emergency contact. Parents are contacted first, then the emergency contact, unless otherwise noted.

Illness – If a child becomes ill during the Y's Owls Preschool program, the program staff will contact the parents or guardians listed as the child's emergency contact. Parents are contacted first, then the emergency contact, unless otherwise noted.

COVID-19 – If there is a positive case of COVID-19 in a child or an adult who has been present in the Y's Owls Preschool program, we will immediately inform the Hamilton Township Division of Health and the parents of the children in the Program.

Injury – For any injury that occurs during the Y's Owls Preschool program which requires first aid treatment, the parents will be required to sign off on an incident report.

- If a child has a minor injury during the program, staff will complete an incident report and parents will be notified at pick up or drop off.

- If the injury is an injury to the head/face, involves a fall from a height greater than the height of the child, or the child cannot be consoled, the staff will call the child's parent/guardian and will leave a message if the person does not pick up.
- If the injury is major, and the child will need further medical attention, the staff will first attempt to call the parents/guardians listed as the emergency contact.

Behavior – If a child is exhibiting minor or major behavior violations, the staff will notify parents during pick up or drop off, or by a phone call. If the child exhibits a critical behavior violation or cannot be controlled, the staff will call the child's parents/guardians. If parents/guardians cannot be contacted and the behavior warrants the child be removed from the program, the persons listed as the emergency contact will be called.

## **POLICY ON THE RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

A. The Center's policy on the release of children shall include:

1. The provision that each child may be released only to the child's custodial parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the custodial parent(s) to take the child from the YMCA and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the custodial parent(s) cannot be reached.
2. The provision that if a non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to a child by a court order, the YMCA shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

B. Procedures to be followed by staff members if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified above in A. 1, fails to pick up a child at the time of the center's daily closing, shall require that:

- 1) The child is supervised at all times;
- 2) Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- 3) An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the Hamilton Police Department or the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline 1-877-NJABUSE (1-877-652-

2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick up the child.

C. Procedures to be followed by a staff member(s) if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified above in A. 1, appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the center shall ensure that:

- 1) The child may not be released to such an impaired individual;
- 2) Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
- 3) If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the Hamilton Police Department or the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline 1-877-NJ-ABUSE (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child.

## **Medical Policies and Procedures**

### **Medication Policy**

By law, medications can be administered to a child only under the following conditions:

- Parents must complete and sign a medication authorization form.
- Prescription Medication must come in its original prescription container with medication name, dosage, directions, physician's name, pharmacy name, and telephone number. Over the counter medications must be accompanied by a doctor's note which prescribes the medication and gives the dosage instructions.
- All medication is to be given directly to the Lead Teacher or Program Director.
- Cough drops are not permitted in any Child Care Program.

### **First Aid**

All YMCA Staff are trained in First Aid. To treat for minor injuries the YMCA will use soap, water, ice (if needed) and a Band-Aid. A form will be completed and given to the designated pick up person to help keep parents informed of any minor injury.

### **Injury/Medical Emergency Procedures**

In the event that a child is injured, sick or in need of emergency medical attention, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, the YMCA will then notify the contact person on the child's emergency

paperwork. Child must be picked up from program within 30 minutes of notification. When warranted, Emergency Medical Services will be notified immediately.

## **Safety and Insurance**

While in the YMCA program, every precaution is taken to assure that each child has a safe and fun experience. If an accident should occur while in our program, please note that the YMCA does not furnish accident insurance. All medical bills are the responsibility of the child's parent or guardian.

## **Illness**

We are concerned with the health and welfare of each child. In order to prevent illness from being spread to classmates, please observe the following guidelines:

- Children may not attend school with fever, vomiting, or diarrhea. (Allow 24 hours before returning).
- In the event that your child becomes ill at school, a staff member will contact you. Upon notification, we require that your child be picked up from school within one hour.
- Children sent home from the program must be free of symptoms, (i.e., fever, vomiting) for 24 hours before returning to school.
- Please contact the Director or Teacher of your site if your child will not be attending the Program.

## **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES**

Positive discipline is a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of the individual child, the group, and the adult.

Positive discipline is different from punishment. Punishment tells the child what they should not do; positive discipline tells the child what they should do. Punishment teaches fear; positive discipline teaches self-esteem.

Using positive discipline:

- Re-direct to a new activity to change the focus of a child's behavior.

- Provide individualized attention to help the child deal with a particular situation.
- Use time-out – by removing a child for a few minutes from the area or activity so that he/she may gain self-control. At this time the child will remain under the supervision of a staff member.
- Provide alternative activities and acceptable ways to release feelings.
- Point out natural or logical consequences of children’s behavior.
- Offer a choice only if there are two acceptable options.
- Criticize the behavior, not the child. Don’t say “bad boy” or “bad girl.”
- Respond to and reinforce positive behavior; acknowledge or praise to let the child know you approve of what he/she is doing.
- Provide positive reinforcement through rewards for good behavior.
- Use encouragement rather than competition, comparison or criticism.
- Give caring to every child every day.
- Appreciate the child’s point of view.

We appreciate your cooperation and involvement in your child’s school experience. It’s important that we work as partners to ensure the best possible educational environment for your child.

## **Expulsion Policy**

### **DISCIPLINARY PHILOSOPHY**

At the Y, discipline is handled with much care and thought. Positive discipline is used to help promote social and emotional growth. We use two methods for promoting positive behavior. First, we reinforce acceptable behavior with verbal rewards. Second, we talk with children to help them make better choices, discuss follow up with a parent/guardian and allow the children to rejoin activities. The benefits of a behavior report are to encourage positive behaviors and/or correct a situation in a positive manner with parents as our partners.

We encourage the children to develop self-control to solve minor conflicts in a peaceful way. However, at times, children behave inappropriately. Some behaviors may even be injurious to themselves or others. We feel, in order to preserve the safety of the children, these behaviors must be controlled. We will implement the guidance and direction necessary for healthy growth and development. Parents will be notified when negative behavior becomes a concern.

## **SCHOOL CONDUCT**

We expect the children to conduct themselves in a manner that is age appropriate, showing respect for others and for school property. Proper behavior is a cooperative effort between parents and staff. It would be very helpful if you could reinforce the school rules with your child.

Appropriate behavior defined as:

- Respect for others
- Respect for school property
- Use good listening skills
- Keep your hands, feet, and all objects to yourself
- Be polite

Inappropriate behavior defined as:

- Behavior on the part of the child that interferes with the safety or well-being of himself/herself, or any other person.
- Behavior that takes a staff member away from working in ratio.
- Verbal disrespect of YMCA staff or other children
- Lack of respect for property and/or the property of others.
- Abusive language or gestures.

## **EXPULSION FROM PROGRAM**

Our intent is to work as a team with parents or guardians for the best care plan for each child. A teamwork approach is the only way to

correct repeated inappropriate behavior. Your patience, support, and follow through are necessary and greatly appreciated.

The YMCA reserves the right to expel a child from its programs for any of the following reasons:

1. The child's needs are not being met in our small or large group setting.
2. Failure of parent/guardian to provide information and/or follow the guidelines required of the YMCA and by the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.
3. The child is a safety threat to himself/herself, other children, or the YMCA staff.

If it is determined that a child needs to be removed from the program, a two-week notice will be provided, to enable parents to make alternate child care arrangements, except as specified in following paragraph.

If the behavior is defined as potentially dangerous, then it is grounds for immediate expulsion from the program. Potentially dangerous behavior is defined as, but not limited to; inappropriate sexual behavior, verbal or physical abuse towards a child or staff member, bringing a weapon to school.

## **Social Media Policy**

The State of New Jersey Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing requires that all licensed Child Care Centers develop and follow a written policy on the use of social media

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Hamilton Area YMCA recognizes the value of online social media tools for connecting with members, staff, donors, and volunteers. Our web presence should project a positive image that is reflective of our overall brand and is consistent with our mission.

### **DEFINITION**

Social media, for the purpose of this policy, should be understood to include any website or forum that allows for open communication on the Internet including but not limited to: blogs, wikis, micro-blogging sites, social networking sites, virtual worlds, video and photo sharing websites and content published online by Hamilton Area YMCA employees.

If you choose to post a personal website or to participate in social media, (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) chat rooms, or blogs, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. The Hamilton Area YMCA Code of Conduct requires that the staff do not initiate outside contact with members or program participants. Under no circumstances should an employee encourage access or provide access information to his/her personal website or blog to a teen member or program participant under the age of (18) eighteen.
2. The use of photos, logos, or images of the Hamilton Area YMCA or its programs is prohibited.
3. All staff members of the Hamilton Area YMCA must uphold the YMCA's value of respect for the individual and avoid making defamatory statements about the Hamilton Area YMCA supervisors, employees, members, participants, clients, partners, affiliates, and others including competitors.
4. Any personal website, blog, or social network interactions should not contain commentary and/or links that violate the Hamilton Area YMCA's policies on harassment or discrimination.
5. Any reference to the Hamilton Area YMCA must include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed are yours alone and they do not necessarily reflect views of the Hamilton Area YMCA.
6. Staff of the Hamilton Area YMCA are asked to promote the core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility in their speech and behavior at the Hamilton Area YMCA, with the community, and in any public forum.
7. Facebook page – The Hamilton Area YMCA maintains a Fan Page on Facebook that is administered and maintained by the Senior Director of Marketing and Communications.



8. The only approved website is [hamiltonymca.org](http://hamiltonymca.org); no other website is endorsed by the Hamilton Area YMCA.

9. Posting Hamilton Area YMCA information and pictures on your personal social media page is prohibited (without approval). If you wish to post Hamilton Area YMCA related information/pictures on your personal page, approval is needed from the Departmental Director prior to posting.

10. Parents/Guardians are prohibited from posting photographs or videos (from the YMCA program) of any child other than their own.

11. The Hamilton Area YMCA requires that all staff members use good judgement and discretion when posting on social media sites and abide by the internal Hamilton YMCA Social Media Policy.