

**WESTPORT
WESTON FAMILY Y**

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.

Westport Weston Family Y

*Early Learning
Programs*

Family Handbook

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Accredited by
the NAEYC Academy
for Early Childhood
Program Accreditation



Table of Contents

| | | |
|-------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| I. | Education | Page 3 |
| | A. Program Philosophy | Page 3 |
| | B. Program Goals | Page 3 |
| | C. Classroom Environment/Curriculum | Page 4 |
| II. | Staffing | Page 5 |
| III. | Overview of Programs | Page 6 |
| | A. Infant/Toddler | Page 6 |
| | B. Preschool | Page 6 |
| | C. Kinderkids | Page 7 |
| IV. | Arrival | Page 7 |
| V. | Guidance of Young Children | Page 8 |
| VI. | Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect | Page 9 |
| VII. | Physical Examinations | Page 9 |
| VIII. | Clothing/Items from Home | Page 10 |
| IX. | Birthdays | Page 10 |
| | Suggested Foods for Celebrations | Page 11 |
| X. | Communication | Page 12 |
| XI. | Health and Safety | Page 13 |
| | A. Illness | Page 13 |
| | B. List of Conditions for Exclusion | Page 14 |
| | C. Medication | Page 14 |
| | D. Accidents and Injuries | Page 15 |
| | E. Safety – Prevention | Page 15 |
| XII. | Weather and Emergency Procedures | Page 15 |
| XIII. | Inclement Weather | Page 15 |
| XIV. | Financial Arrangements | Page 16 |
| | A. Summer Vacations | Page 17 |
| | B. Membership Discount | Page 17 |
| XV. | Complaint Procedure | Page 18 |

Welcome to the Westport Weston Family Y Child Care. It is our pleasure to work with you and your family.

Education

Program Philosophy

We believe that parents are the primary educators of their children. The role of our program is to assist the parent(s) in the care and education of each child. We believe in a strong parent/teacher partnership.

All parents are encouraged to:

- volunteer time at/for the center
- visit the center at any time
- support the efforts of the Child Care Program in fund-raising and public relations
- share any special talents or hobbies with their child's class

We believe that a child's work is his play and his play is his work. Children learn through play. Play is structured to maximize a child's success and minimize failure, which allows children to meet their needs for acceptance, affection, and approval. Children gain a strong sense of self-esteem and social competence through hands-on experience in a safe and supportive environment that respects individual needs, cultures and preferences.

Our philosophy is based on three basic beliefs:

1. Children need to express themselves through interactions with nurturing adults and peers while being encouraged to be themselves.
2. Children need an environment that responds to their individual needs and development, while maintaining a safe and healthy atmosphere.
3. Children need to be respected, with the opportunity to make choices within planned age appropriate and individually appropriate activities.

Program Goals

Our overall goal is to promote the social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of each child. A child will benefit from a program that is concerned with all aspects of his/her development.

The Westport Weston Family Y Child Care has broad and specific goals for each child.

1. Each child should appreciate him/herself as a capable person.
2. Each child should build his/her skills of problem solving.
3. Each child should feel comfortable exploring and expressing curiosity.
4. Each child should be able to make choices.
5. Children should love learning.

Classroom Environment/Curriculum

When a child enters our program, he/she enters with a wealth of knowledge obtained from home - through family, culture, and community.

The curriculum in each room is built around the strengths, needs and interests of the individual children. The teachers in each room are knowledgeable about child development. They use this information, regarding what is age appropriate, and then customize the classroom to what is individually appropriate. The following is an example:

Ms. Kim knows that three-year-olds learn through active involvement. Sam, a child in her classroom, is going to be a big brother soon. He has been talking about this upcoming change, but seems nervous about his mother going to the hospital and the changes at home. Ms. Kim supports this child by setting up the dramatic play area as a hospital. Real props, such as masks, gowns and stethoscopes are brought in to the classroom. Baby dolls continue to be available. Special books about becoming a big brother or sister are added to the collection and are used during group time. All of the children in the room benefit from these changes, while Sam is also helped to feel comfortable.

Our classroom equipment and materials are arranged and designed to clearly define areas of interest for individual, small group and large group experiences.

Teachers prepare the environment:

- from making observations of each individual child's interests and developmental levels
- by planning age and developmentally appropriate activities
- to design specific learning activities for small and large groups
- to reflect the cultures of the children represented in each classroom and society as a whole
- by interacting with children in ways that introduce them to new concepts and continuously build upon prior experiences

This philosophy is grounded in solid research, theory and practice, and promotes standards set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

We believe:

- all children share certain needs and can benefit from a comprehensive inter-disciplinary program that will foster social, emotional, cognitive, psychomotor and language/linguistic development through a broad range of services.
- in using a child-centered approach
- in providing an environment that promotes learning
- in providing activities based on children's interests, developmental skills, culture and language
- the focus of the curriculum must come from the children

Some of the skills and competencies that the children are acquiring in the learning centers are:

- Problem solving skills
- Literacy skills
- Competence and confidence with physical abilities
- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Swimming skills
- Computer skills
- Ability to deal constructively with emotions
- Self-help skills

Staffing

The Westport Weston Family Y Child Care is staffed with professionals who bring education and experience in the field of early childhood education. This combination of assets is necessary to produce an atmosphere of learning and quality care. **Each Head Teacher and each Teacher (every individual who works with children) holds a college degree.** Teacher-to-child ratios are always maintained at high-quality levels, often at far better levels than required by the State of Connecticut. For example, the State would allow 20 preschool children with two teachers, while the Westport Weston Family Y will not make a class larger than 12-15 children. Opportunities for teachers' professional and personal growth are encouraged by the administration and in-service training is provided.

Overview of Programs

Infant/Toddler

Children under three enjoy a caring and educational environment with the same teachers and the same classroom until they graduate to the preschool. This continuity of care with degreed, professional teachers provides the basis for individualized education that supports each child. Each room of 7-8 children has a Head Teacher and 1-2 Teachers. Each of these Teachers holds a college degree. The upstairs rooms can accommodate children from 6 weeks of age through 3. The downstairs rooms can accommodate children from 12 months of age through 3, due to fire evacuation regulations.

The daily schedule is flexible, adapting to the needs of the individual children. Activities include, but are not limited to:

- hands-on activities
- manipulatives
- creative arts
- sensory exploration
- reading and stories
- music
- dramatic play
- outdoor/large motor and gym activities
- Mahackeno Outdoor Center
- neighborhood walks to the green
- nutritious feeding, snacks and lunch
- rest time
- Music with local artists

Preschool

The Preschool classrooms are licensed for up to 16 children on a daily basis, but are generally enrolled to 12-14 children. Children range from three to five years of age. There is a Head Teacher and a Teacher in each of the four classrooms, plus substitute and floater teachers as necessary. Each of these Teachers holds a college degree.

The daily schedule includes, but is not limited to:

- morning circle
- story time and music
- choice time
- learning center (writing/literacy center, blocks, dramatic play, sensory activities, art, etc.)
- child and teacher directed activities
- large motor and gym activities
- neighborhood walks to the green
- Mahackeno Outdoor Center
- swimming-recreational and/or instructional
- nutritious snacks and lunch
- rest time
- Music with local artists

Kinderkids

The Kinderkids program is for children who attend the Westport or Weston Public Schools. The group size is 12 to 14 children daily. There is a Head Teacher and a Teacher with each group. Each of these Teachers holds a college degree.

The daily schedule includes, but is not limited to:

- **transportation from the public schools**
- greeting circle
- choice time
- large motor/outdoor activities
- neighborhood walks to the green
- swimming-recreational and/or instructional
- nutritious snack
- calm activity time for children who stay until 6:00pm

Arrival

A responsible adult must accompany children to their classrooms. Children should not arrive any earlier than 5 minutes. A charge of \$20.00 per fifteen minutes early will be charged for any unscheduled early drop-offs. Parents must remain with their child until the scheduled time and hold full responsibility for the child during that time. The teacher may be present in the classroom, but he/she is preparing for the day and is not responsible for your child until the time you have registered your child to begin the program.

Children must arrive by 9:30. Late arrival to the program can be a disturbance to your child's group. Families with infants under one year may make alternate arrangements with the teachers for an arrival schedule.

On a daily basis you must sign your child in and out, check the mailbox and say "Goodbye" to your child upon your departure. It is not healthy or fair to your child to sneak out of the classroom. The establishment of routine is important for your child.

Guidance of Young Children

The Westport Weston Family Y Child Care strives to build each child's self-esteem, independence and ability to socialize in a group. This is done, primarily, through developing a child's self-control. All guidance techniques are based upon knowledge of child development and familiarity with the child. In our program we use non-punitive forms of discipline and guidance:

1. **Positive Environment**
 - There are choices for activities, supportive teachers and an appropriately stimulating curriculum.
 - Teachers act as role models, treating children and adults with respect.
 - Teachers (and children) set reasonable and fair limits.
 - Teachers reinforce positive behavior.
 - Flexibility is exercised.
2. **Natural and Logical Consequences**
 - Children are not punished. Rather, there are consequences that naturally or logically follow. For example, if a child is throwing Legos he is showing that he is not able to play with them appropriately. The teacher will remind him that Legos are for building. If the action continues then the child is done with the Legos for a period of time.
3. **Redirection**
 - Teachers help/allow children to choose alternative activities. This diffuses the situation when the children do not have the abilities to deal with the situation.
4. **Separation**
 - When a child is enraged or extremely upset, he/she may need time and assistance in calming him/herself. This is done by sitting with a child, often with a book or soothing activity. The child may *always* rejoin the group as soon as he is ready to do so. **“Time-out” is not used in this program.** “Time-out,” as it is currently practiced in society, is nothing more than punishment, similar to the “dunce cap” of previous generations.

If a child in the program harms another child, the caregiver will first attend to the child who is hurt, then proceed with the other child. The staff will inform both families of the incident. However, because confidentiality is a keystone of our program, we will not disclose another child's name or information to the other family. Both the State Department of Public Health and the National Association for the Education of Young Children recommend this practice.

Communication with parents occurs on an on-going basis. Therefore, parents should always know how their children are adjusting. When parents and/or teachers feel that behavior or another issue is not improving, meetings may be scheduled with the Director, parents, and other appropriate staff.

If difficult behaviors persist, parents may be required to meet with the Director or Senior Director. After a discussion is held with the parents, **the Senior Director may give four weeks notice for either resolution or termination of services. If the Senior Director feels that there is an extreme problem, he/she may be expelled immediately from the program.**

The staff will not, at any time, use physical, emotional or verbal abuse. Under no circumstances will children be neglected, frightened or humiliated.

Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

By Connecticut State Law, all employees of the Westport Weston Family Y Child Care are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Suspected abuse will be reported, according to procedure, to the Department of Children and Families. The Department of Children and Families provides annual training on the subject. A full explanation of definitions and requirements is posted on the parent board at the bottom of the stairs.

Physical Examinations

Your child's health is of major importance to us all. A health form must be on file prior to your child's entry into the programs. This form must include the physician's signature, as well as a record of his/her immunizations and the date of the physical. These must be updated on an annual basis. Please be sure that your physician documents any allergies or health problems on the form.

Clothing/Items from Home

Appropriate clothing and footwear is necessary for your child. One of our goals is to enhance self-esteem. Simple clothing, free of complicated fastenings is helpful for the staff and your child. Your child's early childhood experience will be filled with the following activities:

- Art supplies and other “messy” activities
- Outdoor and gym play, please provide sneakers so your child can move freely and safely
- Swimming. Swimwear, a second pair of footwear, and a towel are necessary items for the pre-school and Kinderkid programs. Swimming for infants (6 months and older) and toddlers is a parent/tot swim, which usually begins mid-October.
- In the winter, each group attempts to go outside, if only for a short walk. Always provide a light sweater or jacket in the early fall or spring. Please provide a coat, long pants, hats and scarves, mittens and boots. Your child's teacher may request that a snowsuit be provided.

Spare clothing should be labeled and kept in your child's cubby. When your child uses his/her extra clothes please send in another set. If your child must borrow Child Care's extra clothes, please return them in a timely fashion, washed and with a set of clothes to be placed in your child's cubby. To help decrease lost or missing clothing, please label your child's belongings with his/her initials.

Only naptime items from home will be allowed in the center. We provide a wonderful assortment of toys, materials and activities. Toys from home, quite often, are a cause for disruption. **Teachers will not be held responsible should you allow your child to bring toys from home.**

Birthdays

We realize that birthdays are special days for children and families. The following is a sample of how teachers make your child feel extra special on his/her day:

- provide materials for all children to make crowns to join in the celebration
- make a banner or crown for the birthday person
- choose a special book to read
- leader of the day
- special helper for the morning

Suggested Foods for Celebrations

The following is a list of foods that teachers (and parents) request to be brought into the classroom for celebrating. The focus, as is our regular snack menu, is on healthy, nutritious foods. Please check with your child's teacher for any food allergies.

- cookies, such as oatmeal and fig newtons
- breads or muffins: blueberry, pumpkin, banana, corn; special toppings, jelly, cream cheese, flavored butter, etc.
- pancakes with shredded coconut, blueberries, strawberries, etc.
- ingredients for healthy shakes, milk, fresh or frozen yogurt
- granola bars (Nutri-grain bars)
- items to create individual trail mix bowls – dry cereal, pretzels, etc.

Please check with your child's teacher as to when the special snack will be shared. If an afternoon snack:

- small ice cream cups
- popsicles of frozen yogurt
- sherbet or sorbet
- pudding or Jell-O
- pizza-muffin, rolls or bagelettes

Party favors and/or hats are not permitted in the program. This includes placing them in children's cubbies. No nuts may be served to the children. This is a precaution, due to the serious allergic reactions that may occur.

Communication

Communication is key to any successful relationship. Therefore, the program will promote an open channel of communication in many ways.

- **Sign-in/out sheets** – Daily sign-in/out sheets must be filled in every day. This is to ensure the safety of all children. This is also the attendance sheet and is used in emergency situations. This is a State Department of Public Health regulation and must be completed *every day*.
- **Verbal communication** – Daily verbal communication between parents and teachers. This can take place in person or through telephone calls.
- **Home visits** – Home visits are conducted annually by the classroom teachers. These generally take place in late August. This is a time for parents and teachers to meet and for children to become comfortable with his/her teachers. The main purpose is to strengthen the bridge between the program and the family.
- **Intake Meetings** – Intake meetings are conducted by the Director prior to the child entering the program. This is a time for parents to share pertinent information and for parents to ask questions and become familiar with policies and philosophies.
- **Parent meetings** – Parent meetings and workshops are offered as a resource to parents and to respond to community needs.
- **Classroom visits** – Parents are encouraged to visit, share books, and share their special talents.
- **Family events** – Family events are held during the year to encourage families to join together in a social manner and provide a sense of belonging to the “program.”
- **Newsletters** – Each month the Director and/or classrooms will provide a newsletter for parents. It may include items such as school events, policy reminders, changes in procedures, hints on child rearing, information about books and articles on parenting.

Please feel free to call the program at any time. The following is a list of extensions:

Westport Weston Family Y **226-8981**

Administration:

- Director, Child Care Programs – Extension 113
- Senior Director, Child Care – Extension 109

Classrooms:

- I-1 (Infant/Toddler) – Extension 155
- I-2 (Infant/Toddler) – Extension 186
- Room A – Extension 158
- Rooms B-1, B-2 & B-3 (Toddlers) – Extension 191
- Room C – Extension 159
- Rooms D-1 & D-2 – Extension 190

You can always dial “0” to reach the receptionist at the Westport Weston Family Y.

Health and Safety

Illness

Children in any child care setting average eight to ten upper respiratory illnesses in the first year. We recognize that illnesses can be stressful for the parent and the child. However, our program serves “well children.” The decision as to what constitutes “ill” will be based on the observation of the Teacher and/or Director.

The Westport Weston Family Y is proactive in the fight against the spread of illness. This includes consistent practices of hand washing, cleaning and disinfecting. In addition, the following guidelines have been established to determine whether a child is to be admitted or allowed to stay in the program on a particular day. Each child will be observed upon arriving to the program. **If the health of the child is in question, the child will not be permitted to stay.**

Children may not attend the program, or will be sent home, if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- a. vomiting**
- b. diarrhea**
- c. sore throat, difficulty swallowing or breathing**
- d. fever of 100 degrees F. or above at present or within the past 24 hours. (based on an “Under the Arm” (Axillary) temperature)**
- e. cold symptoms, coughing, constant runny nose that produces unclear mucus or interferes with activities.**
- f. an earache that has not been checked by a physician.**

IF ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS DEVELOP WHILE YOUR CHILD IS AT THE PROGRAM, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD WITHIN THE HOUR.

List of Conditions for Exclusion

The following is a list of conditions that exclude children from the program as well as conditions for the child's return.

| CONDITION | MAY RETURN |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Chicken Pox | after the blister has scabbed over-minimum of 5 days from onset |
| 2. Measles | when all signs of the rash have disappeared |
| 3. Mumps | when all swelling has disappeared |
| 4. Pinworm | after being on medication for 24 hours |
| 5. Head lice | after all lice and nits are gone |
| 6. Scabies | when lesions have disappeared or a doctor's note stating the child is non-infectious |
| 7. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) | after treatment, no eye discharge and a doctor's note |
| 8. Impetigo | after being on antibiotics for 24 hours |
| 9. Skin Rash | must be diagnosed by a physician and a written note must be received before child is readmitted into the program |
| 10. Strept throat, tonsillitis | after being on antibiotics for 24 hours |

Please notify your child's teacher if he/she has been exposed to any contagious disease. We must exercise precautions in order to maintain a healthy environment and to avoid any epidemic situations.

CHILDREN MAY RETURN TO THE PROGRAM WHEN ALL SYMPTOMS DISAPPEAR OR THE PHYSICIAN SIGNS A STATEMENT AS TO THE LACK OF A CONTAGIOUS DISEASE.

Medication

The Westport Weston Family Y Child Care **does not administer medication** to children, except for life-threatening or chronic (asthma, reflux, skin conditions, etc.) conditions. Parents are asked to discuss with their child's pediatrician alternate doses, which meet the child's daily schedule. **PARENTS MAY NOT SEND MEDICATION IN A CHILD'S FOOD OR JUICE DUE TO THE "HIGH RISK" THIS WOULD PRESENT TO BOTH YOUR CHILD AND OTHER CHILDREN IN THE PROGRAM.**

Accidents and Injuries

All Staff members are provided training in First Aid and CPR. If a minor accident occurs, the Teacher will assess the situation and act accordingly and fill out an accident report form that is signed by the parent. If the injury seems at all serious, the parent will also be called immediately. Teachers will not hesitate to call for an ambulance for any emergency and will always accompany the child in the ambulance.

Safety – Prevention

The Westport Weston Family Y Child Care takes extraordinary steps to ensure the greatest level of safety for your child. The following are some examples of measures that are taken:

- **Secured entry** - Each family receives a code for entering the Child Care department. In addition, the doors to the program are under 24-hour recorded camera surveillance. This prevents individuals from wandering into the department.
- **Cell phones** - Teachers always carry wireless phones when they take children out of the building. This allows for emergency calls and important communication.
- **Professional drivers** - All drivers of Y buses hold Commercial Drivers Licenses.
- **Transportation safety** - Staff is thoroughly trained in the use of bus safety systems (integrated car seats and seat belts).
- **Appropriate environments** - Rooms are regularly evaluated to ensure that furniture, materials and activities promote safety.

Weather and Emergency Procedures

The Westport Weston Family Y Child Care is equipped with smoke detectors, heat sensors, fire alarm pulls and fire extinguishers. The staff and children participate in a monthly emergency drill to facilitate the safe evacuation of all participants.

Inclement Weather

The Child Care program will operate unless the Y building closes or weather is deemed so severe that staff/child ratios cannot be met. **If the Westport Public Schools are closed, the Child Care program will be closed. If the Westport Public Schools delay opening Child Care will open at 9:00 am.** Local TV and radio stations will announce the status of the Westport Public Schools. You can also call the Y after 6:00am at 203-226-8981 and speak with a Member Service Representative in regards to delays or closures – especially if there is severe weather during a public school break.

Financial Arrangements

Tuition is based on the actual cost of operating the program as a non-profit, self-sustaining program.

Families must sign an enrollment form prior to a child's attendance to the program. This specifies current financial policies and procedures. It is possible for agreements to be amended with the Director's approval. A \$50.00 administrative fee will be assessed for each change and only two changes will be allowed per program year.

The Westport Weston Family Y, through United Way support, provides financial assistance to families who are registered for the program. Applications are available from the Director.

A **non-refundable registration fee of \$125.00** is payable upon registering for the Child Care program. No further registration fee will be required for the duration of the child's enrollment in the program (i.e. year-to-year, infant/toddler or toddler → preschool → Kinderkids → school age). The first month's payment is due within 2 weeks of confirming the availability of a space for your child. Refunds of 50% of the first month's payment will be made when notice is given at least 30 days before the start date. No refunds will be given after that point.

Tuition is always paid one month in advance. Payments may be made in cash, by check or by credit card (MasterCard or Visa) in monthly installments.

Checks are payable to: **Westport Weston Family Y**

All payments should be made to the Child Care Director or in the drop box at the top of the stairs. Payments should not be left with teachers. Payments can also be mailed to: Westport Weston Family Y, P.O. Box 190, Westport, Connecticut 06881-0190.

- Payments must be made by the 1st of the month (paying for the following month)
- Parents with unpaid accounts will not be permitted to drop-off on the 1st of the month (payment can be made on that day)

For your convenience:

To ensure uninterrupted service, we recommend using a monthly draft system. There is a form for **Credit Card Draft** and **Bank Draft**. This way, you will never be behind on a payment and you will avoid any stress around the 1st of the month (if you are already using a credit card, there is no need to fill out this form, unless you want to switch to bank draft). Please be aware that if credit card or bank accounts fail to provide funds for any reason, parents will need to pay by cash or check on the 1st of the month.

Thank you for your support. By enhancing our financial management we are working together to keep tuition hikes under control and maintain a quality staff with worthy wages. Any account not paid in full by the end of the month will result in terminated services. Reinstatement to the program will involve registering again based on availability.

There is a **\$25.00** per quarter hour late pick-up fee, beginning five minutes after the regularly scheduled pick-up time (i.e. 1:05 pick-up for a 1:00 schedule will result in a \$20 fee).

No reductions in fees are made for closings due to inclement weather, illness, scheduled holidays, personal vacation (see exception on following page) or withdrawal from the program.

Please note that payments are monthly. However, June, July, August & September may slightly differ. For example, June may end on Thursday 6/22; July may begin on Tuesday 6/27; August may end at shut-down week and September may begin in July. This accomplishes an eight-week summer. If you are, in the previous example, enrolled through the end of June, 6/22 is your last day. If you are starting in September, you will actually start in August.

Parents/Guardians assume full responsibility for payments of the total tuition, regardless of attendance, unless your child contracts a long-term illness certified by a doctor, and regardless of receiving a statement. **One month's written notice is required for such a withdrawal from the program. All bills must be paid in full through the end of the month in which the child leaves.**

Summer Vacations

The months of July and August are common times for families to take vacations. Therefore, the program allows for up to two weeks (taken as one-week blocks), during the summer where families will receive a ¼-month credit for each week. The weeks need to be planned well in advance. Specific details will be distributed each spring.

Membership Discount

As a benefit to Child Care participants who have a Y membership, Child Care tuition is discounted. Those who have a membership must show proof of number and expiration date upon completing the enrollment form. **It is the responsibility of each family to keep membership current for the entire program year.**

Complaint Procedure

Most problems that arise are due to misunderstandings that can be solved through communication. If a problem occurs, please;

- Discuss the problem with your child's teacher
- If unresolved, speak with the Director.
- If not satisfied, discuss the situation with the Senior Director of Child Care or the Executive Director of the Westport Weston Family Y
- If the problem is still not resolved you may contact:

Department of Public Health- Day Care Licensing Unit
410 Capitol Avenue
P.O. Box 340308
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308
1-800-842-2288

All inspection and compliance letters are available for your inspection at the Child Care facility or by contacting the Department of Public Health Services.

Although negative reactions are generally shared with the above-mentioned party, please feel free to contact them with positive reactions as well.