

YMCA OF FREDERICK COUNTY

Birth to Five Child Development Center/ Head Start/ Early Head Start



FAMILY HANDBOOK 2026-2027

Classroom Information

YMCA of Frederick County Head Start operates classrooms throughout Frederick County.

Locations for the 2026-2027 school year include:

All Saints Episcopal Church Center: 106 W. Church Street,
Frederick, MD 21701

Head Start Classroom 1:

Head Start Classroom 2:

Church Street Center: Y Arts Center, 115 E. Church Street,
Frederick, MD 21701

Head Start Classroom A: (301) 418-6554

Head Start Classroom B: (240) 623-9512

Emmitsburg Center: Emmitsburg Community Center, 300 S. Seton
Ave, Emmitsburg, MD 21727

Head Start Classroom: (301) 600-6343

Grace United Church of Christ Center: 25 E. 2nd Street, Frederick,
MD 21701

Head Start Classroom:

Early Head Start Classroom:

Staley Center: 11 West 10th Street, Frederick, MD 20701

Classroom 1/Infants: (240) 883-9116

Classroom 2/Toddlers: (240) 437-4932

Classroom 3/Two's: (301)-620-7874

YMCA Birth to Five Child Development Center: 1000 N. Market
Street, Frederick, MD 21701

Office (301) 418-6573

Classroom 101/Infants: (301) 418-6595

Classroom 102A/Toddlers: (301) 418-6592

Classroom 102B/Two's: (301) 418-6597

Classroom 103/Two's: (301) 418-6583

Classroom 104/Head Start: (301) 418-6594

Classroom 105/Preschool: (301) 418-6593

Welcome to YMCA of Frederick County Early Learning Programs!

YMCA of Frederick County Mission: To build a healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Head Start Mission: Head Start promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Our Commitment to Families/Philosophy Statement

The YMCA of Frederick County Birth to Five, Head Start, and Early Head Start programs are dedicated to family engagement as fundamental to fostering positive outcomes for children and families. We invite families to share any developmental, learning, or health concerns they may have about their child. We acknowledge families are recognized as their children's most influential teachers and actively encourage parents and guardians to participate in the learning and development of their children. Open, mutually respectful communication between families and our staff is highly encouraged through home visits, conferences, and technology like phones, and email communication. We are committed to ensuring our engagement with families is culturally respectful and inclusive, responsive to individual strengths and needs in support of increased family resilience and overall well-being. Our classrooms are supported by dual-language teachers to ensure that all children have access to a rich, inclusive learning environment. We provide classroom materials in multiple languages, reflecting the diversity of our families. Additionally, any documentation sent home about the program is provided in the language spoken at home, ensuring clear communication and support for all families. We are committed to fostering an environment where all children and families feel valued and understood.

We believe in creating an inclusive environment where all children see themselves and others reflected in the materials in their learning environments. In our classrooms, we use the Creative Curriculum to guide

our teaching. Staff select topics of study based on the children's interests, the changing seasons, and relevant environmental factors. This ensures that the learning experience is engaging and connected to the world around them. Our classroom materials, including books in the library and other learning centers, are carefully selected to be multicultural, dual-language, and representative of children with a variety of abilities. We also invite parents and families to share any holiday traditions or celebrations they may observe at home. By incorporating these celebrations into our program, we honor and celebrate the diverse cultural practices of our families, helping to create a more inclusive and connected community.

We recognize the well-being and development of every child as a partnership where responsibility is shared between the program and our families. We encourage parents to be involved in their child's program by participating in various family involvement opportunities, including parent meetings, volunteering, and participation in the Head Start/Early Head Start Policy Council and other committees.

We believe in creating an inclusive environment where all children see themselves and others reflected in the materials they engage with. Our classroom materials are carefully chosen to reflect diversity and inclusivity. We have a dedicated Behavioral, Mental Health, and Disabilities Specialist on staff who plays an active role in supporting each child's development. This specialist participates in Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and will observe children in the classroom setting if any concerns arise from the teaching staff. By working closely with families and educators, we ensure that all children receive the support they need to thrive.

What is Head Start?

Head Start (HS) is a federally funded early childhood education program in the United States that promotes school readiness for children from low-income families. It provides comprehensive services , including education, health, nutrition, and family support, to children from birth to age five.

The YMCA Child Care Program

The YMCA of Frederick County Child Care program offers quality full-day early learning opportunities and child care for infants through preschoolers, enabling parents and family members to go to work knowing their children are in safe, stimulating environments. The Y's Birth to Five Program is staffed with people who understand the cognitive, physical and social development of kids, the support parents and families need and the importance of maintaining a safe, clean environment for children to learn and thrive. At the Y, infants develop trust and security, preschoolers experience early literacy and learn about their world and school-age kids make friends, learn new skills and get help with their schoolwork.

Program Staff

The YMCA of Frederick County early learning programs offer center based options for classrooms and learning. The staff consists of teachers, teacher assistants, aides, family advocates, behavior specialist, mental health and disabilities specialist, nutrition staff, and transportation staff.

Office and Administrative Support staff are located at the Head Start main office building. The address is 801 N.East Street, Suite 3., Frederick, MD 21701. The Head Start Main Office provides support to the children, families, and staff in the areas of application/enrollment, education, disabilities, family services, health, social/emotional wellbeing, and nutrition.

You may contact the Head Start main office by calling (301) 378-9140 or visiting our website at [Head Start](#)

Parent Leadership Opportunities

Head Start programs include parents and community members as active decision-makers in policies, procedures and other important issues that affect your child's education and how the program operates. This process is called "shared governance". If you are interested, you might become a member of the Policy Council, Health Advisory Committee, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS) Leadership Committee or other program committee, or attend meetings and special training sessions for parents. Participating on the Policy Council and other committees is a

wonderful leadership opportunity for parents to be involved in their child's education.

- **Policy Council:** The Policy Council is composed of parents and community representatives. This group meets monthly to review and approve business matters, such as personnel recommendations, policies and procedures, and the annual operating budget. The members of the Policy Council serve as the link between the parents of Head Start, the Head Start staff and the community. Members receive training on their roles and responsibilities, as a Policy Council member/representative. Policy Council members cannot be YMCA HS employees, nor can they be related to any YMCA HS Employee by blood, marriage or domestic partnership. There is a lifetime limit of five (5) one-year terms to serve on the Policy Council.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Leadership Committee:** The program implements a program-wide PBIS plan. Four core values are in place and taught to our children: "Bee" Responsible, "Bee" Respectful, "Bee" Caring, and "Bee" Safe. PBIS techniques assist children in developing self-control and pro-social skills over time. The PBIS team meeting allows parents to join in the discussions that support ongoing training and coaching on positive guidance and supports that can be used in the classroom and at home.
- **Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMSAC):** An advisory group that brings together staff, parents and local health providers to talk about the planning, operation and evaluation of health services in each Head Start program. As a parent, joining the HMSAC allows your voice to be heard on the issues important to you in the area of health, including nutrition, medical, mental and dental care.

Arrival/Departure of Children

Families are expected to ensure children arrive and are picked up from the center on time, according to your child's classroom schedule.

YMCA facilities and programs are tobacco, drug and alcohol free - for the health and safety of our children and staff we require that you refrain from exposing anyone to tobacco, vaping or any other harmful substances on or

around program grounds. This includes your child's bus stop location, if transportation is provided.

To ensure a safe, respectful and engaging environment for children and staff, we require parents and visitors to refrain from cell phone usage during drop-off and pickup, and while on program grounds.

Please enter and exit the building through the designated entrance. To ensure your child's safety, you must accompany your child to this entrance. You must also sign your child in and out of the center and tell the appropriate staff member that you are arriving and/or leaving with your child. Persons, other than a child's parent, signing children in and out of the center **must be at least 18 years of age** and must already be listed on the approved list of emergency contacts. Please note that each center may have specified pick-up and drop-off procedures which will be shared by the classroom teacher.

Children will **not be released** to any individual not designated on the Emergency Card. If you need to make any changes to the Emergency Card, please contact your child's teacher, family advocate, or the receptionist at the Head Start Main office so that they may update this information. **A valid photo ID is required to release children to approved persons.** Acceptable forms of photo ID include a driver's license, state ID card, passport, visa, resident alien card, ID badge issued by a federal, state or local government agency with a photo, military ID card, border crossing card, or Tribal issued ID card.

Attendance and Absences

Children who attend school regularly learn more and are more successful in school than students who do not. Parents who make regular school attendance a priority also are helping their children learn to accept responsibility. Attendance patterns are formed early in life. Children who develop good attendance habits in the early years will be more likely to continue them throughout their school career. That's important, because students who are absent miss out on classroom routines, active learning experiences, and socialization opportunities with their peers. **Children who are frequently late or absent may struggle with developing healthy**

coping and self-regulation and academic skills. Daily attendance is closely monitored to ensure each child receives the full benefits of the program. If a child is absent, the parent or guardians will be contacted to follow-up.

Parents are asked to notify the center when their child will be absent from the program. Contacting us will alleviate the need to contact you at work. There is **no refund or adjustment to the weekly fee** if your child is absent (in the Birth to Five Child Care program). Full payment is due regardless of the number of days absent.

What Parents Can Do

1. Let your child know that you expect him/her to attend school every day. Explain that, just as you have a job, it's his/her job to go to school and learn.
2. Get a good night's rest! Children between the ages of 2-5 may require between 8-10 hours of sleep per night. A well-rested child will be less likely to have the "I don't feel good" feeling in the morning.
3. Get involved with your child's classroom or center. When s/he sees that you believe that their education is important, s/he will learn that school is important.
4. **Be on time with arriving at the start of the school day.**

Account Statements (Birth to Five Child Care)

Families may access your annual childcare account statement by logging into your account at frederickymca.org. This can be found in the Records box after January 1 and will be available through December 31st of each year. If you do not print your tax letter during this time, it will not be available in later years. If you would like a statement at another time during the year, you can obtain this through your account as well. Select payment history and enter the date range that you are trying to obtain receipts for. If you have any issues, please contact our Child Care Billing Department at childcarebusiness@frederickymca.org. Our tax ID number is 52-0607953.

Admission and Registration (Birth to Five Child Care)

Children are accepted on the basis of available space in the program.

To register your child, you must complete the enrollment forms, submit all of the required forms for licensing and pay an annual non-refundable registration fee of \$50. The annual registration fee pays for activities, some special events, and classroom supplies.

A two-week notice is required for disenrollment. Withdrawal of your child for any period of time designates a slot available for children on the waiting list. The following forms must be completed before your child can attend the center. Parents will be given an enrollment packet, which includes:

- Registration application form
- Health inventory I and II
- Blood Lead Testing Certificate
- Medication Authorization form
- Immunization form
- Emergency Card
- Family Handbook receipt

The following forms will be given to you after you enroll:

- Meal Benefit Application
- Inclement Weather policy
- Family Handbook ([Family Handbook](#))

Vacation Policy (Birth to Five Child Care): Children enrolled in the Birth to Five Child Care Center will be allowed one week of “vacation” or “absenteeism” per school year, accrued after 12 weeks of program attendance. If you do not use your week of credit by the end of the program year, you lose it. Vacation credit cannot accrue from year to year. Payments must be current in order to take advantage of the vacation credit. Parents are asked to give two weeks notice for a planned vacation.

Babysitting

It is against the YMCA policy for staff to babysit for children they have met through the program. Please help staff support our policies by not requesting their assistance outside of YMCA programming.

Belongings

Please have your child keep all personal items of value such as toys, jewelry, etc. at home unless it is an approved show and tell day. Children tend to not want to share these items, and they may get lost or broken. Please be sure other items that our children bring are labeled with their name (extra clothing, pillow, blanket, etc.).

Cell Phones

Staff are not permitted to be using a cell phone while with children. Teachers are supplied with iPads as a way of capturing pictures to add to your child's portfolio. During pickup and drop off, parents and guardians please keep cell phones away. It is important to be available to speak with the staff and to make a smooth transition with your child. **When you plan to visit your child's classroom, we respectfully ask you to maintain the same policy and keep cell phones away.** By keeping cell phones away during a visit, you are showing your child that you are committed to them and their education!

Center Calendar

The 2026-2027 program calendar includes dates of operation and closures. The calendar is posted on the Frederick YMCA Head Start website. [Calendar page](#). The YMCA of Frederick County Head Start Program calendar is closely coordinated with the Frederick County Public Schools program operations calendar.

Child Abuse and Neglect

It is our goal to partner with you and promote healthy family functioning and positive outcomes of families enrolled in our early learning programs. It is the responsibility of YMCA staff to promote the healthy and safe development of the children in our program. All YMCA staff are mandated by state law to report any cases of suspected abuse or neglect to the local Child Protective Services agency.

Reportable situations may include the following:

- Signs of malnutrition
- Poor hygiene
- Unattended physical or medical problems
- Unexplained bruises, burns, or welts or explanations that don't fit the injury
- Child appears frightened of a parent or caregiver
- Pain, bleeding, redness, or swelling in anal or genital area
- Sexual play with toys, self, or others that is not age appropriate
- Knowledge of sex that is not age appropriate
- Extremes in behavior ranging from overly aggressive to overly passive
- Delayed physical, emotional, or intellectual development
- Abandonment of a child by a parent or guardian; Absence of proper parental control or subsistence, education, medical or other care of control necessary for the child's well-being
- Child is constantly belittled, berated, or blamed by the parent

Children with Disabilities

Young children vary in their skills, knowledge, backgrounds, and abilities. Effective teaching requires individualization and opportunities to learn for all children to access, participate, and thrive in early learning settings. Individualizing education for children who need more support helps ensure effective teaching for children with disabilities and other special needs across all the Early Learning Outcomes Framework domains. Using outcomes from children's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or goals from their Individualized Education Program (IEP) is part of effective teaching, individualizing, and creating inclusive environments to support children's positive outcomes.

YMCA staff work closely with Frederick County Public Schools, Child Find and Infants & Toddlers, to establish the most successful learning environment for your child. It is always recommended that everyone involved with your child's education be present in establishing goals and routines. If your child has an existing plan, an upcoming IEP or IFSP meeting, or if you have a concern regarding your child's development, please contact the Behavior, Mental Health and Disabilities Specialist, your child's Teacher or Family Advocate, as we will accompany and support you through the process.

Some children's developmental needs will be identified through the process of completing assessments either by the parent and/or child's teacher. In the event that an area of need is identified, the child's team will partner with the family to obtain consent for referral to either Infants and Toddlers or Child Find, depending upon the child's age, for further evaluation. **It is very important that meetings with Infants and Toddlers and Child Find occur on the date and time scheduled so that there are no delays in your child receiving services they may need to grow and develop.**

Clothing

Please dress your children in comfortable clothing so they may participate in all activities, both indoors and outside; bring appropriate outerwear for the current weather conditions. For safety, flip flops, sandals and any type of open toed shoes are strongly discouraged. Shoes should have rubber soles. If your child likes to wear 'dress' shoes, please keep a pair of sneakers in their backpack. Your child's team may communicate needs related to shoes and clothing throughout the school year and offer resources as applicable.

Each family is asked to provide a clean change of clothing for their child (2 sets for children under 2 years old), to be kept at the center at all times. Please exchange these clothes as the seasons change so that children are appropriately dressed. When a child wears home the change of clothing left at the center, please provide the center with another set of clothing as soon as possible.

Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct outlines the expectations for parents, guardians, and family members to create a supportive, safe, and respectful environment for children, staff, and families.

Safety and Security

To ensure a secure environment, we ask that all parents, guardians, and visitors adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Identification:** Be prepared to show ID upon staff request. Acceptable forms of photo ID include a driver's license, state ID card, passport, visa, resident alien card, ID badge issued by a federal, state or local government agency with a photo, military ID card, border crossing card, or Tribal issued ID card.
- **Authorized Pickup and Drop-off:** Ensure that children are picked up and dropped off by designated persons at the appropriate times.
- **Sign-In/Sign-Out:** Use the provided sign-in and sign-out sheets for classrooms, meetings, and events.
- **Well-being Focus:** Prioritize the health, safety, and emotional well-being of all children.
- **Safety Procedures:** Adhere to all safety protocols, including keeping doors secure and not holding locked doors open.
- **Report Concerns:** Notify program staff of any safety or security concerns immediately.

Important Notice: Threats, profanity, intimidation, drugs, and alcohol are strictly prohibited on all YMCA premises. Violation of this Code of Conduct may lead to restricted access to YMCA facilities and programs, and/or impact your child's scholarship.

Confidentiality

To protect the privacy of all participants:

- **No Cell Phones or Recording Devices:** Refrain from using cell phones or recording devices in classrooms to maintain the confidentiality of children and families.
- **Confidentiality of Information:** Staff are unable to discuss any

information about a child/family with other parents, volunteers, or visitors. Similarly, staff are unable to discuss sensitive information with families about their child in the presence of other children/visitors and will schedule a time when privacy can be maintained.

Model Positive Behavior

Parents and guardians are encouraged to reflect the program values being taught to children:

- **Core Values:** Demonstrate and promote responsibility, respect, caring, and safety at all times.

Behavior Redirection

- **Staff-Led Guidance:** Program staff are responsible for redirecting children's behavior as needed.
- **Parent-Staff Partnership:** Parents should avoid redirecting children in the classroom unless it has been discussed and agreed upon with program staff.

Inclusive Play

The program encourages inclusive play, where all children learn and grow together:

- **Encourage Sharing and Communication:** Support your child in learning skills such as sharing, expressing feelings, and setting boundaries.

Communication

YMCA early learning programs believe parents are the most significant adults in a child's life. We strive to create mutual respect between parents and staff and to develop a partnership for the benefit of the child. While these partnerships might become strong throughout the child's enrollment in the program, staff and parents must also recognize the professional nature of their relationship while their child is enrolled.

We ask that you tell your child's teacher about any unusual behavior or incident that may have occurred with your child at home so that teachers can take care of your child in the best way possible. Please also share your observations of your child's development with the teachers as well as the positive impacts the program is having on your child and family.

The following opportunities will strengthen your relationship with program staff and support your child's progress:

- Volunteer
- Parent/Teacher Conferences (held twice a year to align with Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment Checkpoints)
- Home Visits
- Family Events
- Head Start Policy Council
- Participation in program advisory committees (i.e., PBIS, Health Services Advisory)
- Parent Meetings and Workshops
- [Head Start Website](#)
- Classroom Newsletters
- Text message reminders/Alerts via Teaching Strategies App (SmartTeach) or GoEngage.app

Curriculum and Ongoing Assessment

The curriculum used at YMCA early learning programs is *The Creative Curriculum for Infant, Toddlers, and Twos*, and *The Creative Curriculum for Preschoolers*. It is based on sound early child education principles and developmentally appropriate practices. Teachers use various resource materials for ideas and activities to be developed according to each child's stage of development and individual needs. A number of screening and assessment tools, completed by the Lead Teachers, with input from the parents, such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ:3), the Ages and Stages Questionnaire- Social/Emotional (ASQ-SE) both within the first 45 days of enrollment. Individual child assessment (GOLD) from the Creative Curriculum corresponds with and are completed along with lesson plans for each study are utilized to individualize the curriculum to meet each child's developmental stage and areas of interest. The teachers use observations, information given by parents in interviews, home visits, conferences, and

helpful screening/assessment instruments throughout the year to gather information about the children and plan activities for small groups and individuals within each classroom. Family Conferences and/or Home Visits will be conducted at the end of each checkpoint as scheduled in the below chart.

	Checkpoint End	Finalize By Date	Conference/ Visits
Fall	November 20, 2026	November 27, 2026	11/30/26 - 12/18/26
Winter	February 12, 2027	February 19, 2027	2/22/27 - 3/26/27
Spring	May 14, 2027	May 21, 2027	5/24/27 - 6/04/27
Summer	July 30, 2027	August 06, 2027	8/09/26 - 8/13/27

Developmental Screenings

The YMCA early learning programs utilize developmental screening tools to evaluate and document children's growth, accomplishments and areas of difficulty. The screening tool sets a baseline for the classroom teacher to be able to develop an individualized learning plan for each child.

Emergencies

Medical Emergency: In the event of a medical emergency, you will be contacted immediately. If you cannot be reached, we will proceed to call emergency contacts. If you or your emergency contact person(s) cannot be reached, staff will follow program procedures until your child can be reunited with you.

Emergency Contacts

- A. Emergency contacts (person(s) authorized for a child to be released to) must be **18** years of age or older.
- B. Three emergency contacts are preferred, a minimum of 2 must be completed. Each contact must have a current phone number and address. Two contacts must be able to pick up your child in case of an emergency within 15 minutes (you must inform your child's emergency contacts of the expectation of picking up your child in the event of an emergency when you cannot be reached).
- C. Parents/Guardians cannot be considered a contact.**
- D. Contacts must have phone numbers that are different from the child's home and parent information.
- E. For your child's wellbeing it is critical that we have up-to-date emergency contact information for your family in our files at all times.
- F. Persons authorized to release the child: For children that attend Pre-K or another childcare facility, this section of the emergency form must include the facility's address and phone number; instead of specific names for authorization to release, "Staff" can be written in the designated line.
- G. Please provide any changes in your personal or emergency contacts to your family advocate, teacher, or the Head Start office receptionist to ensure that we always have the most current information.

Enrollment

Head Start/Early Head Start:

Head Start services are provided by a federally funded grant award and are available for eligible families with children ages birth to 5. Head Start preschool services work with children ages 3 to 5 and their families. Early Head Start services work with families that have children ages birth to 3. Head Start enrollment begins in June for the following school year, children must be age 3 by September 1 to qualify for Head Start. We have a continuous application process and will enroll throughout the school year if space is available. Head Start preschool serves 120 children, Early Head

Start serves 24 children. If there is no space available children will be placed on the waiting list and families will be notified if a space becomes available.

Early Head Start is a year-round program. If you choose to disenroll for the summer, please note that your child will be placed back on the waitlist. This does not guarantee a maintained scholarship placement for the Fall.

Head Start/Early Head Start Family Services

Families are the most important part of the Head Start Family Services Team. The Family Advocates serve as a link between the family, the program and the community. Family Advocates will partner with families to identify their strengths, interests and goals. Families are encouraged to participate in individual activities, home visits, policy council, family events, and a variety of workshops and training. Family Advocates will contact families, either in person, by telephone or email on a monthly basis. The needs of a family and/or the goals that family is working on with their Family Advocate will determine how often they meet. **Your Family Advocate will provide you with their work cell phone number, provided by the Head Start program, so that you may contact them directly.**

Early Head Start children who are age 2 at the beginning of the program year and turn 3 during the same year may be presented with a Head Start transition plan which will be implemented six months prior to the child's third birthday. During this process, the child's eligibility for Head Start will be determined through a new application and upon completion, the child may then transition into a Head Start classroom, subject to program availability. In the event that a child is not found eligible for Head Start after turning 3 during the program year, the child may remain in the Early Head Start program for a limited number of months based on their eligibility at time of enrollment. Transition planning supports the child's development and learning to group them with same aged peers and to support Pre-K readiness.

A child's Early Head Start or Head Start application is valid for two years upon completion and verification of eligibility. In the event that a child attends Early Head Start for two years and expects to attend a third year, a

new Early Head Start application will be required to maintain eligibility. Head Start families will receive guidance and support from teachers and family advocates in order to assist with the application and registration processes for Pre-K and Kindergarten as applicable. Any child not found eligible to return to the Early Head Start or Head Start program will be provided resources upon request based on each family's circumstances.

Fire Drills

YMCA early learning programs hold monthly fire drills and evacuation plans are posted at each center. Please do not be alarmed if a fire drill occurs while you are in a classroom. We suggest that families practice fire and other safety drills at home so that all family members are familiar with what to do in case of a fire emergency.

First Aid/Incident Reports

The welfare and safety of your child is of primary importance to us, and we make every effort to see that accidents do not occur. However, young children are active and occasionally accidents happen.

YMCA staff have both First Aid and Adult & Pediatric CPR training to rely on if there is a serious injury to a child. All centers have first aid kits that are well supplied and kept in a designated location. Only soap and water will be used to clean any wound. If a child sustains any type of injury, bump or broken skin; you or your emergency contact will be notified by staff. The staff member present at the time of an incident will ensure an Incident Report is completed and reported to a manager for follow-up as appropriate.

Food/Nutrition Services

Nutrition is key for children's healthy development, and is a focus of all the YMCA Child Care programs. Healthy eating habits established early in life are important in establishing and maintaining a healthy weight that can last a lifetime.

Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack provided by the program are benefits of participation in the program. Because of Child and Adult Care

Food Program (CACFP) guidelines, allergies, and nutritional practices, no outside food is to be brought to the centers or on the bus for the child without approval. Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack are provided for children enrolled in YMCA early learning programs based on the hours that they attend. Meals and snacks are planned in consultation with a registered dietitian and meet all federal nutrition standards as outlined under the CACFP, this includes limiting fats, sugars, and salt in the foods we serve. Parental requests for individual variations in the menu for medical or religious reasons are honored when requested in writing by the family's health care provider. Additional documentation is required on the [Special Dietary Needs Form](#).

For Infants we will provide a program formula that meets the CACFP requirements, if you wish to provide your own formula you will need to fill out additional documentation. If you choose to provide your own formula please understand the program will monitor and supplement when necessary. Along with a program formula we will also provide program infant cereal, baby foods, and snacks that follow CACFP requirements. Please discuss with your child's teacher about the progress of transitioning to infant cereal, baby food, and solids. We may inquire about these transitions but will follow the parents lead. Children should be exposed to new foods for the first time at home.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.
[Non-Discrimination Statement | USDA](#)

Meals and snacks are served family style whenever possible. As a part of family style meal service and good early childhood education practices, classroom staff and volunteers sit at the tables with children, eat the same food being served to the children, and converse with the children during meal time.

Staff and children will always wash their hands before meals and meal preparation. Family style dining includes children assisting with setting up tables for meals and assisting in clean-up. We encourage families to do this at home as well. Mealtime is designed to be a pleasant social experience shared by children and adults. Self-help skills such as pouring, serving, and cleaning up are encouraged. Children are also encouraged (but never forced) to eat a wide variety of nutritious food. If a child does not want to eat a

particular food, the child is encouraged to have a taste but is never forced or coerced. Adequate food is prepared to make second servings available if a child desires.

We know that your child's health and safety is your top priority. Part of keeping your child healthy, includes their nutrition: including any food allergies, food preferences, and eating habits. During Head Start and Early Head Start Program Orientation, you will be asked to complete the Nutrition Assessment form. Please answer these questions to the best of your ability. Here are some of the reasons as to why we inquire:

- We ask questions about vitamins to see if they're doctor prescribed or if you have concerns that the child may not be getting enough vitamins in their meals. We also ask about where their drinking water comes from (city or bottled water). City water contains fluoride; bottled water does not unless the company states that they add fluoride to their water. Fluoride benefits the child's teeth and helps prevent tooth decay.
- We ask if the child is still bottle feeding as that may affect speech as well as hearing if the child lies down with a bottle.
- We ask about chewing and swallowing to make sure we are aware at meal times and free play time.
- We also ask if you, the parent, have any concerns about eating habits, such as; not eating enough or eating too much, having too many sweets and/or not eating enough fruits and vegetables.

We are here to help you with your nutritional concerns. If you have questions or concerns please speak with your Teacher, Family Advocate, the Food Service Supervisor, or the Health and Nutrition Manager. Parents are welcome to eat with their children in the classroom, provided advance notification is provided to ensure sufficient food is available. **Parents are required to follow the same CACFP guidelines as staff and not bring their own food, including; coffee, sodas, snack food, chips, candy, etc. into the classroom or on the bus.**

Guidance and Discipline

Frederick County YMCA early learning program staff support the social-emotional development of all children by building nurturing, trusting relationships and fostering growth and independence. Providing clear, consistent rules, routines, and expectations also contributes to the child's development, as does encouraging respect for others' feelings, rights, and home language and culture.

Our program is deeply committed to the emotional and social development of children enrolled. We strive to provide a setting where children can develop healthy relationships with staff and peers, feel comfortable, engaged, and supported in their learning environments, and develop self-regulation and problem-solving skills. We understand that children are still developing emotionally and socially. Just as we teach children academic concepts, such as pre-reading, math, and science, we guide children's social and emotional development through mentoring, modeling, and direct teaching. During the initial weeks of the school year, classroom teachers implement the *Beginning the Year* component of the Creative Curriculum to establish classroom rules and behavioral expectations. Teachers guide discussions to ensure that expectations are clearly understood and developmentally appropriate. Children are encouraged to participate in the development of classroom rules, fostering a sense of responsibility and community. Throughout the school year, these rules and expectations may be reviewed, revised, or expanded as needed, based on the ongoing input and developmental needs of the children.

Following Office of Head Start policies and procedures, the program maintains a no-expulsion, no-suspension, and no-disenrollment policy for children from Head Start due to their behavior. Should a child struggle with behavior management such as physically harming another person, endangering him/herself or intentionally destroying property, the Behavior, Mental Health and Disabilities Specialist in collaboration with the parent/guardian, teacher and other support staff, will develop an individualized Behavior Intervention Plan.

Program Wide PBIS Implementation

The YMCA of Frederick County Head Start implements a program-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS/Pyramid Model) plan. A monthly meeting is scheduled to move our PBIS program forward and we encourage families to participate in the meetings and discussions. All early learning program staff will receive initial training on The Pyramid Model, the tool used to implement PBIS, and ongoing training and coaching on positive guidance and support.

Four program-wide values are in place throughout our program and taught to our children. These include: **"Bee" Responsible, "Bee" Respectful, "Bee" Caring and "Bee" Safe.** The PBIS implementation team has adopted a honeybee mascot to represent these four core values visually in the early learning programs. These core values align with the YMCA core values, and will be used throughout our program to guide expectations for children, staff, and families.

PBIS techniques assist children in developing self-control and pro-social skills over time. These techniques include strategies such as:

- teaching social skills
- encouraging the child to use words to solve problems
- helping children to solve problems by finding workable solutions
- modeling positive communication and social interactions
- looking for the reasons behind the behavior
- telling the child specifically what to do rather than what not to do
- praising positive behaviors
- diverting a behavioral issue by offering two choices.

An example of how staff may respond if they see a challenging behavior being demonstrated by a child:

- Gently correct the child in a positive manner while referring to one of the four program wide expectations: Bee Responsible, Bee Respectful, Bee Caring or Bee Safe Example: Mary is looking at a book and Max takes the book away from her.
- Gentle correction - "Max, can you come over here and be respectful to Mary by asking if you can see the book? That's how we show our friends we care."

- Staff may need to further guide and intervene if Max does not respond appropriately. If Max does listen and responds appropriately, staff will provide Max specific verbal praise for a job well done.
- Specific praise - "Thank you Max for coming over and returning the book. How could we ask Mary for a turn?" Staff will have a conversation with Max and Mary and guide Max through the steps of how to nicely ask for the book for better understanding and learning of these concepts.

Mental Health is an essential part of well-being. For young children the term "mental health" is synonymous with social and emotional development. In early childhood, mental health is developing the capacity of children birth through age five to:

- Form close and secure relationships with adults and peers
- Experience, regulate and express their emotions in appropriate ways
- To explore their environments, try new things and learn - all in the context of their family, culture and community.

All aspects of development, including children's social emotional competence, are essential outcomes of the YMCA early learning programs. YMCA early learning programs provide behavioral/mental health services. Some examples of these services include:

- Classroom observations to support the teacher in their efforts to provide appropriate emotional support to all children using effective tools and methods of guidance and discipline and developing positive teacher-child interactions.
- Collaborating with parents, teachers and other support staff to develop individualized Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) to further support individual children's social/emotional development, with written parental permission.
- Referring children for additional support services as needed in collaboration with parental consent.
- Educational resources and support for families.

Health Services

The goal of health services is that each child receives ongoing, continuous health care. Promotion of good health and preventative health care involves children, parents and staff.

- Dental care and dental hygiene is an important focus of YMCA Head Start services. Classroom staff support the children with proper oral

care, including brushing their teeth daily. Children are also provided with a dental kit consisting of a toothbrush and toothpaste so each child can participate in brushing their teeth at home.

- All health papers on file must be current at all times. A yearly physical is required for all children ages 3-5. Children ages 0-2 should have the form updated at each visit to the doctor for immunizations/physical exam. Please provide our program with updated information after each well visit or immunization visit. If the health papers expire, it is an expectation that the new papers will be supplied to the program within two weeks of the expiration date. If that can't be completed, a note from the medical office stating the date and time of the child's appointment must be received by the Health and Nutrition Manager.
- YMCA Head Start is required to complete or obtain results for hearing, vision, dental and height/weight screenings and an nutritional assessment.

Including Children with Special Health Care Needs

During the application process, parents are asked to disclose any health concerns their child may have. When it's time for enrollment, parents are asked again to ensure that any special health care needs are noted. If any are identified, parents are provided with additional paperwork to take to their child's healthcare provider for completion.

Once the paperwork is returned, it is reviewed by the Health and Nutrition Manager. Any necessary medications and specific instructions are also reviewed, and this information is shared with the classroom staff. Staff are provided with details about the health concern, signs to monitor for, and instructions on how to administer any required medications.

If specialized training is necessary, such as for managing seizures or other specific health needs, the staff working with the child will receive this training in a timely manner to ensure proper care and safety.

Sickness Policy and Exclusion from Care

Exclusion from the classroom due to sickness occurs when a child has any of the following conditions:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
2. The illness results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
3. A severely ill appearance - this could include lethargy/lack of responsiveness, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, or having quickly spreading rash..
4. Fever (temperature above 100.4°F) with a behavior change or other symptoms (for infants younger than 2 months, a temperature of 100.4°F or above with or without any behavior change or other symptoms.)
5. The illness has a risk of spreading harmful disease to others, such as strep, chicken pox, Covid-19, rash/skin sores, diarrhea and vomiting.
6. Diarrhea (defined by stools that are more frequent or less formed than usual for that child and not associated with changes in diet). Exclusion is required for all diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper.

Be advised that if your child is out of school due to illness s/he may only return to school with a written note from the parent or physician indicating that the child has been symptom-free without the use of medication for more than 24 hours. If your child is out of school due to a communicable disease, they may only return to school with a written note from the physician indicating s/he may resume regular activities and are no longer contagious.

Lice Policy

The following steps will be followed if a child is found to have head lice or nits:

- A. The parents/guardians will be notified immediately by the classroom staff or another staff member.
- B. The family will be asked to come pick up the child and treat the child's hair. The child's hair must be treated with lice shampoo and combed through before they can return to the school.
- C. Parents/guardians will be provided guidelines about effective treatment for head lice for the child and the household.

- D. A classroom staff member will check the child's hair upon return to school and again in one week to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. If head lice/nits are present, parents/guardians will be notified and expected to consult with their child's healthcare provider and/or treat their child again before returning to school.
 - E. A letter will be sent out to all the families in that classroom informing them that a case of lice has been identified and ways to monitor their child.
 - F. If the case of lice is ongoing then the parent/guardian will need to consult with their healthcare provider to bring the infestations under control and avoid further outbreaks.
- (Referenced CDC Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, 4th edition: Pediculosis Capitis (Head Lice): 7.5.8.1. And FCPS Rg. No. 400-21)

Holidays and Other Celebrations

YMCA early learning programs provide meaningful experiences for children that are reflective and respectful of family traditions from all children in the classroom. Families are encouraged to share their traditions with classroom staff to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate experiences for our children in the classroom. If this experience includes food, families will be asked to share recipes so that the program can purchase the necessary ingredients to prepare the dish(es) at school. Conversations about the many ways people celebrate holidays/special events are encouraged and will be included as we plan with you to create multicultural learning experiences.

Home Visits - Head Start/Early Head Start

The purpose of a home visit is to establish a rapport and partnership with the family, support the families hopes and expectations for their child and their development, and provide an opportunity to explore how the family's home relationship can be supported within the classroom environment. Per the Head Start Program Performance Standards, Teachers are required to conduct at least two home visits per program year with each family, including one before the child attends. Additionally, Family Advocates also conduct home visits each program year with every family. Home visits present opportunities to address any of your family's needs or concerns,

provide education, and to support each family's understanding of their responsibilities as Head Start scholarship recipients.

Hours of Operations

The Head Start Main Office is open Monday - Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm. Center based classroom times vary. The Birth to Five Child Care Center is open Monday - Friday, 6:30am to 6:30pm.

Inclement Weather, Delays, Closures

The YMCA's Birth to Five Child Care Center, Head Start and Early Head Start Centers may close during hazardous weather conditions. Inclement weather conditions may delay our opening and/or transportation of your children to school. Please note that our primary mode of communication with you will be via text and email to the contact information of the primary member of your YMCA account (for child care) or your child's emergency contact.

Additionally, announcements will be made via the Frederick YMCA website:

- frederickymca.org
- The Frederick YMCA Facebook page

Late Payment of Tuition Fees (Birth to Five Child Care)

Late fees will be charged on past due accounts at \$25. Accounts that fall 7 days past due may result in termination of child care. Failure to stay current on any payment agreements will result in disenrollment. After three broken payment agreements payment plans will no longer be permitted. Following all disenrollments, at \$50 registration fee will be required upon return to the program (Fee will not be waived for CCS).

Late Pick Up Fees (Birth to Five Child Care)

Parents must have an emergency contact within 15 minutes of the childcare site to satisfy licensing regulations. If you are running late, please call the classroom to let the staff know you are on your way. If you find you will not be able to arrive by 6:30pm, please inform the center and find someone to

come in your place (be certain that whomever picks up your child is listed on the emergency form). Many of our staff have other commitments after 6:30pm, so timely notification is important. Children also become anxious when their parents are late.

A late pickup fee of \$25 will be charged to your account AND an additional \$5.00 per minute fee will be assessed for pick up past 6:30pm. At closing, childcare staff will call the emergency contacts as noted on the emergency cards. If the emergency contacts cannot be reached in a reasonable amount of time, Child Protective Services will be called.

Learning Materials

Classroom learning materials are carefully chosen to be developmentally appropriate for each age group, ensuring they support the diverse abilities of all children. These materials are designed to spark children's interests and promote open-ended learning experiences. They reflect various languages, cultural backgrounds, and are arranged on child-sized shelving for easy access. Additionally, materials are rotated throughout the school year to keep the learning environment fresh and engaging.

Medication Administration and Storage

Medication Administration:

- 1) Medication, whether prescription or non-prescription; may not be administered to a child in care unless:
 - a) Parental permission to administer the medication is documented on a completed, signed, and dated medication authorization form, provided by the office, that is received before the medication can be administered; and
 - b) A licensed health practitioner has approved the administration of the medication and the medication dosage.
- 2) No medication will be administered at school before at least one dose of the medication has been given to the child at home.
- 3) If the medication is by prescription, it is labeled by the pharmacy or physician with:
 - a) The child's name;

- b) The date of the prescription
 - c) The name of the medication
 - d) The medication dosage
 - e) The administration schedule
 - f) The administration route
 - g) If applicable, special instructions, such as "take with food"
 - h) The duration of the prescription
- 4) Topical Applications: (i.e.,diaper rash product, sunscreen, or insect repellent) May be applied by classroom staff with signed written consent from parent or guardian (**Topical Basic Care Products form required**).
- 5) Medication shall be administered according to the instructions on the label of the medication container or a licensed health practitioner's written instructions, whichever are more recently dated. One of the following forms will need to be completed by your child's doctor.
- a) [Allergy and Anaphylaxis Medication Administration Authorization Plan](#)
 - b) [Asthma Action Plan and Medication Administration Authorization Form](#)
 - c) [Seizure/Convulsion/Epilepsy Disorder Medication Administration Authorization Form](#)
 - d) [Medication Administration Authorization Form](#) - for all other medications
- 6) Recording Requirements.
- a) Each administration of a prescription or non-prescription medication to a child, including self-administration of a medication by the child, shall be noted in the child's record.
 - b) Application of a diaper rash product, sunscreen, or insect repellent supplied by a child's parent shall be recorded in the child's record.

Medication Storage:

Each medication shall be:

- Labeled with the child's name, the dosage, and the expiration date;
- Stored as directed by the manufacturer, the dispensing pharmacy, or the prescribing physician; and

- Discarded according to guidelines of the Office of National Drug Control Policy or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, or returned to the child's parent upon expiration or discontinuation.
- All medications shall be stored to make them inaccessible to children in care but readily accessible to each employee designated by the operator to administer medication.

*All medications not picked up by the child's parent or guardian, on the child's last day of school, will be properly disposed of.

Outdoor Play

YMCA early learning programs view the outdoor setting as an extension of the classroom and a setting in which learning and interaction can occur. Unless weather conditions are prohibitive, or the weather service has issued a warning to remain indoors, all children will go outdoors daily. Even in cold weather your child still needs fresh air, sunshine, and exercise. In general, if your child is well enough to attend school he/she is well enough to go outside. Please dress your child for outdoor play and supply appropriate clothing and shoes for the season, allowing for weather extremes. As mentioned before, please dress your child in comfortable clothing, so he/she may enjoy the time outdoors.

Physical Fitness Policies and Practices

Our program is committed to fostering and promoting the development of healthy habits related to physical fitness. We understand the vital role that physical activity plays in overall well-being, and we aim to provide opportunities for children and families to engage in activities that support both physical health and personal growth.

1. Physical Activity as a Daily Practice

Physical fitness is incorporated into daily routines through structured and unstructured physical activities. These activities are designed to engage children in fun, age-appropriate exercises that promote strength, flexibility, and cardiovascular health. By making physical activity a regular part of the day, we encourage children to develop habits that can benefit their long-term health.

2. Education on Healthy Habits

Alongside physical activities, we emphasize the importance of healthy habits such as proper nutrition, hydration, rest, and self-care. Children are provided with educational materials, engaging discussions, and hands-on activities to help them understand the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle. This foundation empowers children to make healthier choices as they grow.

3. Inclusive and Accessible Fitness Activities

Our program ensures that all children, regardless of ability or fitness level, can participate in physical activities. We offer a variety of options, such as indoor and outdoor activities, games, and exercises that promote teamwork, coordination, and motor skills. Adjustments are made for children with special needs to ensure full participation and success.

4. Family and Community Involvement

We recognize that physical fitness extends beyond the classroom. Our program encourages family participation in fitness-related activities, providing resources and ideas for parents to engage in healthy habits at home. Additionally, we work with local community partners to provide opportunities for outdoor play, recreation, and fitness education.

5. Staff Training and Support

Our staff members are trained to model and encourage healthy physical activities in ways that are safe, fun, and inclusive for all children. Ongoing professional development ensures that staff remain knowledgeable about best practices in physical fitness and can effectively guide children in developing positive habits.

By focusing on both physical activity and education, our program promotes the holistic development of each child, helping them to establish lasting healthy habits and a positive relationship with physical fitness.

Parent/Family Involvement Events

We are excited to welcome you to our classrooms and family events. We have an open door policy, and encourage you to visit and stay a while. We cannot allow siblings to visit during class hours as our programs are licensed by MSDE, although we would love to see siblings and other family members at our after hour events. Families are encouraged to communicate with their child's teacher in order to coordinate classroom visits with respect to scheduled outdoor play, meal times and naps. Parent and Family Engagement opportunities will be offered throughout the school year.

Ready Rosie

Ready Rosie is a simple parenting curriculum tool for your use. Ready Rosie is aligned to *The Creative Curriculum for Infant, Toddlers, and Twos* used in our classroom. By signing up for and using the Ready Rosie app or website, along with the Teaching Strategies app, you will be able to hear about what your child is doing in the classroom. Both of these tools are **FREE** for you to use. You will discover activities and games you can play with your child that relate to their classroom learning. The best part is that each activity/game is modeled in a two minute video so you and your child can watch together and then play the game! You will receive these videos and communication via text message and/or email.

Scholarships (Birth to Five Child Care)

Effective May 1, 2025, the Child Care Scholarship (CCS) Program stopped issuing scholarships to new families. This is called an enrollment freeze. At this time, we are unsure how long the enrollment freeze will be in effect. However, families are still encouraged to apply to be added to the waitlist. When the freeze is lifted scholarships will be issued to families on the list. (Families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are not subject to frozen status. You can apply at any time. Your application will be reviewed, and if you qualify, you will receive a scholarship.)

For more information and to apply please visit [MSDE Childcare Scholarship Program](#)

Parents may apply for a temporary YMCA scholarship upon submitting their application to the state. [Financial Assistance Application](#)

Screen Time

Appropriate early education programming for young children focuses on active learning and exploration. Passive screen time will not replace creative activities, music, socialization with other children, outdoor time or other early childhood activities. We will only use screen time in our program if it is teacher-led and pertains to curriculum and lesson planning, example: along with the study of bread, teaching staff may show a video of someone making and baking a specific type of bread. Technology/Ipads may be used for group music and movement activities as a source of sound only, no screen/videos. We do not offer any form of screen time for children under the age of two-years old, all learning is hands-on, active learning and exploration. Children are not permitted to bring tablets or electronic devices from home.

Social Media

The YMCA early learning programs are committed to keeping confidential information private for children and families. By signing the permission form, you are allowing appropriate use of your child's photo. These may include fun activities happening in the classroom, field trip photos, exciting milestones or celebrations for your child, and reminders of upcoming events. It is exciting to see the fun things happening in our program, and many times, this is the easiest way to access these great moments! If you wish not to give permission, your child's photo will not be published on any YMCA or affiliate websites.

Toys

Please have your child keep their toys and electronics at home, unless approved by your child's teacher. Toy guns or other weapons are not offered as play options and should not be brought to class. Material that is violent,

sexually explicit, stereotyped, or otherwise inappropriate for children is also not allowed. Please do not allow your child to bring these types of items.

Toilet Training and Diapering

For Head Start and Early Head Start programs, we provide a program based diaper and wipe brand. If you wish to provide your own diaper or wipes additional documentation will be required. We will change diapers and assist children in learning to use the toilet when they are ready. Coordination between you and program staff around toilet learning is imperative. If your child is currently learning to use the toilet, please dress your child in clothing that is easy to get on and off. Accidents are a part of toilet training and they will happen. Please provide two changes of clothing just in case the need arises.

Transportation Services

Here are important guidelines for transportation policies related to the Head Start Program. These rules help ensure safety, fairness, and consistency in providing transportation services for children.

1. **Private Vehicle Transportation:** Program staff are **never authorized** to transport children in privately owned vehicles.
2. **YMCA Head Start Van Transportation:** Staff may **only transport children** in a YMCA van if a **parent/guardian is present**.
3. **Self-Transport Families:**
 - a. The Early Head Start program does not provide bus-transportation and is completely a self-transportation program. Please understand that by agreeing to enroll your child into Early Head Start you are agreeing to dropping off and picking up your child on time daily.

***Please drop off and pick up your child in a timely manner. Please note the start time of class, as well as the departure time.**

Volunteering

We appreciate your eagerness to volunteer and engage in your child's education. We value your role as your child's first and most important teacher. If you would like to volunteer on a regular basis (more than twice a month), we ask that you call our main office at (301) 378-9140 to schedule a volunteer training.

Here are some additional ways for you to stay engaged in your child's education:

- Listen to, read to and talk with your child frequently.
- Foster and encourage your child to be independent. Teach them self-help skills such as buttoning, putting their coat on and zipping and tying their shoes.
- Spend time together, and give your child positive and clear directions.
- Attend Head Start Policy Council and committee meetings as your child's classroom representative and help make important program decisions.
- Participate in Head Start home visits and parent-teacher conferences
- Support your child's learning as this sets the tone for a successful school experience.
- Help your child complete home-school activities. Share the results through photos or video with the classroom staff.
- Support your child's social emotional health and well-being. Contact your Family Advocate, Teacher, or Mental Health/Disabilities Specialist for help you may need.
- Ensure your child's health needs are met, including immunizations
- Do you have a family member with a special talent or profession? (Gardening, cooking, juggling etc.) Speak to your child's teacher or Family Advocate regarding your interest in scheduling a time to come and share with the program.

Withdrawal (Birth to Five Child Care Program)

Parents may withdraw a child from the program at any time. A two-week written notice is required during the school year. Parents not giving proper notice will still be responsible for tuition.

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Acknowledgement of Receipt

I have received a copy of the Frederick YMCA Birth to Five Child Development Center/Head Start/Early Head Start Program Family Handbook (2026-2027) and I agree to adhere to the policies and procedures described in the handbook.

Child's Name _____

Parent signature_____ **Date**_____