



CAMP HEARTWOOD Nature Program

GREAT SUMMERS START HERE!

Summer Camp Family Handbook

20
26





WELCOME to the YMCA of Southern Maine's Summer Camp Program!

We are happy to offer quality, full-day summer camp for children aged 5-12 years. Camp Heartwood Nature Program in Biddeford is licensed for 84 children.

We are committed to providing a positive experience for your entire family. Our camps provide a safe place for your children to learn and grow with guidance from our quality staff.

20
26

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Camp Heartwood Nature Program in Biddeford

3 Pomerleau St., Biddeford, ME 04005

Brenda Hamilton, Director

207-283-0100

bhamilton@ymcaofsouthernmaine.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contact Information..... 2

Admission & Enrollment

- Admission Information 4
- 2026 Fees 4
- Financial Procedure 4
- Cancellations & Refunds 4
- Financial Assistance 5
- Camp Readiness 6
- Inclusion Philosophy & Procedure 7
- Enrollment/Attendance 7

Schedule

- Camp Hours 7
- Holidays 8
- Absences & Early Pick Up 8
- Closures 8
- Daily Schedule, Arrival & Departure 8
- Late Pick Up Procedure 9

What to Bring

- Camp Checklist 9
- Helpful Hints 10
- Clothing & Outdoor Play 10
- Food 10

General Health & Safety Procedures

- Hygiene, Sickness & Emergencies 10
- Returning to Child Care After Illness 11
- Medications 11
- Allergies/Chronic Symptoms 12
- Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye 12
- Lice & Ticks 12
- Immunizations 12

Child Guidance Strategies

- Behavior Management 12
- Behavior Procedures 13
- Mandatory Withdrawal Procedure 14

Communication & Resolution 14

Family Engagement & Program Information

- Family Engagement & Guardian Involvement 15
- Program Goals 15
- Child Abuse and Neglect 15
- Consumer Code of Conduct 15
- Abuse Prevention & Reporting Concerns 16

Emergency Procedures 17

Curriculum & Staffing

- Curriculum 17
- Developmental Screening 18
- Staff Qualifications 18

Rights & Regulations

- The Rights of Children & Parents 18
- Confidentiality & Records Access 19
- Parental Rights & Custody Situations 19
- English Language Learners 19
- Child Care Licensing 19



ADMISSION INFORMATION

Enrollment is limited and structured to provide the most positive experience for the children. We follow the State of Maine licensing ratios and are enrolled in the Quality for ME Rating System. The Rating System is intended to promote higher quality care and encourage continuous quality improvement and is administered by the Early Childhood Division of the Maine Department for Health and Human Services.

2026 FEES

\$335 per week

A \$70 non-refundable deposit per week is due at the time of registration.

Financial Assistance is available and is applicable to all fees, including the deposit. Please register using our paper application if you are interested in Financial Assistance.

FINANCIAL PROCEDURE

The YMCA Camp Financial Procedure has been set up in order to ensure that accounts stay up to date and parents do not fall into financial hardship, owing several weeks' tuition.

If you have questions about your account at any time, please contact your Program Director.

- Upon enrollment, parents are required to pay a \$70 per week deposit. Financial Assistance is available and is applicable to the deposit.
- Payments are due two weeks prior to the start of the camp week.
- The YMCA of Southern Maine requires that payments be made using our automatic payment system. You may use a checking, savings or credit card account.
- If a payment is returned or declined, you will be contacted so that we will know how to proceed.
- All parents are asked to sign a financial contract upon enrolling their child/children in a YMCA camp.
- If you are having difficulty affording camp, please let us know so that we can work together to develop a plan that will best serve the needs of everyone involved.
- The YMCA of Southern Maine reserves the right to ask parents to withdraw their child when the financial obligations are not met.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS

We strive to provide affordable, quality summer camp experiences. To effectively manage our resources:

- Written notice is required at least 15 days before the camp week starts.
- No refunds for:
 - Cancellations with less than 15 days' notice.
 - Disciplinary removals.
 - Deposits.



Please review our cancellation policy as it has changed since the 2025 session.

If you cancel in writing 15 days or more before the start of the camp week:



Refunded what you have paid, less the weekly non-refundable registration deposit

If you cancel in writing 0-14 days before start of camp week:



No refund, charged in full

If you would like to transfer your registration to a different week of camp:



We can accommodate this request dependent on space and staffing if the request is made in writing 15 days in advance of the original registration week

Late Cancellation Policy:

Within 0-14 days of the start of a camp week, there will be no refunds given, including but not limited to the following situations:

- Incomplete or missing paperwork, including required medical forms.
- Illness, such as fever, headache, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Failure to attend the session, including late arrivals or no-shows.
- Homesickness that prevents the camper from participating.
- Behavioral concerns, including bullying, harassment, or actions that pose a safety risk to self or others.
- Displays of verbal or physical aggression.
- Inability to follow camp policies and procedures.
- Conflicts with other activities, such as if school extended due to snow days, competitive sports, summer school, vacations, or family commitments.
- Changes in transportation availability that prevent attendance.

Behavior Removal Policy:

In the event of dismissal from camp due to behavioral reasons, no refund will be given for the week of camp the camper is currently attending. For other weeks of camp, the cancellation policy will apply, where there will be no refunds for camp weeks starting within 0-14 days of the behavior removal.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The YMCA of Southern Maine serves the entire community, regardless of ability to pay. We do this by providing financial assistance, made possible through the generous support of donors in our community.

The State of Maine offers Child Care Subsidy for families through multiple programs. Subsidy can help with the financial aspect of camp, as well as health insurance for your child. Often a subsidy award is greater than YMCA Financial Assistance. We encourage all families to check if they are eligible. YMCA Financial Assistance applications are available for those who do not qualify for Maine State Subsidy programs.



If you have questions about subsidy or the Y's Financial Assistance, please talk to us. We'd welcome the opportunity to help.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The YMCA of Southern Maine serves the entire community, regardless of ability to pay. We do this by providing financial assistance, made possible through the generous support of donors in our community.

The State of Maine offers Child Care Subsidy for families through multiple programs. Subsidy can help with the financial aspect of camp, as well as health insurance for your child. Often a subsidy award is greater than YMCA Financial Assistance. We encourage all families to check if they are eligible. YMCA Financial Assistance applications are available for those who do not qualify for Maine State Subsidy programs.

If you have questions about subsidy or the Y's Financial Assistance, please talk to us. We'd welcome the opportunity to help.

CAMP READINESS at Camp Heartwood Nature Program:

To help families assess if their child will be successful at camp, we have developed guidelines for camp readiness.

What does it take for a camper to be successful?

- Campers are able to ask for help and communicate what they need. This includes regulating emotions, boundaries, friendships, and conflict in an age appropriate way.
- Campers are able to stay with their group and transition between activities, following directions from camp staff.
- Campers are able to explore outdoor nature areas that are not enclosed, including nature trails, areas with uneven terrain, and open fields.
- Campers can be responsible for their own personal hygiene without assistance, including: changing in and out of their wet bathing suit, using a port-a-potty, and hand washing.
- Campers can uphold the YMCA of Southern Maine's values by being respectful, responsible, caring, honest, and inclusive.
 - Respect campers, counselors, and the camp area. Keeping hands to ourselves, listening to counselor directions
 - Being responsible by cleaning up after ourselves, keeping track of our belongings, keeping our camp space clean, and making safe choices
 - Being caring to others by helping campers and counselors, listening to our camp guests
 - Being honest about our actions, asking for help when we need it, honoring our bodies if they are asking for rest or water
 - Being inclusive by making new friends and inviting people to play, talking to a counselor if someone is being mistreated
 - Campers can be away from technology for the entirety of the camp day.
 - Campers can manage being in a group environment that can be loud and energetic.



What support can Camp Heartwood staff typically provide?

- Camp staff can help campers navigate conflict and emotions.
- Camp staff can support camp transitions with 10-5-3-1 minute reminders and by following a routine.

What support can Camp Heartwood not safely provide?

- Behavior and emotional support that requires camp staff to provide consistent one-on-one support of a camper.
- If your child receives one-on-one support at school, they will typically require a one-on-one aide at camp to be successful. Camp Heartwood does not provide one-on-one support, but we can accommodate a DHHS approved aide if provided by the guardians. Please note that guardians are not permitted to be the child's one-on-one support at camp.

If you are unsure if your child will be successful at Camp Heartwood after reading our Camper Readiness guidelines, please contact Brenda Hamilton, (Camp Director, bhamilton@ymcaofsouthernmaine.org), to discuss the potential enrollment of your child.

INCLUSION PHILOSOPHY & PROCEDURE

We believe every child deserves access to a quality camp experience. Inclusion is at the core of our mission, and we're committed to serving each child and their unique needs.

While we welcome all children, there may be instances where additional support is needed beyond what our staff training or staff-to-camper ratio can provide. In these cases, we'll work with families to identify appropriate accommodations, such as providing a one-on-one aide, or connect you with programs better equipped to meet specific needs.

The Program Director and Branch Executive, in consultation with families, will determine the best approach for each situation and make every effort to support your child's camp experience.

ENROLLMENT/ATTENDANCE

Summer Camp runs June 15 - August 21 2026.

The following documents must be provided prior to admission:

- Completed Enrollment Forms
- Child Immunization Records
- Financial Assistance or Subsidy Application and supporting documentation
- A deposit of \$70 per week (prorated based on Financial Assistance or Subsidy award)

Wait List

When enrollment is full, we carry a wait list. As openings occur, they are filled from this list.

SCHEDULE

Each Summer Camp session runs Monday through Friday, except for June 19.

- **Camp Hours:** 9:30am - 3:30pm
- **Extended Care Hours:** 8:00am - 9:30am & 3:30pm - 5:30pm

We understand that many parents need a safe, enriching place for their children outside of regular care hours. Extended Care is provided each day at no additional charge.



HOLIDAYS

Camp is closed on the following holidays:

- June 19 – Juneteenth

ABSENCES & EARLY PICK UP

Camp fees are based on a weekly session fee. When you enroll your child, your place is saved for that session. Because of this, no tuition adjustments will be made when your child is absent due to illness, injury, family vacation, etc. Similarly, no adjustments will be made for holidays, storm days, etc.

We ask that families stay in touch with us throughout the summer, and that they communicate any absences, changes in plans or health status to us immediately.

If your child will be absent from camp or if they will be arriving late or picked up early, call the program and leave a message for the Director the day that your child will be absent. Phone numbers are listed above.

CLOSURES

We will alert families of closures using email and phone communication. Branch closures are also announced on the website and local television closure listings. Families may also call the YMCA front desk for information.

If the YMCA closes, Summer Camp will also close. In the event of a power, heat or water failure, families will be notified if a closure is necessary.

DAILY SCHEDULE

While our schedule will vary from day to day, in general we use the following structure. Please contact us if you have questions about your child's camp schedule.

8:00 – 9:30	Before Care
9:30 – 9:50	Morning Meeting
9:50 – 10:15	Snack
10:15 – 11:00	Activity 1
11:00 – 11:45	Activity 2
11:45 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:00	Reading / Journaling / Coloring / Quiet Games
1:00 – 2:45	Activity 3
2:45 – 3:00	Snack
3:00 – 3:30	Bead Ceremony
3:30 – 5:30	After Care

Activities include nature, swimming, sport/games, arts and crafts, and special guest activities. This schedule is only a guide and will be adjusted to meet the children's needs and staffing situations. The schedule may look a bit different for each program to adjust for children's ages. Children will play outside daily as weather permits!

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Guardians should walk their children into their camp program.



LATE PICK UP PROCEDURE

- The regular camp day ends at 3:30pm; campers can be picked up at your program's designated pick-up area.
- After-Care ends promptly at 5:30pm to support camp operations. If you are going to be late for pick up, please call us immediately. If you are late on more than three occasions, we reserve the right to remove your child from camp.
- If your child is not picked up by 5:30pm, a staff member will call you and/or all your emergency numbers and attempt to leave a message for you. If the staff person is unable to contact you or your emergency contact by 5:45pm, **we will contact the police.**
- **Please make sure your emergency phone numbers are up to date.** You **MUST** have an alternative adult who can pick up your child if you cannot be reached. Families are expected to pick their child(ren) up within one hour of being called.

CAMP CHECKLIST

What does my child need for Summer Camp?

- Backpack** – A great place to store sunscreen, a swimsuit and towel for sprinklers, snacks or lunch, and water bottles.
- Sunscreen** – Please pack extra in a Ziploc bag to reapply throughout the day.
- Bug Spray** – Please bring bug spray for trips to the woods, etc.
- Water Bottle** – Every child needs to bring a full, reusable water bottle each day
- Swimsuit** – Pack a swimsuit every day.
- Towel** – Please send a dry towel for your child.
- Swim Shoes** – Crocs or flip flops. Outside shoes are not allowed at the pool.
- Lunch** – Please do not send meals that require refrigeration or microwaving.
- Filling Snacks** – For long days filled with adventure
- Comfortable Clothes** – We'll be outside for most of the day and children should dress in clothes that can get dirty and are appropriate for the weather. Don't forget a sweatshirt or jacket on chilly days. It's always a good idea to pack an extra set of clothes and a raincoat.
- Sneakers & Socks** – Please be sure to pack sneakers and socks for your child so they can safely participate in all activities.

WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD LEAVE AT HOME?

- Money
- Electronics (cell phones, game systems, MP3 players, iPods, etc.)
- Game/Trading cards
- Weapons/Pocket knives
- Lighters/matches
- Toys, including stuffed animals, keychain toys, fidgets, and bracelet toys
- Anything of value (monetary or sentimental)
- Candy/Soda/Caffeinated beverages



Please do not send computerized games, cell phones or movies with your child to camp. Please be sure to leave valuables at home to avoid loss or damage. The YMCA is not responsible for lost, broken, or stolen belongings.

Each year we collect many lost items. Please do not send your child to camp with anything of great value. Remember to label all clothing and belongings with your child's full name. If anything is left at camp, please notify your Director. They will look for the lost item.

HELPFUL HINTS

To ensure your child has the best week at camp:

- Write your child's name on everything they bring to camp, and limit these essential items only.
- To make an early morning start less hectic, prepare your child's lunch and/or snacks the night before.
- Check the weather forecast the night before to prepare your child's weather-appropriate outfit.
- Pack a book for quiet times.
- Greet your child with a smile and ask about their day to hear about their fun experiences and to let us know of concerns.

CLOTHING & OUTDOOR PLAY

Outdoor play is a key element of YMCA camp. We go outside in all weather – including rain!

The YMCA uses the Child Care Weather Watch chart and the air quality index to determine weather suitability.

Children should dress in clothes that can get dirty and are appropriate for the weather. Closed-toed shoes like sneakers and socks ensure children can safely participate in all activities.

In addition, we strongly encourage packing an extra set of clothes, a bathing suit, towel, flip flops or sandals, a sweatshirt, and a raincoat.

FOOD (Please note: The Y is not a peanut-free facility.)

Please send a water bottle to camp daily. Children may drink water at any time.

To help your child have a good day at camp, please send them to camp with at least two filling snacks and a filling lunch that does not need refrigeration. Campers are not permitted to share food with other campers.

Campers will not have access to a microwave or refrigerator for their food at camp. Please send food items that are ready to eat from their lunch box.

If your family is facing challenges with access to food, please reach out to your camp director.

GENERAL HEALTH & SAFETY PROCEDURES

Hygiene Practices

All children and staff must receive training in proper hand hygiene. All children and staff must wash hands before and after eating and after using the restroom.

Sickness & Emergencies

In a group setting, illness can spread rapidly. The staff are vigilant about hand washing and will remind and assist children to wash their hands frequently.

If your child shows symptoms of illness while at camp, we will use our best judgment to call you. You are expected to ensure your child will be picked up within one hour of our call.



Children should stay home if they have the following symptoms:

- Fever at or above 100.4
- Chills
- Cough
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion
- Runny nose (in conjunction with other symptoms)
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea*

*Diarrhea is defined by the CDC as within a 24-hour period, 3 or more episodes of loose stools or an occurrence of loose stools that is above normal for the person.

Returning to Child Care After Illness

Children can return to care when, for at least 24 hours, both are true:

- Their symptoms are getting better overall, and
- They haven't had a fever (and are not using fever-reducing medications)

Upon returning to camp, added precautions should be taken by families over the next five days, including monitoring of symptoms, supporting children to cover their mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze, and practicing proper handwashing techniques. Masks and physical distancing are recommended but not required.

Medication

The State of Maine Department of Health & Human Services administers strict guidelines in the area of dispensing medication to children in a childcare setting.

Whether a medication is prescription or over the counter, an **Authorization to Dispense Medication** form must be completed before we can administer a dose.

Each course of medication requires its own Authorization to Dispense Medication form. Please ask your Program Director for a form when you bring in the medicine.

All medication must:

- **Be in their original container** with the name of the medicine and the dosage on it.
- **Be labeled clearly** with your child's name. Never bring medicine in a food container.
- **Be given directly to the Camp Director or staff.** Please do not send your child with medication to give to staff, or to keep in their bag or pocket.

All medication left at a YMCA camp will be locked up and kept inaccessible to children. Each camp has a physician consultant that is used to gain insight on best practices when needed.

A written record is kept noting each time a prescription or nonprescription medication is given to a child. Only Program Directors or designated staff may dispense medication.

When starting a new medication, it is vital that the first dose be given at home. This is to ensure that if a child were to have an allergic reaction to the medication, their guardian will be with them and able to respond.

Self-Administration of Inhalers, EpiPens, Emergency Medication

A note is required from both you and your child's medical provider authorizing your child to self-administer a specific medication before they can do so at camp. All medications, even those self-administered, must be given to the Director by the parent or guardian for safekeeping during the day to ensure safety for all children.



Allergies/Chronic Symptoms

If your child has a medical condition, please make your Program Director aware of so that we can work with you to develop a plan to keep your child healthy and safe.

Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye

Children with conjunctivitis or pink eye should not be at camp until they have been using eye drops or ointment for 24 hours.

Lice

Head lice is a common occurrence in school-aged children and is not a reflection of the child or the family. However, to prevent the spread of lice, children with lice should remain home until they have been treated. If your child is found to have lice while at the Y, you will be notified and asked to pick up your child within 60 minutes.

Once your child's lice have been treated, please let your Director know so that your child can be cleared to return to the Y.

Ticks

After spending time outdoors, we will assist children in doing a tick check. If a tick is embedded in your child, we will alert our Program Director who will follow the YMCA physician's standing orders and remove the tick. The tick will be placed in a plastic bag and given to the family at pick up. If you would prefer us to call you to come treat your child, please let us know.

Please also conduct regular tick checks on your children, as we are unable to do full body tick checks at camp.

Immunizations

All children must have a current record of immunizations on file at the YMCA that clearly documents their present immunization status based on Maine DHHS's ([Day Care Immunization Standards \(https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/documents/Daycare-Immunization-standards-revised.pdf\)](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/immunization/documents/Daycare-Immunization-standards-revised.pdf)). These records must be updated annually.

Under Maine law, only an MD, DO, NP or PA may provide an immunization exemption for your child, based on their professional judgment that immunization against one or more diseases may be medically inadvisable. Religious exemptions are no longer allowed under Maine law.

If your child is not vaccinated, during a disease outbreak, defined by CDC reporting standards, your child will be excluded from programming following CDC guidance, or until your child receives the necessary immunization. During this time you will still be charged for your child's spot in our child care programs.

CHILD GUIDANCE STRATEGIES

YMCA uses positive methods of child guidance that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, effective and age-appropriate communication of wants and needs, and cooperation with others. All strategies should meet the needs of the individual child.

Constructive methods of guidance include conflict resolution, encouragement of language skills, redirecting, providing choices, using positive reinforcement, recognizing each child's strengths, supervised breaks, clear expectations, self-regulation, modeling appropriate behavior and allowing for individual differences.

Behavior Management

The YMCA of Southern Maine feels it is essential to focus on positive behavior. When children make inappropriate choices, staff will REDIRECT them to another choice, area or activity.



- We encourage children to use words with their friends and counselors. Staff will model appropriate language to use.
- Children are encouraged to solve peer problems. Staff will assist and model the use of conflict resolution strategies.
- Staff set logical consequences for behavior.
- Consequences will be directed at the behavior, not the child. The child should learn from the experience.
- We do not withhold physical activity from a child as “discipline” for negative behavior, however if a child is being disruptive or unsafe they may be asked to take a short break from an activity.
- We do not use food as a reward for positive behavior, nor will food be withheld from a child for negative behavior.
- We ask that parents do not discipline children other than their own. This includes verbal rebukes and correction. If you notice a problem or issue at the program when you drop off or pick up your child please speak to a counselor and let them take care of the situation. Thank you.

Behavior Procedures

We are committed to inclusion of all. We know we are stronger when ALL can learn, grow, and thrive at the Y. As part of this, we expect everyone to behave in a welcoming and inclusive way, consistent with our character values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility.

Our primary concern within our summer camp programs is to provide a safe environment for all children all of the time. Managing safety behaviors is very difficult while setting the pace for the entire group.

We do all that we can to promote positive behavior and use positive guidance techniques. To be successful, we ask families to work collaboratively with us to develop and implement a plan to support their child.

One-on-one attention is not always possible at camp, as counselor-to-child ratios do not always warrant such activities.

When faced with situations that are more difficult, we rely on this behavior procedure to guide our next steps.

- All behavior that is outside our expectations will be brought to the Director. This includes all behavior that puts the child’s or other’s safety at risk.
- The YMCA does not tolerate hurtful or disrespectful comments of any kind, including, but not limited to, those involving ability, appearance, color, gender, language, national origin, race, or weight.

We follow these steps to ensure all children feel safe and welcome. In cases of severe behavior, YMCA leadership may skip steps one and/or two.

- **First Incident** – Warning Camp staff discuss the behavior with the camper, review camp expectations, and explain the consequences if the behavior continues.
- **Second Incident** – Warning with Parent Communication Camp staff gives another warning to the camper. Camp leadership contacts the guardian by phone and/or at pickup and provides a signed parent communication form documenting the behavior and expectations.
- **Third Incident** – Suspension The guardian signs an additional parent communication form at pickup. Camp leadership calls for early pickup that day. The camper may be suspended for additional days at the Camp Director’s discretion. No refunds are provided for suspension days.
- **Fourth Incident** – Termination The guardian signs an additional parent communication form. The camper is removed from camp for the remainder of the 2026 season. The guardian must meet with the Camp Director before registering for any future YMCA programs.



Children asked to go home must be picked up within 60 minutes of notification from the YMCA. Failure to do so may result in the child being removed from the program. Please make sure your contact information and your Emergency Contacts' information are up to date and reachable by phone whenever your child is in care at the Y.

MANDATORY WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE

On some occasions, children may be unenrolled from camp by the YMCA:

- If a behavior or condition exists which threatens the health and safety of other children or staff.
- Non-payment of tuition or assessed fees.
- If a family does not follow YMCA protocols, or does not collaborate with the YMCA in trying to address an issue.

In each case, staff will prepare the child for transition in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand. This preparation will be supportive of the child's sense of self and self-esteem.

PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATING & RESOLVING ISSUES

We value open communication. If you have any concerns about your child's experience at camp, please contact your Program Director. If you need further support, please contact the Branch Executive overseeing your camp. In the same regard, if there is an issue that needs to be addressed with a guardian, the Director will reach out to you to discuss.

Our Promise

We are the strongest when we promise to make sure everyone has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive at the Y. We accomplish that when we value the diversity of everyone's personal beliefs, respect the rights to those beliefs, and we expect all to honor our core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility with one another—everything we do stems from that expectation.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT

There are many opportunities for parent and guardian involvement in our child care programs

- Guardians are able to visit during program hours. Please reach out to your Camp Director if you are interested in stopping by during the camp day to see any of our programming.
- We welcome suggestions, special visitors, good ideas, suggestions and sources of supplies or services. Our families are a rich source of ideas and we would love to hear from you.

PROGRAM GOALS

- To provide a warm, safe, and secure environment for every child.
- To work closely in partnership with the family unit. Communication and a sense of trust are vital.
- To help each child develop a positive sense of self. We recognize individual differences and the importance of each person's unique contribution to the group.
- To foster healthy social development by helping the children become aware of each other, of the group and their place in it, and how each person's needs can be met through harmonious cooperation.
- To help each child develop cognitively and intellectually by providing a rich and varied experience from which each child can learn at their own pace.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Maine law requires reporting to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) when there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect. Our staff are mandated reporters.

We take very seriously the trust families place in us. Any observation or incident that raises suspicion of abuse or neglect will be reported immediately to YMCA administration and, if warranted, to DHHS. The YMCA cannot discourage anyone from making a report about suspected abuse or neglect.

Our commitment to safety includes:

- Welcoming unannounced parent visits at any time
- Running background checks on all staff and volunteers 18 and older through the State Bureau of Investigation
- Requiring fingerprinting for staff 18 and older through the Office of Children and Family Services
- Open communication with parents and staff about safety practices
- Self-reporting any licensing violations to DHHS
- Regular visits from our DHHS Licensing Specialist

A copy of the YMCA Child Abuse Policy is available on our website and upon request. Rule violations can be reported to DHHS Child Care Licensing Division at 1-800-452-1999.

CONSUMER CODE OF CONDUCT

Our Commitment to You

The YMCA of Southern Maine has zero tolerance for abuse, mistreatment, bullying, or sexual activity among program participants. We are committed to providing a safe environment where everyone feels welcomed and valued. Behavior that violates this commitment will result in intervention or disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the program.

For more information on our Child Safety Expectations, including examples and resources, visit our website at <http://www.ymcaofsouthernmaine.org/consumer>.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM EACH OTHER

Treating Others with Care and Respect

Our highest priority is keeping everyone safe. We ask that everyone:

- Treat all staff, volunteers, and participants with care and respect
- Use language that builds up rather than tears down—abusive, obscene, or profane language has no place in our community



- Refrain from any verbal, emotional, or physical abuse or mistreatment

Participants shall not engage in physical abuse or mistreatment of other participants, staff, or volunteers.

BUILDING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We encourage positive friendships and connections. To maintain appropriate boundaries:

- Romantic relationships between participants during programming are strongly discouraged
- Physical displays of affection are not permitted while in our programs
- There should be no romantic or personal relationship between a participant and YMCA staff or volunteers

For detailed guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate interactions, please visit our website <http://www.ymcaofsouthernmaine.org/consumer> or contact your Program Director.

STAYING CONNECTED SAFELY

One-on-one interactions: To protect everyone, private one-on-one interactions between participants and staff/volunteers are prohibited unless approved in advance by program leadership. Please report any such interactions you observe.

Electronic communication: All communication between staff/volunteers and participants must be approved by administration and parents/guardians. We follow the “Rule of Three”—at least two staff members must be included in text messages and emails with participants. Direct, private messaging is not allowed. Participants may not share cell phones with other participants and must follow our policies on personal mobile devices during programs.

CREATING A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Substances: Following the YMCA’s commitment to healthy living, possession or use of drugs, tobacco products, alcohol, vaping, or other substances is strictly prohibited in any of the YMCA’s facilities, grounds, and programs, including camp. Participants may not participate while under the influence. Parents/guardians will be notified as appropriate.

Weapons: Weapons and items that may be considered weapons (including laser pointers) are prohibited and will be confiscated. Parents/guardians and/or authorities will be notified as appropriate.

Violence: Violence and threats of violence will not be tolerated. Our staff are here to help resolve differences and conflicts in healthy, constructive ways.

Taking care of our space: Disruptive behavior, graffiti, littering, spitting, or throwing objects is not permitted.

Electronic communication: Communication between staff/volunteers and participants must be approved by the YMCA’s administration and a participant’s parent/guardian and must occur in an open electronic environment. We follow the “Rule of Three” in all electronic communications—there should be at least two staff members included in text messages and emails with participants. Direct, private messaging between participants and staff or volunteers is not allowed.

PREVENTING BULLYING

We believe everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. The YMCA of Southern Maine will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one participant by another participant.

What is bullying?

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take many forms including physical, verbal, social, cyber, hazing and sexualized bullying. Anyone who sees bullying and encourages it is also engaging in bullying behavior. This applies to all participants, staff, and volunteers. To learn more, visit our Child Safety Expectation online at <http://www.ymcaofsouthernmaine.org/consumer>.

HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS

We all play a role in keeping our community safe. If you observe any suspicious, inappropriate, or concerning behaviors by participants, staff, or volunteers, please report them immediately. We take all reports seriously and will respond promptly. You will not face retaliation for making a good-faith report, and we will maintain confidentiality whenever possible.

Ways to report:

- Speak with the program director
- Share your with your Branch Executive or our CEO

– Association Office: 207-874-1111



- Casco Bay Branch: 207-865-9600
- Greater Portland Branch: 207-874-1111
- Northern York County Branch: 207-283-0100

- Use our anonymous, online Concern Reporting Form (<https://www.ymcaofsouthernmaine.org/prevention>)

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESOURCES

Open conversations with your child about body safety and boundaries build trust and empower them to speak up if something happens. For resources to support these important conversations, visit our Abuse Prevention page www.ymcaofsouthernmaine.org/prevention or ask your Program Director.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If your child becomes ill at camp, or shows any signs or symptoms listed in the health screening section you will be notified, and asked to pick up your child within 60 minutes. Your child will be separated from the group and allowed to rest until you arrive.

In case of an accident or emergency at camp, the procedure is as follows:

- In the case of a minor accident, simple first aid treatment is applied on the spot and you will be notified either at the time or when you pick up your child.
- In the case of a more severe accident (i.e.: a cut that needs stitches), first aid will be rendered, we will call you immediately, and also call your pediatrician and follow his/her instructions. If you cannot be reached right away, we will call your emergency contacts.
- Uninjured children will be removed from the scene and kept calm.
- 911 will be called to transport a seriously injured child. A staff member will accompany your child in the ambulance and will call you, or your emergency contacts to meet at the hospital. All serious injuries are reported to Licensing.
- If a child loses consciousness or stops breathing, we will render aid, following CPR/AED/First Aid training.

Please make sure your emergency phone numbers are up to date. You MUST have an alternative adult who can pick up your child if you cannot be reached. Families are expected to pick their child(ren) up within one hour of being called.

Fire Drills

We conduct a minimum of one fire drill per month throughout the year. Your child will be taught the reasons and correct behavior for our fire drill procedures. Drills will take place from different areas of the building to ensure that children know how to exit in case of emergency.

We teach the children that we evacuate the building any time we hear the alarm.... even during random “tests” that are done on the alarm system. If you have any questions about our fire drill procedure, please talk to your Director.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

The YMCA of Southern Maine has an emergency preparedness plan for each camp location that addresses emergencies that could arise in our facility. It includes, but is not limited to, emergencies related to weather, power or utility failure, intruder/domestic violence, missing child, bomb threats, etc.

This emergency plan is not open for the public in order to keep our children safe, however, if you have questions or would like to know how we would handle any emergency, please speak directly with your Program Director.

If evacuation or relocation is necessary, the Director and counselors will evacuate all children from building. Injuries will be addressed using our first aid training, as soon as it is safe to do so. After all children are safe and accounted for, a YMCA representative will contact you.

If the YMCA and surrounding area is deemed unsafe, we will evacuate children and staff to another YMCA branch:

PROGRAM LOCATION	WILL RELOCATE TO	RELOCATION ADDRESS & PHONE #
Camp Osprey in Freeport	Greater Portland Branch	217 High Street, Portland, ME 207-874-1111
Camp Heartwood in Biddeford		

CURRICULUM

We strive to provide an engaging and enriching curriculum for the children in our care. These experiences may include elements of, but are not limited to: Time Outside, Arts and Math, Nature Appreciation, Sports and Games.



DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Every child learns and develops at their own pace. Our staff is committed to supporting each child's healthy development and will communicate regularly with families about observations, concerns, and steps we're taking to support your child.

If we feel your child could benefit from additional support or evaluation, we will communicate this to you and, with your permission, share our observations with your provider of choice. The YMCA does not employ an intervention specialist, but we believe working closely with families is the best way to help children thrive.

Resources for families:

- **211 Maine** – Connects families with agencies and community organizations for child development, parenting, behavioral assessment, screenings, and more. Call 211 or 1-866-811-5695
- **Your child's pediatrician, teacher, literacy specialist, school social worker, or intervention specialist** are also excellent resources

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Camp counselors must be at least 16 years of age, be CPR and first aid certified, and model the Y's core values and Promise Statement. Counselors 18 years and older must pass a criminal background check, including fingerprinting through the Office of Children and Family Services.

Qualifications for Youth Development Director:

- A Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, or related field preferred. Associate's degree, or a combination of training and experience that meets State Licensing rules required.
- 3-5 years of experience in a leadership role within a youth setting
- Strong communication, interpersonal, leadership and decision-making skills
- Models and teaches the Y's Core values and Promise Statement
- Emotionally mature
- Adult and Pediatric CPR, First Aid, and AED Certification
- A criminal background check, including fingerprinting through the Office of Children and Family Services.

All staff undertake continued education and training. Staff are supervised through program observation by Program Directors and Executives, through regular staff meetings, and one-on-one coaching or mentoring sessions with Directors and Executives, as needed. Each staff member receives yearly evaluations by their immediate supervisor. New staff complete an orientation process during their first weeks of employment.

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN & PARENTS

Rights of Children:

Children receiving care from any childcare facility have the following rights:

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
2. Each child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the child.
3. Each child has the right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards of this rule.
4. Each child must be provided childcare services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes use of developmentally appropriate practices by the childcare facility.
6. Each child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for the child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the childcare facility.
7. Each child has the right to developmentally appropriate activities, materials and equipment.
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to childcare facility policies and practices.



Rights of Parents & Legal Guardians of Children Receiving Childcare

1. A child's parent or legal guardian must be fully informed of items or services which are included in the rate they pay for childcare services.
2. A child's parent or legal guardian has the right to be fully informed of findings of the most recent inspection conducted by the Department. The childcare facility must inform children's parents or legal guardians that the licensing inspection results are public information and inspection results must be posted in a prominent place on the premises.
3. Parents or legal guardians must be notified by the childcare facility within two business days of any actions taken against the childcare facility by the department, including but not limited to decisions to issue conditional licenses, refusal to renew a license, or to impose fines or other sanctions

CONFIDENTIALITY & RECORDS ACCESS

We maintain a secure file for each child, locked in our office and accessible only to program administrators. We will not share information about your child with third parties without your written permission, except as required by Licensing or Child Protective Services. Your child's confidentiality is important to us.

Records are retained for a minimum of three years. As a legal guardian, you may access your child's file, request copies at no cost, or attach comments by submitting a written request to the Program Director.

Photos may be taken to share our impact with the community. Parents are asked to sign a Photo Release during enrollment. If you prefer your child's photo not be used publicly, simply indicate this on the release. Staff members use discretion when discussing children's experiences and will not share confidential matters with other families.

PARENTAL RIGHTS & CUSTODY SITUATIONS

We understand that families sometimes navigate difficult situations involving the courts. All court documents regarding custody and parental rights must be provided to the Program Director and will be added to your child's file. Our staff will follow all court orders. If anyone attempts to violate a court order, we will call law enforcement for support. The YMCA and our staff remain neutral in these situations.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

All childcare providers are required to make interpretation services available for English Language learners, including guardians and children. Please let your Program Director know if this would be of benefit to your family.

CHILD CARE LICENSING

Our programs are licensed through the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services. We would be happy to provide you with a copy of the latest Child Care Facility Licensing Rule upon request. You may also find the rules online at www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/provider-resources/child-care-licensing/becoming-a-childcare-provider.

Families have the right to view the results of any childcare provider's most recent licensing inspection.

QUESTIONS?

This handbook is a general reference guide. If there are any concerns that have not been addressed, please feel free to speak with your Director. The information included in this handbook is subject to change from time to time. It is important that you help facilitate active communication with YMCA staff.