



Pre-K/K OST Program

Family Handbook

School Year 2024-2025

Location

- Somerville Y Pre-K Building- 97 Highland Ave. Somerville,
MA 02143
617-625-5050 x119, x120 & x122
- Jessika Sickey, Pre-K/K OST Program Director:
jsickey@somervilleymca.org
617-996-6599 or 781-434-8300
- Website: www.somervilleymca.org

Dear Parents/Families:

Welcome to the Pre-K/K Program at the Somerville YMCA. We are delighted that you have chosen our program for your child(ren). We are committed to providing a safe and nurturing experience for your child with plenty of opportunities for growth in your child's social-emotional, academic enrichment and physical/recreational needs.

A child spends a tremendous amount of time in our program, during which time a significant developmental impact occurs. In all settings attitudes are formed, ideas of self worth are developed, relationships with peers and adults are experienced and young bodies grow strong and competent.

Our programs are designed to provide each child with a variety of positive, healthy and interesting activities throughout each week. The staff are trained and experienced in working with children. Many of them have a degree in education or in the human service field(s). The Y provides them with ongoing professional development and trainings throughout the year. Our staff meets all the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) requirements for licensed care programs. All of these regulations/standards can be found at the state website at www.ma.gov/deec.

This handbook is designed to assist you in better understanding the philosophy, policies and procedures of our program. We encourage you to review this booklet and retain it for future reference. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to talk to us. We are very much interested in your comments, questions and feedback regarding our program.

Thank you for choosing us to meet your child care needs. You have chosen a quality program for your child(ren), with safety as a number one priority. Together we can better assure your child a successful experience in our program. We are glad to have you as part of our Somerville Y Family.

Sincerely,

Tania Buck

Tania Buck, VP of Child Development & Education
tbuck@somervilleymca.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

Pre-K/K OST Program Questions: Jessika Sickey, Program Director
jsickey@somervilleymca.org 617-625-5050 x119 or 617-996-6599-direct
office line or cell is 781-434-8300

Voucher and Billing questions: Francesca Ciccone, Child Care Registrar
fciccone@somervilleymca.org 617-625-5050 x111

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Ages Served: 4 years and 0 months (minimum) to 7 years old
- EEC Licensed Capacity: 39 children (2 classrooms)
- Open: 52 weeks a year
- Days Open: Monday thru Friday
- Hours of Operation: 12noon/end of school day until 6pm during school year and 7:45am-5:45ppm during vacation weeks and summer.
- Enrollment Choices: 3, 4 or 5 day slots
- Principal Service Area: Somerville and surrounding communities
- Meals: Afternoon snack provided during the school year and breakfast and Lunch during the summer months. Parents should provide a lunch during Christmas, February and April vacation weeks a breakfast and a snack will be provided during those weeks.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The main purpose of the Somerville YMCA's Pre-K/K OST Program is to provide a safe, comfortable and reliable childcare environment that fosters emotional maturity and promotes the physical, intellectual and social well-being of the preschool age child. It is also our policy to work together with families to help children participate successfully in our program even when professional values and practices differ from family values and practices.

Our primary intent is to help children develop to their fullest potential. The design of the program recognizes the need for play and its importance as a means for growth. Our curriculum is one that nurtures and responds to the developing needs of each individual child. The activities provide challenge, stimulation and an opportunity for self-expression. The teachers will guide the children in developing their decision making abilities, their creativity, positive social/emotional skills as well as their growing independence.

PROGRAM GOALS

The following goals and objectives serve as a foundation for the Somerville Y Pre-K/K Program:

- To foster a life-long love of learning within each child by providing a wide range of opportunities for individual growth in the areas of English language arts, mathematics, science and technology, social studies and the arts.
- To increase the child's self-awareness, confidence, and self-esteem by providing opportunities for positive social/emotional development.
- To give each child a sense of security and individuality by respecting their needs and feelings.
- To promote good health habits; by providing active learning opportunities which develop large and fine motor coordination and by helping children make nutritional food choices.
- To assist the children in understanding and accepting individual differences in a diverse society.
- To support and strengthen the family unit.
- To encourage family involvement in all aspects of our Preschool program, i.e. volunteerism, family and child activities, program evaluation, fundraising, etc.
- Help children develop the tools necessary for living in a diverse world.
- Working on the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully and to challenge stereotypes.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum at the Somerville YMCA Preschool is the ***Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences*** developed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (E.E.C.) and some aspects of the ***Teaching Strategies Gold*** curriculum. These are comprehensive curriculums that support the philosophy and goals of the Pre-K/K OST Program as stated above.

SCREENING & ASSESSMENT

Children are screened 45 days after they enter the Pre-K/K OST Program. The center uses the Early Screening Inventory-R Tool. It is a brief screening administered individually to the children. The results of this screening will be shared with the family. The results and family input will be used to set goals for your child as they begin their preschool journey.

Every six months, from your child's enrollment date, you will be asked to meet with one of your child's teachers to discuss your child's progress. At this time family will receive a written report of your child's progress and achievements. This report will become part of your child's center record. In addition, the staff will verbally communicate at least, on a quarterly basis, to discuss progress,

issues or concerns for planning assessment purposes. The assessment tool that we use is the ***Teaching Strategies Gold***. It aligns with the ***Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences***, the curriculum that we use. Teachers will bring any special problems or concerns to a family immediately, if need be.

Families are encouraged to consider the following to help accomplish the curriculum objectives of the Pre-K/K OST Program.

- Assume the role of being your child's first teacher.
- Talk with your child's teacher and ask about your child's classroom activities.
- Keep informed about events and participate in them frequently.
- Volunteer as often as you can. Talk with the teachers for ideas.
- Encourage your child in conversation about daily events at preschool.
- Place an emphasis on music and singing in your home. Ask the teachers about songs your child sings at school.
- Read to your child daily. Read and retell familiar stories.
- Visit the public library on a regular basis.
- Visit museums frequently. The Somerville Museum is free!
- Use visits to stores and supermarkets as learning opportunities by looking for letters, numbers and even familiar words.
- Cook with your child and have them help to count measure and mix ingredients.
- Play simple memory games and board games.
- Help your child to work on simple puzzles.
- Supervise and limit television viewing and the use of video games.
- When using computers, I-Pods and/or electronic books with your child, use appropriate preschool programs, music and books.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Somerville Y Programs do not discriminate in providing services to children and their families on-the-basis of: race, color, national origin, cultural heritage, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Each child enrolled in our program shall be treated fairly, and with due regard to each child's individual needs. Toilet training is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.

LICENSING AUTHORITY

The Somerville Y Child Care Programs are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and are mandated to uphold all of the

Department of Early Education and Care rules and regulations pertaining to Large Group and School Age Child Care licensing. You may contact EEC directly at 617-472-2881 (1250 Hancock Street, Quincy, Ma) or at [\(617\) 988-6600](tel:6179886600) Central Office Main number for additional information regarding the programs regulatory compliance history.

ENROLLMENT CRITERIA

The policy of Y Child Care Programs is to work with families in enrolling your child into the program. We encourage families to visit at least one time without your child so that you are able to meet and discuss policies and procedures. The enrollment application is available online at our website www.somervilleymca.org. Families must fill out all the completed forms along with their tuition payment before their child can begin the program. Once you have completed the online document the child care registrar will be in touch regarding any additional information that we may need and to sign up to use the payment application ProCare. In addition, families will be asked to sign a Family Handbook receipt form verifying that they understand and will adhere to the policies and procedures set forth by the Pre-K/K OST Program. A copy of that receipt shall be placed in the child's file.

Registration procedures throughout the year include a meeting with the Program Director, a tour of the facility and a parent and child orientation. All parents must attend an orientation **PRIOR** to their child attending the program.

Your child will be assigned to a classroom. Each class has assigned teaching staff. The teaching staff provide ongoing personal contact, meaningful learning activities, supervision, and immediate care as needed to protect children's well-being.

If children have any medical conditions or allergies that require them to utilize an emergency medical device such as an inhaler or Epi-Pen, additional forms are needed PRIOR to the child starting the program. Please see the Medication Administration Section.

Registration information needed for application and the family handbook are available on the Somerville YMCA website. www.somervilleymca.org

REGISTRATION INFORMATION CHANGES

It is very important that any changes in registration information concerning you or your child (i.e., changes in pick-up authorization, addresses, work or home phone numbers, emergency numbers, allergies, health conditions, etc.) must be

reported by the parent to the Program Director immediately and in writing to insure the safety of your child.

TRANSITIONING CHILDREN INTO THE PROGRAM

Children should visit the center several times; first with their family, and then alone for a short amount of time, increasing the length of time until your child has adjusted. Children need a routine that is predictable and works for the both of you such as: putting away belongings, greeting the teachers and reading a story. The teachers are available to assist in separation and to comfort a sad child/parent/guardian when needed. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between the staff and the children and to maintain continuity of care between groups and the teaching staff.

TRANSITIONING CHILDREN FROM CLASS TO CLASS

When children are ready to move from P1 (the younger classroom) to P2 (the older classroom), the children will visit the classroom at least twice during the week before the transition date. If the staff or the family think more visiting time is necessary, we will ensure that more visits will be arranged.

TRANSITIONING OUT OF THE PROGRAM

Children, families and teachers form exceptionally strong bonds at the Somerville Y Pre-K/K OST Program. The learning experiences resulting from a child's transitioning from our program can become the basis for strong and positive ways of handling separations. **A two week written notice of withdrawal** must be submitted to the Child Care Registrar so that the Y may prepare your child, other children and the staff for the departure. Special activities will focus on making the transition easier for all involved.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

All information contained in a child's record is privileged and confidential and cannot be released to an outside agency without the written consent of a parent/guardian. Authorized representatives from the Department of Early Education and Care have the right and responsibility to review all records upon request. The child's parent(s) shall, upon request, have access to his/her child's record at reasonable times.

AMENDING THE CHILD'S RECORDS

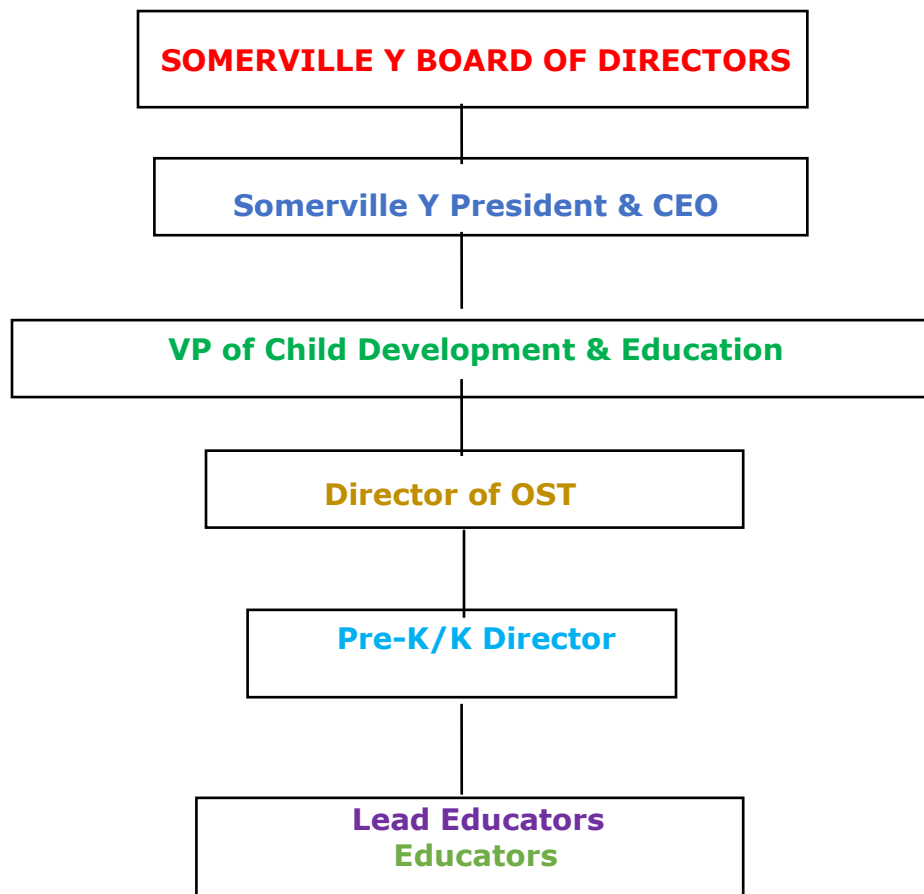
A child's parent(s) shall have the right to add information, comments, data or any other relevant materials to the child's record. A child's parent(s) shall have

the right to request a deletion or an amendment of any information in the child's record.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN FOR THE Y PRE-K PROGRAM

Administrative staff and Program staff are organized in the following way to deliver OST services. Teachers report to their respective Lead Educator who in turn reports to the Pre-K/K OST Director. The Pre-K Director in turn reports to the Director of OST who in turn reports to the Y's VP of Child Development & Education. The VP of Child Development & Education is supervised by and reports to the Somerville Y President and CEO who in turn reports to the Board of Directors.

If there is ever an issue within the Pre-K program, please bring it to the immediate attention of the Pre-K Director first. Please do not bring issues to the upper administration without attempting to follow the chain of command. Please see the organizational chart below. Thank you.



OUR STAFF

We believe the success of our programs, and ultimately your child's experience, lies in the quality of our staff. Our staff members are carefully selected based on their experience, education, talents and interpersonal skills. All staff comes together for in-depth orientation and trainings to cover such areas as program goals, emergency procedures, group work and curriculum planning. Our staff bring a multitude of experiences and backgrounds. Above all else our staff have one thing in common - a love for working with children.

PROGRAM PLAN-HALF DAY

Most afterschool days are considered half days. Each school day the children will be picked up and transported via school bus and/or 7-D Licensed vans from their schools to the Y. SPS Pre-K are dismissed at 1:45pm, SPS K is released at 2:35 and PHACS is dismissed at 2:45pm. Early release days for SPS are at 12:00 for Pre-K and 1pm for K. All PHACS early release Wednesdays are at 1:45pm.

After arriving all children will receive a healthy snack. Other daily activities will include a group meeting time, STEAM Activities (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) that will include outdoor playtime in the backyard or local park, literacy activities, group games to encourage social interaction, choice time and transition home.

PROGRAM PLAN-FULL DAY

Arrival

The morning schedule is designed to specifically aid in the daily transition from home to school, and to allow as much flexibility as possible to individual families. Therefore, it is required that children arrive at the program each morning before 9:00 am. During this time, less structured, open-ended free choice activities are planned. This allows Teachers the freedom to greet each arriving child and parent/guardian, aid in the child's transition to the activities of the class according to his/her arrival style, and aid in the good-bye process.

Activities:

Begin to take place at 9:00 am, such as, clean-up, meeting time, breakfast, and gym and swim activities which make it difficult for a Teacher to be available to a late arriving child.

Breakfast – A healthy breakfast will be provided by the Y for each child. As the children enjoy their meal, they will engage in conversation with teachers and their peers, as well as listen to stories others have to tell. Breakfast time is a social time where the children will be able to develop their conversational skills. Children learn basic skills in set-up and clean-up.

Physical Activity/Gym - Organized games, obstacle courses and activities for the children help in the development of physical coordination and large motor skills. Games may include relay races, small group games, ball play, parachute play and playing with scarves.

Arts - Projects are organized by the classroom Teachers, supported by children's interests, to help the children develop their fine motor skills such as: cutting, pasting, drawing as well as fostering their creative abilities. The emphasis will be made on the process of the project rather than the final appearance.

Choice Time - At least twice a day the children are given a choice play time, where they choose from story time, games, toys, learning centers or time to sit down and talk to each other and/or the teachers. During this time the children are able to familiarize themselves with the activities set out for the day, and develop social skills while interacting with the other children.

Rest Time- Each child will have their own designated cot, and should bring a small pillow and sheet/ blanket from home. If after a reasonable amount of time a child has not fallen asleep (this may vary according to the individual child), that child may read books, draw or write or play with quiet games, but they must remain quiet on their cots so that other children may sleep.

Swimming - during school vacation weeks and summer, the Pre-K/K program has an opportunity to swim at the main Y pool. Each child is level tested to determine their individual swimming skills. All non-swimmers are directed to the shallow end of the pool and fitted with flotation devices. The primary goal of the swim program is to help children overcome a fear of water. From the swim program the child learns a "CAN DO" attitude and improvement in large motor and self-help skills.

Quiet Play Interaction - Projects, games, puzzles, and other activities will be available during this time to allow the children to develop group interaction skills.

Outdoor Play - This activity takes place at our backyard play space or local parks, in the surrounding area of the Y. The children walk in groups of two with a teacher in front, a teacher in back and other staff evenly distributed in the line. The parks in Somerville have a safe ground cover, and slides and climbing structures of varying difficulty. Some parks have sand box areas and sprinklers for summertime use. The Pre-K/K program also has a small outdoor play space located in the back of the building to provide a safe area for small group activities.

Field Trips - Field trips are planned in advance. Each child needs a permission slip. Examples are museums, zoos, hiking; nature walks outside of the immediate area of Somerville, amusement parks, and special functions.

Family Activities - These activities include family meetings, parties, special field trips, and family training nights. Families are highly encouraged to attend. We also encourage our families to volunteer at the Pre-K in any way that would be convenient for them. Some ideas are to read a story to the class, bring in a special treat from home to share with the class, take an hour or more to work in your child's classroom, share your cultural heritage, visit us at gym or swim time and play with the children.

NUTRITION/PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Somerville Y is a HEPA Y which stands for Healthy Eating, Physical Activity. HEPA is a national movement that emerged out of early learning and afterschool standards to help combat the childhood obesity rates in the United States. Nationally the Y is committed to offering nutritious food at all times that children are in programming. We commit to serving as much fresh, wholesome food as possible. This means that we follow the USDA guidelines and state guidelines for lower sugar, lower fat and lower sodium intakes for children. HEPA guidelines for children's programming generally include: 1) include 30 minutes of moderate, fun, physical activity for every child every day; offer 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity three times per week; 2) ban sugar-sweetened drinks from being served or brought to program; 3) offer water and low-fat unflavored milk as a beverage during snack every day; 4) eliminate use of commercial broadcast TV/movies; limit recreational computer time to less than one hour per day; 5) offer a fruit or vegetable option every day; and 6) ban foods with trans fats.

HEALTHY EATING

The Y Pre-K/K OST Program will provide breakfast and lunch during the summer months and a healthy snack every afterschool day. These foods must also meet USDA Guidelines.

WHEN PARENTS ARE PROVIDING MEALS/SNACKS

The Y Pre-K/K OST program provides breakfast and lunch during the summer months and a PM Snack that meets the requirements of the USDA for pre-K/K children on regular afterschool days. Menus are available at your request. Menus are also posted on the parent board.

Families are asked to provide a nutritious lunch during school vacation weeks (December, February and April). We will provide breakfast on these full days and an afternoon snack. During meal times, the staff will sit and eat with the children. They will encourage conversations with the children and model positive social skills.

- Lunches will be stored in the child's cubby
- The center will heat (not prepare) your child's lunch.
- Icepacks will keep the lunches cold in the case of warm weather.

The following is a list of nutritious items which may be included in a bag lunch. Try to include something from the food groups that includes whole grains, lean proteins, healthy carbohydrates and fruits/veggies. Beverages should be low-fat milk or water. Try putting fruit in the water as a natural sweetener. It is recommended that children **do not drink** more than **one** 4-6oz juice per day as most fruit juices contain a lot of added sugar.

Children **are not allowed** to bring candy, soda or excessive amounts of "sweets" with them. If candy, chocolate, soda, etc. does come into the program, it will be held in the Program Director's office until the child is picked up at the end of the day.

Please **do not send your child with fast food** or drop-off fast food to them at lunch time.

Because of potential issues with allergies the **Y must be a peanut free zone.** Please do not send your child with peanut butter sandwiches, crackers, trail mix or granola bars, or any other food that may contain peanuts or other tree nuts.

For more information on what kinds of foods are nutritious for young children, please visit <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/browse-by-audience/view-all-audiences/children/kids>

Protein and Carbohydrates

Whole wheat bread or crackers
Low fat cheese or string cheese
Lean meats such as chicken, turkey,
ham, etc.
Tuna Fish
Hummus w/pita bread
Low-sugar Yogurt
Low sugar Oatmeal
Low-fat pudding

Fruits or Veggies (any kind your child likes)

Celery/Carrot sticks w/low-sodium
dressing or dip
Baby carrots
Grape/cherry Tomatoes
Oranges
Apples
Pears
Bananas

Cheerios or other low fat and low sugar
cereals
Corn
Sweet potatoes

Beverages

Water
Fruit Juice: only 1-4 Oz serving per day
Low fat Milk (**no** Chocolate or flavored
milk allowed)

Raisins
Peaches or other seasonal fruit
Berries
Applesauce
Apricots
Canned fruit in water
Apple rings
Colored pepper slices
Raw broccoli and Cauliflower

TRANSPORTATION POLICY-ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE THE PROGRAM

A Transportation Plan Form must be completed by the parent prior to the child's enrollment in the Y Program. The form indicates how the child will arrive and depart the program. Children are picked up by Y staff at the Somerville Public Elementary Schools and the PHA Charter School (Early Childhood/Webster location) utilizing our school bus and/or 7-D Licensed Pupil Transport vans. During school vacations and summer months it will be parent/guardian drop-off and pick up each day. We ask that all children arrive no later than 9am on vacation weeks as we may be leaving on a field trip early. Parents/guardians/authorized adults can pick up participants at any point during the program times. Please call ahead so that we can get the child prepared to leave.

ARRIVAL

Children must be at the center by between 7:45-9:00 am on full days and no earlier than 12:00noon am on SPS early release afterschool days, so that they can participate in all of the educational activities that the teachers have planned for the day. If you are going to be late or if your child is not attending for any part of the day, please call the program at 617-628-1741 or the YMCA Front Desk at 617-625-5050 by 8:30 am on full days and 12:00 Noon on regular half days. You may also e-mail the program director at jsickey@somervilleymca.org.

Parents must call or e-mail by 11:00am on school days (by 7:00AM on full days during vacation weeks and summer) if their child is not attending the program for the day. This allows the Y staff to know that the child will not be attending and will not have to try and locate the child within the school building or be waiting for your child to be dropped off. Repeatedly failing to inform the Program of your child's absence or constant absences may jeopardize continued enrollment in the program*.

*If you are a family with a voucher, please see THE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE ATTENDANCE NOTIFICATION AGREEMENT that you signed for detailed information on absences and fee agreements.

- **The Program is not responsible for any child prior to being received by YMCA staff at the designated drop-off site within the school.**
- **Any child who has been asked to stay after school, for any reason, is then the responsibility of the school and parent. School buses and vans CANNOT return to a school if the child is kept back by the teacher or is attending special school programming.**

If a child is to be picked up by someone other than an authorized person, the program must be notified **in writing** prior to the pickup. You may e-mail that notice to the Program Director jsickey@somervilleymca.org During the school year, parents or designated persons dropping off or picking up children **must have a picture identification available at all times.**

On full days such as vacation weeks and the summer, parents or their designees must sign their child in and out with the authorized Y staff person taking attendance. Any Y staff person will be happy to direct you to the sign in/out location.

- **Please note: Once your child has been signed out of the program by the designated pick-up person the YMCA is no longer responsible for anything that may occur to that child.**

TRANSPORTATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES WHILE ON FIELD TRIPS

Occasionally during the school year and frequently during the summer the program will have field trips. Transportation for these trips will be by walking, school bus, public transportation or a combination of these three modes. For all field trips and off-site activities, the following rules apply:

1. Children must be adequately supervised, at all times. Department of Early Education and Care ratios must be followed at all times.
2. Children must travel safely using crosswalks and street lights, and by staying together in an organized group.
3. Staff must act as role models, reviewing and enforcing safety rules at all times.
4. On every trip, at least one staff person per group must be trained in CPR and First Aid and be responsible for the First Aid Kit and Child Emergency Medication per group. In addition to First Aid supplies, the kit should

contain the Y Health Care Policy, and Children's Emergency Information and Consent Forms per group that includes authorized consent to treat in the case of an emergency parent phone numbers, alternate phone numbers, doctor's phone numbers, and any special health information.

5. Trip leaders must know the travel route, have maps & bus schedules if necessary, have an attendance list, trip fees, overall schedule for departures and arrivals, and make sure the children have what they need for the trip.
6. The group is expected to travel quietly and orderly. Travel will be stopped if the group becomes unruly.
7. Head counts will be taken periodically during the day, at least at departure, lunch time, before returning, and upon returning. When public transportation is used head counts must be taken at each interchange. When school buses are used, role calls and head counts will be taken before departing and before return departure.
8. Children and staff must wear seat belts when provided. On school buses all must be seated, and on public transportation all must sit if seats are available. If seats are not available all must hold on. At no time will hands, heads, or litter be put out windows. The staff must make children aware of emergency exits and how to use them.
9. When riding public transportation all must ride in the same train, car, or bus.
10. Staff are advised to carry materials to entertain the children or at least use songs or conversation to make the journey more pleasant.

CLOTHING

Children at the YMCA are active and involved. They should wear clothes that are comfortable, practical, easily managed by the children and wash easily. Sneakers should be worn daily for active play **even in the summertime**. A full change of clothes should be stored in your child's cubby. This should include underwear and socks. All belongings should be labeled with your child's name. The YMCA is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing. The Somerville YMCA cannot be responsible for lost or damaged articles. Please also note that a swim cap is required for swimming in the Y-Pool and are available to buy at the front desk.

TOYS FROM HOME

Please do not send any toys from home at this time. Please see rest policies as to what children are allowed to bring at this time.

The Y Pre-K/K OST Program discourages children from bringing toys from home except for transitional items such as a blanket or special stuffed animal. Toys from home can cause conflicts and may not meet educational and acceptable standards for a group setting. Please do not send toys from home except as requested by teachers to enrich curriculum plans.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND/OR SPECIAL NEEDS

The Y will request and review information given by the parent related to the child's participation in the program. Identification of specific accommodations required to meet the needs of the child, which would include change or modification in the child's participation in regular activities, will be reviewed. In addition, identification of any special equipment, materials, ramps, or aids will be discussed. If such accommodations will cause undue burden on the program, and restrict the child's enrollment, the parent will be notified in writing, of the reasons for the decisions. Parents may contact the Department of Early Education and Care to review the decision.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

As a parent you are your child's first teacher and major influencer. We appreciate your input on how best to serve your child's needs at any level. We believe that positive and regular communication is the key to a successful program that will support you and your child's needs. If there are any issues with your child, please bring them to the attention of your child's Program Director. We also ask our staff to communicate as often as possible with parents about experiences that your child is having. You will receive child updates and program evaluations in order to support positive communication between the Y and all families. We would like to know how we are meeting your child care needs and how we can improve upon our services and programs.

PARENT VISITS

The program strongly encourages parental visits at any time during the program when their child is present. If you need to speak with your child's Program Director or Teacher, please call ahead (if possible) so that we may ensure ratio coverage while you speak with staff.

DAILY/ON-GOING PARENT COMMUNICATIONS

At the beginning and end of the day YMCA Staff greet parents and exchange information about the progress of their child. This provides both parent and staff the opportunity to create and maintain an open line of communication. Newsletters are also utilized to dispense information.

Most information will be sent via e-mail. Please check your e-mail that you gave us on your child's registration form daily for the latest news/information. Also check out our Facebook page for pictures of the children engaging in activities daily.

<https://www.facebook.com/SomervilleYMCA/>

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The purpose of behavior management practices in the YMCA Pre-K/K OST program is to provide guidance and support to children as they develop self-discipline, while ensuring a safe and comfortable environment for all.

We believe through a consistent, well-articulated and respectful system of discipline, children will understand and accept the importance of considerate individual and group behavior. We expect that, as children experiment with their own emotions, relationships with others, and their abilities to express their needs and preferences, they will begin to take responsibility for their own actions and become increasingly accountable for their behavior.

In addressing these goals, we take a preventative approach to discipline by creating a safe, well organized, and interesting environment in which behavior problems should rarely occur. Within this setting, our first step is to let children and parents know our expectations.

Pre-K/K behavior management procedures shall be consistent and based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of each child. Positive behavior management will be utilized to help create a positive learning experience for the child, within the areas of problem solving, self-help and expression of their feelings, while maintaining a safe environment for the group.

Children will participate in developing classroom rules as developmentally appropriate.

"Classroom Rules" at the Pre-K/K OST Program will be worded in a positive manner informing the children of what they are able to do rather than what they are unable to do. Here are a few examples; listen to others, keep your hands and feet to your own body and use soft voices indoors.

If at any time a child has trouble remembering the rules or has a conflict with another child, the Teacher will work with the child to correct the situation or solve the conflict. For example: When a child runs in the classroom, the Teacher will ask the child to return to the spot where they began to run and use their walking feet.

Words used to help solve conflicts between children and correct situations will be "I" phrases. During time outs, for excessive misbehavior, a child will be given something constructive to do to help the child learn the significance of his/her actions and how they affect others. For example: If two children are disagreeing, instead of separating them they will instead be taken away from the rest of the group and seated at the same table and given something that they must work on together.

The children will always be within sight and sound of the Child Care Staff.

Through this type of behavior management, the Y Pre-K hopes to give a child the freedom of choice and learn that they have control of their own actions and consequences.

Limits will be set positively, constructively, and respectfully. Emphasis will be placed on safety and respecting the feelings, bodies and belongings of others. Children will be encouraged to “use words”, develop problem-solving skills and express negative feelings in acceptable ways.

Guidelines:

- Staff will be positive role models.
- Limits will be set in ways to develop a positive sense of self.
- Children will not be labeled “Bad”; the action or behavior was inappropriate; the child is not bad.
- Children will be encouraged to verbalize their feelings and to learn cause and effect of their actions.

Children thrive on positive interactions. Limits that are set in understandable, positive and compassionate ways encourage self-esteem and social growth.

Limits will be set using the following guideline:

- Positive reinforcement
 - Reminders
 - Redirection
 - Removal from situation
 - Quiet Space
-
- *Please note by Massachusetts General Law: The Y Program prohibits spanking or other corporal punishment of children. No child shall be subjected to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect or abusive treatment. Depriving children of meals or snacks or force-feeding children is prohibited. Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet; or forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or forcing a child to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting; is prohibited.*

PERSISTENT CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS

Defined as any behavior that (1) interferes with children’s learning, development and success at play, (2) is harmful to the child, other children, or adults, [or] (3) puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure.

Examples of challenging behavior: Physical aggression (hitting, biting, shoving, hitting with toys), relational aggression (“You can’t play with us”, verbal

bullying), tantrums, whining, testing limits, refusal to follow directions or observe classroom rules

Teachers address challenging behavior by

- A.** Assessing the function of the child's behavior.
- B.** Convening families and professionals to develop individualized behavior plans to address behavior.
- C.** Using positive behavior support strategies.

The individualized behavior plans do not have to be a formal IEP, but may consist of informal meetings, phone calls, emails, and/or other modes of communication to discuss plans to address the behaviors.

TERMINATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICES

Termination of childcare services by the family

- Families must notify the Pre-K/K Director and Child Care Registrar **at least two weeks** in advance of their child's termination date. Failure to do this will result in the family being billed for this time and losing their tuition deposit.

Termination of childcare services by YMCA Pre-K

- A child may be terminated from the program for several reasons, some examples are:
 - a) Non-payment of tuition after receiving written warnings from the finance office.
 - b) Inappropriate behavior on the part of the parent towards staff, another parent or a child.
 - c) The child displaying repeated unsafe behaviors that put other children or staff at-risk.
 - d) Refusal of family to complete a referral.
 - c) Failure of family to follow the policies outlined in the parent handbook.
- The Pre-K Director will notify families in writing and verbally.
- Families will be given a two-week notice of termination.
- The Pre-K Director will inform the families of the availability of other services.

When any child is terminated from the program, the teachers will prepare the child for termination in a manner that is consistent with the child's ability to understand.

REFERRAL POLICY

The Y Pre-K/K OST Program shall use the following procedures for referring families to appropriate social, mental health, educational and medical services

for their child, should the program staff feel that an assessment for such additional services would benefit the child. Whenever a staff member is concerned about a child's development or a child's serious, challenging behavior and feels that further evaluations should be done, they should report it to the Pre-K Director who will review the concerns. The Early Screening Inventory Revised, our Norm-referenced and standardized tests, will be used when seeking information on whether or not a referral is necessary. The Pre-K Director will also observe the child and make note of any concerns. The Pre-K will maintain a list of current referral resources in the community for children in need of services. This list shall include the contact person for Chapter 766 for children three years or older, the Early Intervention contact person for children under three years of age, behavioral consultation services available for children and their families.

REFERRAL MEETING

- The Director and teacher will meet to communicate to families in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner the area of concern.
- At the meeting the Pre-K Director will provide to the families a written statement including the reason for recommending a referral, including the summary sheet from the Early Screening Inventory Revised as it applies developmentally, a brief summary of the staff's observations related to the referral and any efforts the staff has made to accommodate the child's needs.
- Suggested next steps will be given, and information about resources for assessment. Families should be encouraged to request an evaluation in writing
- If the family needs extra support, the Pre-K Director may, with written consent, contact the referral agency.

FOLLOW UP ON THE REFERRAL

The Pre-K Director will, with family consent, contact the agency or service provider who evaluated the child for consultation and assistance in meeting the needs of the child while at preschool. The teachers, the family and the agency/service provider professionals will work together to develop a plan that will support the child's inclusion and success in the program.

RECORD OF REFERRALS

The Pre-K Director will maintain a written record of all referrals, including the family conferences and results.

SUSPENSION & TERMINATION POLICY

Possible reasons for suspension and/or termination of a child from a Y program will be determined upon each individual case that may include:

- * Inappropriate and/or physically aggressive behavior, considered to be harmful to a child, staff or others.
- * Chronic disrespect of staff or classmates.
- * Destruction of Y property.
- * Stealing of Y, or another child participant or staff's property/belongings.
- * Chronic tardiness on the part of the designated pick-up person.
- * Chronic absenteeism.
- * Overdue fees.
- * Inappropriate behavior by parent/guardian towards Y staff, children or other families/parents.
- * Other, as determined and discussed with the VP of Child Development & Education.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

According to state law (G.L. c. 119, s. 51A) child care workers are mandated reporters. If a child care worker has reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected they must file a report. Abuse is defined as the non-accidental commission of any act upon a child which causes or creates substantial risk of serious physical or emotional injury or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth. Neglect is defined as the failure, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to adequately care for, protect, or supervise children. Neglect may include, but is not limited to failing to supervise children or failing to regulate access to children by non-staff.

In Massachusetts, mandated reporters are immune by law from civil or criminal liability for filing a report, even if abuse is not confirmed by the investigator. This means that even if someone sues you for reporting, the court will dismiss the case when it is revealed that you are a mandated reporter, acting in good faith. Failure to report may cause punishment by a fine of up to \$1,000.00 or may result in civil liability if a child is harmed after a failure to report.

It is the policy of the Somerville YMCA that any staff member shall report to the VP of Child Development & Education if they know or have reason to believe abuse has occurred. Failure to report may result in disciplinary action against the staff person. If a report must be made the Program Director will report to the Department of Children and Families at 617-520-8700, or the 24-hour hotline at 1-800-792-5200. Oral and written communication must be given. However, if a child is in immediate physical danger the police will be called (911). When the written report is made as much detail will be reported as possible. The Program Director will follow up on the report to learn the results of the DCF investigation and any services the Department intends to offer the child and family.

The Somerville YMCA staff will attempt to prevent abusive situations by noting early warning signs. Parents will be made aware of community services and

knowledge of child development and child rearing techniques will be shared with parents. At the same time, the program will educate young children about their right to say "No". Children will be taught their rights to stop abuse and the need to tell a trusted adult about the experience.

In order to prevent institutional abuse, screenings/Vetting of staff will be conducted. This screening will include researching applicant's experiences and qualifications, conducting a Background records check which includes a Criminal, Sexual and DCF, and FBI Fingerprint check. Said staff person must undergo an interviewing process that includes reference checking. Further controls consist of providing adequate supervision of staff, a probationary period, parent observations and sharing policies regarding relationships with children and the Y abuse/ neglect policy. It is further a policy of the Somerville Y to not hire staff previously found guilty of child abuse/neglect.

If a staff member is suspected of abusing or neglecting children within the program, the staff member will immediately be removed from working with children. The incident must be reported to the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Early Education and Care. The accused staff member will not be allowed to work with the children in any capacity while the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Early Education and Care investigations are in progress.

EVALUATION

The Somerville Y serves the community and we are very much interested in your comments, concerns, questions and feedback regarding our programs. As your child arrives home each day, discuss the activities he/she had that day. Find out what other students are in your child's group, the names of their teachers and what activities took place that day. Remember, your child may be a bit timid and shy at first, so encourage them to get involved with the program's activities. As you gain feedback throughout the year, keep us informed. We need to have open communication between the program and parents, as to how your child thinks, what he/she likes and dislikes. With this feedback, we can continue to grow as one of the best preschool programs in Massachusetts. We would appreciate hearing from you in writing as to what areas your child liked as well as those suggestions you may have. Your feedback is encouraged and will be studied during the year as well as for future planning.

At any time, feedback and letters regarding any of the Somerville Y Child Care programs can be e-mailed or direct mailed to the Somerville YMCA, Attention Tania Buck, VP of Child Development & Education, 101 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143, or you can e-mail her directly at tbuck@somervilleymca.org.

ALL PROGRAM PARENT MEETINGS

Parent Meetings/Gatherings are held at least quarterly. Parent Meetings provide an opportunity for parents and staff to exchange ideas and information on a variety of topics. If you have any ideas for a topic that you feel could benefit other parents and families, that participate in the community, please contact your child's Program Director.

COMPLAINTS

Any complaints about the program or staff should be directed first to your child's Program Director. (Please see Organizational chart on page 8 of this handbook). These complaints should be in writing and should be signed by the parent/guardian. These complaints will be discussed with the staff involved. The Program Director, the Director of OST and/or the VP of Child Development & Education will schedule a meeting to address the issues if necessary.

CONFERENCES

The Pre-K Director will contact parents when a conference is needed. Parents are also encouraged to make arrangements for a conference if they feel one is necessary.

PRE-K/K PROGRAM HEALTH CARE POLICY

The complete Health Care Policy is posted in the program office and available on request. The following information is taken directly from the complete health care policy.

CHILD ILLNESS

If the child becomes ill while at the Program, he/she will be given a quiet place to rest until the parent or emergency contact can be reached. Children cannot remain at the Program while they are ill. Parents must pick up their ill child or designate another adult to do so.

Children are not permitted to attend the Program if they have any of the following infectious diseases: scabies, impetigo, ringworm, chicken pox, measles, poison ivy, poison sumac, conjunctivitis, strep throat, and any other condition deemed infectious. ***The child may not return to the Program until the parent brings a note from a Doctor or Registered Nurse if they are experiencing any of these contagious/infectious diseases.*** If a child has head lice, they should start the treatment and return to the program the next day after starting the at-home treatment.

PROCEDURE FOR ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

Please be aware that our medication policy is strictly overseen by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Laws and regulations and we cannot change or modify them.

- The program shall not administer prescription or non-prescription medication to a child without written parental authorization, which indicates that the medication is for the specified child.
- The program shall not administer prescription or non-prescription medication to a child without written order from a physician, which may include the label on the medication, which must indicate that the medicine is for the specific child and specify the dosage, number of times per day and number of days the medication is to be administered.
- The program shall not administer any medication contrary to the directions on the original container unless so authorized by a written order of the child's physician.
- The medicine must be in the **original prescription bottle**, with the child's name, dosage, prescribing physician and any additional directions for administration. Please do not send any medicine, prescription or non-prescription medicine in a sandwich baggie or other type of unlawful container.
- Cough medicine, Tylenol, or other non-prescription drugs must be accompanied by a **medication consent form that is signed and dated by medical personnel and guardian**.
- Parents will be asked, if their child is on long-term medication or has an on-going chronic condition, **to have the prescribing/primary physician fill out a child's Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP)** so that staff are aware of how to care and treat that child. This form is required by EEC and the standard IHCP form must be completed in its entirety and signed. This form is good for one (1) year. Please note that this form is in addition to the medication consent form discussed below. An IHCP form is needed for each condition (i.e. a nut allergy and asthma cannot be on the same form).
- For a child who needs medicine because of an allergic reaction (Epi-Pen) or for a chronic illness (Asthma Inhaler) the medicine needs to be carried in the first aid pack of the group the child is assigned to as well as on any trips outside of the building. The Program will need their own copy of the child's medication that will stay at the program as long as the child is enrolled in the program.

- Parents are required to sign a new Medication Consent Form each time they register medicine. No medication can be given without written consent. Please do not call the program and ask for the staff to give your child medication that we do not have permission to give. The program is also not allowed to give the **first dosage** of any prescribed medication while children are in our care.
- The Medication Consent Forms are kept in an alphabetized notebook and in the child's permanent file.
- Whenever staff members dispense medicine they need to fill out a Medication Administration Record. The staff indicate the name of the medication, the dosage, the route, the date and time medicine was given and then sign each time medication is given.
- All medications will be stored out of the reach of children and under proper conditions for sanitation, preservation and safety. All unused medication shall be disposed of or returned to the parent when no longer needed.

TOILETING POLICY & PROCEDURES

- No child shall be punished, verbally abused or humiliated for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.
- No child shall be forced to remain in soiled clothing, forced to remain on the toilet, or subjected to unusual or excessive toileting practices.
- Children must be supervised in the bathroom at all times, with respect given to the child's privacy needs.
- Children must wash their hands with soap and running water after toileting and before meals.
- Staff members must also wash their hands with soap and running water after assisting children with toileting or toileting themselves. Individual paper towels shall be used to dry hands.
- Clothing soiled by feces, urine, vomit or blood shall be double-bagged in sealed plastic bags and stored apart from other items.
- A change of clothes shall be available for each child. YMCA owned clothing must be laundered after use and returned as soon as possible.
- Cases of diarrhea should be noted. If two or three children have diarrhea at the same time, the health care consultant should be contacted.
- Teachers will work with families in toilet training.

SUMMER/WARM WEATHER SUNSCREEN POLICY

Parents must provide children with sunscreen during the warm or summer months. If your child arrives without sunscreen and the permission form allowing the YMCA to provide sunscreen is not signed, your child will not be

allowed to participate in outdoor activities. In order to keep their skin safe, during the warm and summer months, please apply sunscreen on your child prior to arriving at the program.

EMERGENCY PLAN FOR EVACUATION

At the sound of the fire alarm or any other danger which might cause injury to the children:

- All children must leave the building accompanied by staff.
- Classroom Teachers responsible for each group, take their children out of the exit nearest to where their children are located, unless the exit is blocked.
- All children and Teachers will meet in front of 101 Highland Ave. In inclement weather the program will enter the building and proceed to the Wadleigh Room on the 2nd Floor SACC Program for shelter or to the Gymnasium if not in use.
- The Pre-K Director/Lead Educator or their designee will take the sign in and out sheets and check them against the classroom attendance rosters to check to make sure that all children are out of the Y Pre-K Site.
- Practice evacuation drills will be conducted once a month.
- The Pre-K Director documents the date, time and effectiveness of each evacuation drill.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

The current payment application that we use for all child care payments is ProCare. Weekly tuition notices will be sent to your ProCare Account, once you have set that up with our Child Care Registrar/Billing and Contracts Manager, Francesca Ciccone. Francesca can be reached at fciccone@somervilleymca.org or 617-625-5050 x111.

*** Child Care rates are charged weekly and are not reduced for any weeks containing scheduled holidays or closures due to inclement weather.**

*** A non-refundable one-week deposit will be required at the time of registration. It will be applied to the last week's charge.**

- * **Any parent terminating their slot must give a two-week notice prior to the child leaving the program.**
- * **There are no refunds or credits given for early withdrawal.**
- * **All child care payments must be made in advance of service. Payments are due every Friday by program close for services beginning the following Monday (See Payment Schedule).**
- * **Parents whose payments are more than two weeks late will be asked to withdraw their child from the program and will receive a warning notice. If payments are more than three weeks behind after the warning notice is issued a termination notice will be sent to the family letting them know what the child's last day will be.**
- * **Parents are responsible for payment when their child does not attend the Program on their scheduled days.**
- * **There are no refunds or credits towards another day, week, or session.**
- * **VOUCHERS/CONTRACTS ONLY: Parents on vouchers and contract state subsidy slots are ultimately responsible to ensure that the subsidy is re-authorized in a timely manner. We contact each family in advance that their voucher or contract is expiring, however it is the person whose name is on the voucher or contract's responsibility to make an appointment to re-authorize your subsidy. If the subsidy expires and you continue to send your child, you will be charged the private daily rate until we receive the new voucher or re-authorize the contract. Vouchers and contracts CANNOT be back-dated. All of these policies and procedures are mandated to us by the Department of Early Education and Care's Child Care Subsidy Department.**

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Somerville YMCA accepts vouchers and holds three income eligible Pre-K/K and SACC Contracts of our own for qualifying income eligible families. All voucher parents will need to contact the Child Care Registrar/Billing and Contracts Manager, Francesca Ciccone, for any questions regarding their vouchers or contracts

SCHEDULED HOLIDAYS & CLOSINGS

The Program will be closed on the following days:

- * Labor Day
- * Columbus Day

- * Thanksgiving
- * Day after Thanksgiving
- * Christmas Day
- * New Year's Day
- * Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- * President's Day
- * Patriot's Day
- * Memorial Day
- * Juneteenth
- * 4th of July/Independence Day
- * 5 YMCA Staff Training Days-TBD-
please see annual closure schedule at
the end of this handbook.

SNOW DAY POLICY

Normally the program will be closed when the Schools are closed for inclement weather (Snow Day). When a snow or storm emergency is declared during after-school hours, program staff will notify parents to pick their children up as soon as possible. A qualified staff person will remain with the children until everyone has been picked up. During school vacation weeks, Program snow closings will be announced on our website and the Y-Facebook Page and/or via e-mail.

POLICIES REGARDING LATE PICK-UP OF CHILDREN

The Y Programs have established the following policies for parents/guardians that are late in picking up their children.

1. If you are late, or going to be late, you MUST CALL the Y Pre-K/K OST Program.
2. Habitual late pick-up of your child can/will result in termination of your child care services.
3. The center closes at 6:00 PM during the school year and 5:45pm during vacation weeks and summer. If a child has not been picked-up by closing time, a telephone call is made to the parent/guardian.
4. If the parent/guardian cannot be reached at home/school or work numbers, the emergency telephone numbers are called, and if contact is made, that person is requested to pick up the child. If there is no response, steps #1 and #2 will be repeated at 6PM and again at 6:15 PM.
5. If contact has not been made with the parent/guardian or emergency person by 6:30 PM., the Program Director or their designee will contact

the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to file a 51A report citing child neglect. A report of these actions will be placed in the child's file.

LATE PICK-UP FEES

During the school year, the Somerville Y Pre-K OST program will close promptly at 6:00 PM each day. During school vacation weeks and summer the program closes at 5:45pm. All children must be picked up on time or late pick-up fees will be charged.

- On the first offense, the time, date, and name are recorded and a verbal warning will be given.
- On the second offense, a late pick up fee will be charged to families for every minute they are late picking up their child, starting at 6:01 PM during the school year and 5:46pm during vacation weeks and summer. The clock at the child care site will be used to determine the fee charged. The fee will be \$1.00 for each minute after 6:01 or 5:46PM **per child.** Chronic Tardiness at pickup time could result in your child being terminated from the program on the third offense.
- The late fee will be added to the family's weekly bill and is expected to be paid within the next week.

Somerville YMCA Closing Schedule for FY 2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30th 2024)

The following is a list of days that the Somerville YMCA Pre-K/K and School Age Child Care Programs will be closed for observed holidays and/or professional development days.

- Tuesday July 4th, 2023-Independence Day
- Friday September 1st, 2023-**Professional Development Day**
- Monday September 4th, 2023-Labor Day
- Monday October 9th, 2023-Indigenous People's Day/Columbus Day
- Friday November 10th, 2023-**Professional Development Day/Veteran's Day**
- Thursday November 23rd, 2023-Thanksgiving Day
- Friday November 24th, 2023-Day after Thanksgiving
- Monday December 25th, 2023 Christmas Day

- Monday January 1st, 2024-New Year's Day
- Monday January 15th 2024-MLK Jr. Day
- Monday February 19th, 2024-President's Day
- Friday March 29th, 2024-**Professional Development Day**/Good Friday
- Monday April 15th, 2024-Patriots Day
- Friday May 24th, 2024-**Professional Development Day**
- Monday May 27th, 2024-Memorial Day
- Wednesday June 19th, 2024- Juneteenth Day
- Friday June 21st, 2024-**Professional Development Day**
- Thursday July 4th, 2024

SOMERVILLE Y-Pre-K/K OST Program PARENT HANDBOOK RECEIPT FORM

I have received my copy of the Somerville YMCA's Preschool Licensed Child Care Program's policies and procedures.

I agree to abide by these policies and procedures as they have been given to me and explained to me. I understand that this receipt will be placed in my child's file. I understand that if I have any questions regarding these policies I should follow the organizational chart listed on page 8. of this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

MUST BE PLACED IN CHILD'S FILE