



**2025-2026**  
**Family Guide**

# **WELCOME TO NATURE CENTER PRESCHOOL**

## **South Shore YMCA Mission Statement—The Better You Belongs Here**

The South Shore YMCA is committed to strengthening our communities by nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living, and fostering a sense of responsibility.

## **South Shore Natural Science Center Mission Statement**

The mission of the South Shore YMCA Nature Center is to provide natural science experiences that educate, excite, and commit every generation to preserve the environment and to encourage responsible use, stewardship and enjoyment of our natural resources.

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## **NCP philosophy**

Nature Center Preschool connects young children and their families to their local environment developing ecological literacy, critical thinking, engagement, and stewardship for the natural world while nurturing the mind, body and spirit of each child.

## **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of our school is to nurture each child and family's innate desire to discover their world through direct contact with nature, foster respect for the community where they live and play, and prepare them for lifelong learning.

Nature Center Preschool encourages children to build inquiry skills, develop empathy for all living beings, gain confidence in their problem solving, and cultivate a healthy self-image.

Through place-based, hands-on exploration, naturalist visits, and teachable moments, children will have the opportunity to extend their own learning thereby building skills and knowledge that they can transfer to any future learning.

## **Goals and Objectives**

It is the goal of Nature Center Preschool to support young children's investigations, igniting their passion for learning. By highlighting the interconnectedness of humans with the natural world, we provide a foundation of stewardship, inquiry, and innovative thinking. Children are given the freedom to explore a wide variety of intelligences that enable them to make meaningful connections to the early development of language, math, art, science, technology, and social emotional skills.

The Nature Center Preschool curriculum is carefully facilitated to be developmentally appropriate and emergent according to children's curiosity and interest. Nature Center Preschool serves children from 2.9 to 5+ years old.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Nature Center Preschool does not discriminate with regard to race, religion, cultural heritage, disability, political beliefs, marital status, toilet training status, or sexual orientation.

## **Celebrating Diversity**

Nature Center Preschool welcomes all families and celebrates the diversity represented in our Y community. As staff, we encourage open discussions with families to learn about each child's family and culture so we can have a better understanding of all expressions of human differences, including culture, race, language, ethnicity, religion, family structure, ability, learning styles, sexual orientation, gender, age, and socioeconomic differences. We believe that maintaining open communication and educating ourselves builds mutually agreeable practices and procedures that will benefit our program as well as assist with building a strong bond with each individual family in our program. Nature Center Preschool and the South Shore YMCA are committed to embracing & celebrating all cultures and incorporating their celebrations within the curriculum planning. We invite you to be part of the process by sharing your family's culture with us!

## **I. Tuition**

### **Tuition Policy**

Tuition payments are due weekly and are to be made in advance. Tuition will be expected on Friday for the upcoming week. **Tuition payment is also made for closed holidays; no-show days, family vacations, illness and days closed /delayed openings due to inclement weather, or closure emergencies and or other delays.** The Enrollment Fee (if applicable) and the first week's tuition are due upon enrollment. Enrollment fees and tuition deposits are non-refundable. Tuition rates are subject to change. A 30 day notification of rate changes will always be provided.

### **Annual Re-Registration Fee**

Each family enrolled at the Nature Center Preschool will be charged an Annual Re-Registration fee per child, with a family limit upon re-enrollment. Along with the annual registration fee families will be asked to update their child's registration packet. Per the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) all registration paperwork is valid for one year only and must be updated annually.

### **Automatic Payment Deduction**

For the convenience of our families, tuition payment through automatic payment deduction is provided by our billing department. Upon enrollment, families are provided with the authorization form to complete for automatic payment deduction of tuition payments. This form can also be found at [ssymca.org](http://ssymca.org). Tuition is withdrawn weekly on Friday for payment of the upcoming week's tuition.

### **Withdrawals/Changes**

A written/emailed two week notice to the center Director is required if you decide to withdraw your child from the program. We also ask for a written request to change the days your child is enrolled. This allows for authorization of the change, to maintain proper numbers in the classrooms. A new Enrollment Fee will be charged if the child is re-enrolled.

### **Late Payment Policy**

Tuition payment is due in advance, on Friday for the upcoming week. Payments that are not made by Monday of the current week will be considered late. No student's account may have more than one week's tuition outstanding at any time. Any accounts with an overdue balance will be sent a termination letter, unless agreement has been made with the business office and/or payment has been submitted.

### **Termination Due to Lack of Payment Policy**

Any account with an overdue balance will receive a warning letter on the day that it is deemed late, (Monday). If payment is not received by the following Friday, a termination letter will be sent (Monday) and if payment is not received by Friday, your child will not be able to return to the Nature Center Preschool on Monday. The effective date of the termination notices will be reflective of your last week's paid tuition. If your payment is brought up-to-date by the termination date, your termination notice will be voided. Repeated instances of termination notices will compromise your child's enrollment and all scholarship funding. All billing questions may be referred to Kathy Crompton at the business office at [kcrompton@ssymca.org](mailto:kcrompton@ssymca.org).

### **Financial Assistance**

The South Shore YMCA is a charity. Dollars raised through charitable gifts to our Annual Campaign ensure financial assistance and accessibility to programs and services for all.

To apply, please see the director for instructions on how to apply. Please consider volunteering your time, talent or treasure to this year's Annual Campaign.

## **II. Enrollment Procedure**

Children must be 2.9 years old by September 1st to enroll in Nature Center Preschool. Registration/enrollment for September begins as follows:

January: Children currently enrolled in the preschool and their siblings

February: Open enrollment

Enrollment is ongoing throughout the school year pending available openings.

- An appointment to tour the school, meet with the Director and visit the classroom will be scheduled before enrollment.
- The following forms are part of the enrollment packet and must be completed and returned to the Preschool:
  - Enrollment/face sheet
  - First Aid and Emergency Medical care consent
  - Transportation Plan
  - Photo Consent
  - Medication Consent (if needed)
  - Individual Health Plan (if needed)
  - Developmental History

- Child's Health Record (including immunizations or notification of exemption and lead screening) signed by a healthcare professional.

### III. Curriculum and Assessment

Our developmentally appropriate curriculum is created monthly with the children's interests in mind. As we explore the seasonal changes that occur in nature, children develop skills in observation, making guesses, experimentation, and problem solving. Readiness skills encompassing math, language, social studies and health are woven into the nature-based curriculum. Children are encouraged as they acquire self-help skills, independence and responsibility, as well as social skills and competence in relationship building.

We align our curriculum to the *North American Association for Environmental Education Early Childhood Environmental Education Programs: Guidelines for Excellence* as well as the *Massachusetts Early Childhood Program Standards*. We use Teaching Strategies Gold as an assessment tool and family/teacher conferences are held twice a year—November and late April. A developmental portfolio of your child is prepared annually and will be discussed at the April family/teacher conference.

### IV. Children's Records

The information contained in your child's record is private and confidential and will not be released to anyone without your written consent. You may have access to your child's records at any time, with two days' notice, and copies will be available at your request. **Please note: Families are responsible for providing the copies to all additional programs both internal and external. Nature Center Preschool will not be able to provide copies of records to parties outside of Nature Center Preschool.** Please allow additional time for record copy requests during the summer camp season. You may amend your child's record at any time. Documentation including date of amendment and parent initials will be required.

### V. Arrival and Dismissal

- No child or group of children will be allowed to leave the school with anyone other than a parent/guardian and authorized pick-ups notated on the enrollment forms. All alternate pick-ups must be submitted to the director prior to the student's pick up time and must include the person's name, phone number and address. Please update authorizations accordingly. Identification will be required.
- **Please drive slowly at all times in the parking lot!** Do not let children cross the parking lot unaccompanied by an adult.
- There may be times when the Nature Center Preschool must close due to severe weather conditions. Weather related cancelations will be determined as needed. **Please visit [ssymca.org](http://ssymca.org) for closing updates. Closures will also be communicated through email by the director and through the Remind app.**

### **Late Pick-up Policy**

The staff schedule is set in regard to the program's class times. All children must be picked up at the conclusion of the class in which they are scheduled. If a family must be late for pick-up, Nature Center Preschool will adhere to the following policy.

- Families must call the Preschool to tell us they anticipate being late. They must provide the time in which they expect to arrive.
- Families will be charged a \$10.00 fee for the first 10 minutes and a \$5.00 fee for each five minute interval that their child is still in the program after class has dismissed. The late fee will be added to the family's tuition.
- If the tardiness is consistent, a meeting with the family and Director will be called to discuss strategies to avoid tardiness. Consistent cases of tardiness may result in compromised enrollment.

### **VI. Lead Paint Screening**

The Department of Early Education and Care warns of the dangers of lead paint ingestion and requires children under the age of six be tested for lead paint exposure. For further information check with your child's pediatrician. Verification of lead screening from your child's healthcare professional is required.

### **VII. Illness/Absence Policy**

If your child feels ill in the morning before a school day, please keep him/her at home. Children should be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning to school. Since all children go out on the trails each day, your child should not return to school until he/she can go outdoors and participate in the day.

When a child will not be in attendance on their regularly scheduled day at Nature Center Preschool, it is the responsibility of the family to call Nature Center Preschool at **781-659-2559** and inform the staff of the child's absence by 9:30am. Nature Center Preschool staff will take the following steps to ensure the child's safety:

- If a family member of an absent child has called or emailed the School, the staff person who took the phone call will note the confirmed absence on the Call In Log located inside the Director's office.
- At 9:35am, for AM classes and 1:15pm, for PM classes, a staff member will call the parent/guardian of all students not in attendance. If parent/guardian is not reached, the emergency contacts will be called.
- If, after calling all emergency contacts listed, no contact has been made to confirm the child's absence, the staff person will inform the Director who will call the non-

emergency line of the family's local police department for a welfare check. Please note that this required policy is for the safety of your children.

If a child becomes ill while at school, the parent is called to take the child home. If the parent cannot be reached, an authorized person may be called to take the child home. In the event that no parent or authorized person can be reached, a teacher will stay with the child in a quiet area of the classroom until he/she goes home. Children cannot return to the school until they are symptom free for 24 hours. This will allow your child time to recover and prevent the spread of illness to other children.

Parents are asked to have their children bring a set of seasonally appropriate clothing each day (including socks and underwear) in a bag or backpack with the child's name on it. All soiled clothing will be double bagged in sealed plastic bags and stored apart from other items. All items used by the child will be disinfected and/or washed.

## VIII. Communicable Diseases

In accordance with state regulations: “Nature Center Preschool shall not admit a child who has a diagnosed (or suspected) communicable disease (such as impetigo, conjunctivitis, or H1N1) during the time when it is communicable and shall notify all parents when any communicable disease, such as chicken pox, measles or mumps has been introduced into the center.

<b>DISEASE</b>	<b>May Return</b>	<b>Approx. Time</b>
“Blushing Disease” (fifth disease)	May return with rash, if no fever or distress.	1-3 days
“Cold” Symptoms	Reduction of cough and runny nose. No fever.	1-6 days
Chicken Pox	No NEW eruptions or fever. May have old dry scabs.	1 week
Hand-foot-mouth disease (Coxsackievirus, Enterovirus)	Keep children with hand-foot-and-mouth disease out of child care or school until fever is gone and mouth sores have healed.	7-10 days
Head Lice	After verified treatment	No nits present
Hepatitis-infectious, not otherwise specified	Until documented that illness is not transmissible by fecal oral route or until one week after symptom onset, whichever occurs first.	Fever is completely gone and a week has passed since the symptoms started.
Impetigo	Doctor’s permission or clearing of condition.	24 hours after first medication
Measles (Rubella) / (3 day)	No rash or fever	4-8 days
Measles (Rubella)/ (7 day- hard-red)	No rash or fever, red eyes, red nose	7-10 days
Mononucleosis	Absence of all symptoms	Depending on condition
Mumps	No swelling, fever	1-2 weeks
Pink Eye	Doctor’s permission or clear eyes evident	1-4 days
Ringworm	Doctor’s permission or clear area	
Scabies	After verified treatment	After verified treatment
Strep Infections, Scarlet Fever, Strep Throat, Scarletine	At least 24 hours after initiating antimicrobial treatment.	Personal surveillance and prophylaxis with an antimicrobial when appropriate. Otherwise, no restrictions.

**To ensure the health and safety of the Preschool community, a letter, email, or telephone call informing the Preschool Director of a highly contagious communicable disease within a student’s family is required.**



**Common Cold:** The common cold is the cause of more absences than any other single ailment. Most children's diseases begin with symptoms like those of the common cold. If your child has a cold, keep him/her at home until early symptoms have passed, such as coughing, sneezing and running nose. Colds may be prevented with proper hand washing technique as well as hygiene habits that encourage sneezing and/or coughing into the elbow/sleeve rather than into the hands.

## **IX. Medication**

### **Oral Medications:**

- Prescription medications will be administered with the written permission of the parent and by the written order of the physician utilizing the medication consent form (valid for one year).
- The medication must ***be in its original bottle*** with the child's name, the name of the drug, and the directions for usage and storage on the label. The parent must fill out the authorization for medication form, in its entirety, accompanied by a parental signature. **No Educator will administer the first dose of any medication to a child in case of an allergic reaction. The first dose must always be given at home.**
- A teacher with specific training in medication administration, including epi-pen, will always be present to administer medications.
- The teacher accepting the medication will document the child's name, time medication will be administered, in the daily log.
- The teacher will administer the medication according to the physician's instructions, and record the date, time, dosage and staff signature on the medication log.
- Unused medication will be returned to the parent and documented on the child's medication log.

### **Topical non-prescription medications:**

- Topical, non-prescription medications such as petroleum jelly or antibacterial ointment which are applied to minor wounds, rashes or broken skin may not be applied at school unless given written order by a physician at which time a medication consent form must be filled out.
- Written authorization includes a signed statement listing the specific topical, non-prescription medication to be administered and the criteria for administration. This parental authorization is valid for no more than one year from the original date.
- **The school will not administer any medication contrary to the directions on the original container unless authorized by a written note by the child's physician.**

- Sunscreen and bug spray can be applied with written consent and is good for one school year. It is preferred that sunscreen and/or insect repellent be applied by a parent or caregiver before coming into school but can be reapplied if needed.

## **X. Emergency Procedures**

*(All Nature Center Preschool staff maintain current CPR and First Aid Certification.)*

When a child has a minor injury or illness the teacher will administer the necessary first aid. If the teacher and/or Director feel that the child needs further medical care, the parents will be called and asked to pick up their child as soon as possible. The teacher will fill out an incident/accident form within 24 hours. The parent signs the accident form and keeps a copy. The director reviews the accident form and enters the information into the accident log. The accident form is placed in the child's file.

If there is a life-threatening emergency, the director will call 911 and then call the parent. The teacher will administer the necessary first aid. The child will be transported by ambulance or parent to the appropriate hospital.

## **XI. Emergency Evacuation**

- Emergency Evacuation Plans will be posted at all exits
- During an emergency evacuation the Lead Teacher will be responsible for taking the attendance information, emergency contact information, a first aid kit, and for ensuring that all of the children are out of the building.
- Teachers and assistant teachers will assist in the evacuation.
- Once evacuated, the class will meet at the back of the building and may continue to a center wide meeting place on the center island of the staff parking area.
- The emergency contacts will be kept in each class backpack and be readily accessible in case of an emergency evacuation.
- The Lead Teacher will be responsible for taking the attendance list and for accounting for all of the children in the class once they are safely out of the building.
- Emergency evacuation drills are conducted every month (following the EEC guideline) at different times of the program day.
- Children and staff will practice using different evacuation routes so that the children and staff will be familiar with them.
- Documentation of the date, time, number of children, and effectiveness of each drill will be maintained on the Fire Drill Log located on the bulletin board in the classroom.

## **XII. Clothing**

- Because groups share the classroom, anything your child brings to school should have his/her name on it.
- An extra set of clothing should be brought from home in a backpack with **the child's**

**name on it.** Please also label clothing.

- We go outdoors every day in most weather. Safety is of utmost concern and conditions will be closely monitored and assessed for safe conditions. Please dress your child in appropriate clothes. Play clothes and rubber-soled shoes are best; **no crocs or open toe shoes/sandals**. For rainy weather, a rain coat or rain suit and rubber boots are recommended. In winter we require a warm jacket, snow pants (when needed for snow or bitter cold), boots, hat, and water-proof mittens.

### **XIII. Toys or other items from home**

We prefer that children not bring toys from home except on “Show and Tell” days or items of special interest to our teaching themes indicated on the calendar. If a lovey is necessary we ask that the child keeps it in their backpack where they can visit it when needed and use during rest times.

### **XIV. Parties and Snacks**

**Nature Center Preschool is a tree nut and peanut-free environment!**

A mid-morning or mid-afternoon snack of water, a grain, protein, fruit or vegetables is provided each day. Nature Center Preschool strives to provide nutritious choices for snacks that promote good overall health. Contributions from parents are much appreciated but not required. Nature Center Preschool will follow physician’s orders regarding special diets and allergies. Family requests for dietary needs, not requiring a physician’s order, may also be submitted.

The YMCA has made a commitment to the Partnership for a Healthier America. Nature Center Preschool implements all HEPA (Healthy Eating and Physical Activity) standards in our classrooms. We provide daily opportunities for children to learn about healthy food choices and promote physical activity to keep our children healthy and strong!

We emphasize healthy choices for celebrations (such as birthdays/holidays) like a child’s favorite fruit. Other choices may be pretzels, rice cakes, bagels or veggies with dip. No homemade items may be brought in for the classes, as all snack must have an original label with ingredient and nutritional information. No candy, cake/cupcakes, please, and **no items with peanuts, nuts, or their oils**.

### **XV. Parent/Family Communication**

Nature Center Preschool staff will utilize many forms of communication to keep families aware of special events, curriculum, policies and other news. This may take the form of email, our "remind" app or letters sent home with children. Arrangements can be made at any time to speak with a teacher at length. We will be happy to call you after school or arrange a conference any time during the school year. Regularly scheduled conferences are held with all parents/guardians in November and late April to discuss your child’s progress at Nature Center Preschool.

It would be helpful to the teachers to know if anything unusual is going on in your home during the year. This may be an illness, an anticipated move, death of a relative or pet etc. Although your child may not seem to be affected, his or her behavior may indicate that he or she is upset. If we know what the cause is, we are better able to understand any change in behavior. Please let the classroom teachers know if there are any changes within your family or routine that may affect your child in any way so that we can meet your child's needs.

## **XVI. Open Door Policy/Visitation/Confidentiality**

Nature Center Preschool has an open door policy; we want you to feel welcome at any time. Parents and family members are also invited to help in the classroom with special projects or on our nature walks. Sign-ups will be provided at the beginning of the year. In the spirit of child safety and to protect all children in our program, volunteers must adhere to the South Shore YMCA Volunteer Policy. These are the guidelines for volunteering at Nature Center Preschool:

- One-time volunteers (other than chaperones) are not required to submit paperwork.
- Field trip chaperones must submit a CORI/SORI; waiver/confidentiality agreement.
- Families who request to volunteer on a regular basis in the classroom are considered Program/Dept. volunteers. The following is required:
  - CORI/SORI
  - Application
  - References
  - SSYMCA Orientation
  - Waiver/confidentiality agreement

These forms can be obtained from the Director.

We value the assistance that families provide helping out with day to day routines, chaperoning field trips, sharing talents and hobbies, and sharing their culture. Family volunteers enrich the NCP experience and we could not do it without you!

### **Confidentiality Policy:**

The confidentiality policy protects the privacy of all families and ensures a positive and respectful environment for all. Children's personalities and needs are all very individual and happenings in the classroom on the surface may appear to be easily identified, when, in reality, there are much deeper reasons for behaviors and actions.

It is important to be aware that information out of context can be misunderstood and lead to misinformation. As professionals, NCP educators work with families every day to create the most beneficial environment for each individual child. Educators adhere to strict confidentiality which includes maintaining the privacy of each child and family.

**Volunteers in the classroom are also expected to adhere to these confidentiality**

### **guidelines:**

- Information that identifies individual students should not be disclosed.
- Discussion about individual students or groups of students should be respectful and not include directly identifying names of children.
- Incidents that occur in the classroom should not be discussed with anyone other than the educators caring for the child or children.
- Concerns may be raised with educators in a private setting.

**Photography, audio and video recording while volunteering in the classroom or on field trips is strictly prohibited.**

## **XVII. Class Liaisons**

Class liaisons are family members who are representatives of their child's classroom. Tasks for the class liaison(s) include arranging the classroom yearbook, organizing after school playdates/lunches and relaying classroom specific information regarding special events to the classroom families. These dedicated volunteers may also choose to help with Nature Center events, the Storybook walk, family events, and other projects of interest.

Please speak with the Director and Classroom Teachers if you would be interested in volunteering as a Class Liaison.

We encourage all families to be involved in fundraisers that contribute to scholarships and equipment for the Preschool, the Science Center and the SSYMCA's Annual Campaign.

## **XVIII. Child Guidance Policy**

Our child guidance techniques are used in a consistent, reasonable and developmentally appropriate way based on an understanding of the individual needs and stage of the development of each child. By using the following child guidance techniques, we strive to minimize inappropriate behavior while creating a positive and nurturing environment for all of the children in our care.

### **Child Guidance Techniques will include:**

- Setting reasonable and positive expectations.
- Offering choices and providing children an opportunity to verbalize their feelings.
- Firm and reasonable limits and rules will be explained to children in an age-appropriate manner using clear, easy to understand words.
- Redirection- we will offer alternatives to children when undesirable behavior is displayed.
- Verbal intervention- we will talk with the child about his/her inappropriate behavior and give suggestions on how to deal with the situation more appropriately.

- Logical consequences- we will help the child understand the logical consequences of his/her actions, which will encourage self-control through understanding.
- If a child is acting out by hurting themselves or others, we may separate the child and assist them to an area where he/she can be supervised at all times until the child feels he/she can rejoin the group.
- If a child persists with particularly challenging behavior, the teacher and the family will discuss appropriate management techniques together.
- Children shall participate in the establishment of rules and limits appropriate to their age.

Staff will be a positive role model for youth by exhibiting professionalism in all interactions, portray an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, maturity and always maintain confidentiality to children and families.

### **Nature Center Preschool Strictly Prohibits:**

- Corporal punishment, including spanking of children.
- Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment.
- Depriving children of meals or snacks.
- Force feeding children.
- 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.

### **XIX. Termination Procedures**

Every effort will be made to work with children and parents with the goal of continued enrollment at Nature Center Preschool, including parent meeting and feedback. However, sometimes it may be necessary to suspend or terminate a child's enrollment. In cases where a child's continued behavior is a risk to other children, the staff, or property, parents may be asked to withdraw enrollment.

Parents will be notified in writing of the reasons for the suspension or termination of enrollment and a meeting with the teacher and the director will be arranged. At this meeting other options for the child will be explored and/or referrals made to other community services (Please see referral policy on page 16 of the family guide). We will prepare the child in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand to ease with the transition.

Other Conditions for Termination or Suspension:

- Failure to pay weekly tuition.
- Unresolved disagreement regarding center policies or procedures as stated in the Nature Center Preschool Family Guide.
- Lack of updated physical and immunizations (child may re-enroll based on availability once updated paperwork is completed).

- When a child and/or family member is physically and/or verbally abusive and /or threatening to children or staff.

If a child has been disenrolled (required to end enrollment by Program Director) from any South Shore YMCA Program, and is moving to another SSYMCA Program, a family meeting is required with the Director of the new SSYMCA Program prior to the Program's start. The family must request and schedule the meeting with the Director, and ensure it takes place prior to the Program's start. This meeting is to ensure that the new Program is able to gather information re' the child's needs and that the program can meet the child's needs. It is encouraged that the prior Program Director (and South Shore YMCA Inclusion Director if applicable) be a part of that meeting (Example: Day Camp to Afterschool). Please ask the Director for additional information as needed.

## **XX. Mandated Reporting**

Nature Center Preschool will protect children from abuse and neglect while in the care and custody of the school.

All SSNSC/SSYMCA staff fall under the MA guidelines of Mandated Reporting and are mandated by law to report all incidents of suspected abuse and/or neglect of children under the age of 18 to the Department of Children and Families via 51A Report. According to MA General Laws to Protect Children Section 51A-F no staff will ever be "discriminated or retaliated against" for making a report of suspected abuse.

To learn more about South Shore YMCA Nature Center/South Shore YMCA commitment to child safety, visit <http://ssymca.org/safe-kids/>

The staff will follow written procedure for the reporting of any suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect as required by MGL 119 and 51A:

- All staff are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect. The report will be made to the Department of Children and Families pursuant to MGL 119 and 51A, by the Director.
- Nature Center Preschool conducts comprehensive background checks on all staff including an EEC CORI, DCF, SORI and fingerprinting.

## **XXI. Babysitting Policy**

Nature Center Preschool teachers are prohibited from babysitting, visiting, transporting, or attending any birthday parties when a child is enrolled in the program.

## **XXII. Our Educators**

At Nature Center Preschool we believe that the quality of the children's experiences while in our care is largely dependent on the quality of our educators. Therefore, we carefully select our educators based on their education, experience, passion, and ability to work with children and families. Nature Center Preschool provides an extensive orientation process regarding program policies and procedures, curriculum, and philosophy of education. We provide ongoing

professional development opportunities for our educators to further their own learning through courses and trainings offered inside and outside of the South Shore YMCA. Early educators participate in ongoing professional development in both nature-based curriculum goals and traditional early childhood development. Educators attend a spring Early Educator's Retreat and complete 13 StrongStart Essentials modules to support the healthy growth and development of young children as well as ensure core competencies are enhanced and critical early childhood education skills achieved. In addition, all employees of Nature Center Preschool receive training in first aid and CPR as well as Child Abuse Prevention, Recognition and Reporting.

### **XXIII. Referral Policy**

If a staff member has a concern about a child's social, educational or mental well-being, she is responsible for bringing it to the attention of the preschool director, who files written documentation.

The staff member as well as the Director must first observe and record the child's behavior over a period of time and review previous records if available. The director contacts the family for a conference and offers assistance with referrals, if necessary. A list of services in the community can be found below. The preschool director will make the referral and follow-up will take place with parental permission.

### **XXIV. Individuals with Diverse Abilities**

Nature Center Preschool will make reasonable accommodations for children with diverse abilities and chronic illnesses. We consider each case individually and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In some cases, external referrals may be recommended in an effort to provide the least restrictive learning environment for the child. The following is a list of resources for families. Inquiries about these and other referral services may be made through the Director.

### **XXV. Referral Resources**

Nature Center Preschool is governed by the regulations of the Department of Early Education and Care located at 100 Hancock Street 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Quincy, MA 02169. Telephone: 617- 472-2881 x628. Our Licenser is Lori O'Brien. Families may contact EEC for information regarding the program's regulatory history. Below is a list of local resources. Please reach out to the Director for town specific information.

- Nature Center Preschool Health Care Consultant:  
Heather Simpson, RN 508-395-8368
- Norwell Early Childhood Coordinator 781-659-8800  
Leah Ciolkosz  
[leah.ciolkosz@norwellschools.org](mailto:leah.ciolkosz@norwellschools.org)
- Department of Children and Families 781-794-4400



Coastal Area DCF Office  
220 Forbes Road/Rear, Suite 117  
Braintree, MA 02184

Fax: 781-794-4507

- Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC), Quincy  
[www.eec.state.ma.us](http://www.eec.state.ma.us) 617-472-2881
- South Shore Therapies, Weymouth, Pembroke and Cohasset  
<http://www.southshoretherapies.com/> 781-335-6663
- Early Intervention  
[www.norwellschools.org](http://www.norwellschools.org) 617-971-2470  
781-659-8800
- Sargent Child and Family Services  
[www.sargentchild.com](http://www.sargentchild.com) 781-923-0032

## **XXVI. Hand washing**

Children and Adults will wash their hands:

- After diapering or using the bathroom
- Before eating, or preparing food
- After handling animals or their equipment
- Before and after water play or messy play
- After sneezing or coughing/using a tissue

## **XXVII. Toileting**

Children who are toilet trained will use the bathroom as needed and as scheduled throughout the day. After using the bathroom, all children will follow proper hand washing procedures. For children who are learning to use the toilet, educators will follow family requests and work in partnership during this process. Educators will provide many opportunities throughout the day for children to become familiar with the toileting process.

**Toileting accidents:** All families are asked to provide a complete set of clothes (appropriate to the season) in their child's backpack. If a child has a toileting accident, he/she will be cleaned up by an educator in the bathroom and changed into clean clothes. The soiled clothes will be placed in a doubled and sealed bag and returned to the family at the end of the school day.

## **XXVIII. Transportation Plan**

Parents/guardians are responsible for transporting their children to and from the preschool or on eventual field trips. A permission slip for field trips will be required.

## **XXVIII. Outdoor Activities**

An important part of the curriculum will be outdoor exploration to teach children about the natural world around the Science Center and provide hands-on exploration that connects all

areas of learning.

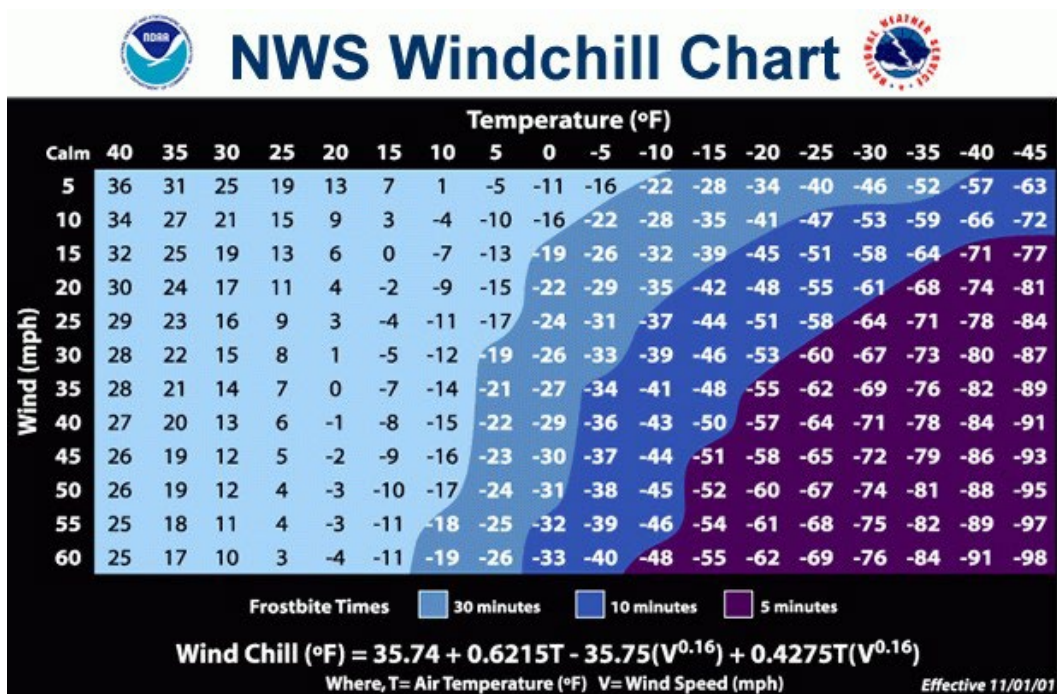
The teachers of Nature Center Preschool have many years of experience leading young children on trail walks around the center. Three people will be with the children on the walks and during outdoor activities if we have more than 15 children in the group. A first aid kit is always brought along as well as a cell phone and a 2-way radio so that we can keep in touch with the staff.

The duration of the outdoor time will be approximately 80% of the day depending on the activities and the weather. In the Fall and Spring, the classes may have their entire class day outside. The children sometimes use a field with a sandbox and at other times play in the meadow. The trails will be inspected by Nature Center Staff on a regular basis and kept in good condition. Our Preschool curriculum empowers children to explore the natural environment in a safe and appropriate way.

Our program differs from that of a traditional preschool with regard to outdoor education. Our Teachers' expertise with the outdoor environment provides for meaningful experiences that encourage and enhance the growth and potential of each child.

**Warmer weather:** Please apply sunscreen and insect repellent outdoors prior to arriving to Preschool. In addition to wearing *sunscreen*, you can help protect your child from harmful rays by having them wear a hat, sunglasses, sun-protective clothing and by limiting sun exposure, especially during the most intense times of the day from 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Tick prevention includes insect repellent, long pants tucked into socks, and permethrin applied to shoes and clothing. We limit meadow play when the grass is very long and stay in the center of the trails during hikes. Please check your child daily for ticks especially in hidden areas of the body.

**Winter:** We take the safety of children very seriously and we utilize guidelines for outdoor time. When the property is full of ice and walking anywhere is hazardous, we do not venture out. Additionally, high winds that cause tree limb damage would be another reason to stay inside. Regarding cold temperatures, we gauge the safety based on the frostbite guide put out by the National Weather Service (p.21). In extreme cold we limit outdoor time to less than thirty minutes while also closely monitoring the children's comfort. Having snow pants, jackets, waterproof mittens and a hat generally protects children from the dangers of cold along with reduced exposure time.



### XXX. Animal and Pet Policy

Animals can be fascinating to children and provide a wealth of learning opportunities. Classroom pets or visiting animals of Nature Center Preschool must be in good health. In addition, all animals must have documentation from a veterinarian showing that they are up to date on immunizations and are of the nature to have positive contact with children. Educators will supervise all interactions between children and animals and will coach children on safe behavior with animals. Children will not participate in the cleaning of the animal's habitat and litter boxes will be inaccessible to children. All children and staff will follow proper hand washing procedures following any contact with animals.

### **South Shore YMCA Nature Center History**

Founded in 1962, by a group of local naturalists and college professors, and led by William G. Vinal, PhD (retired professor of Nature Education) and John Ripley Forbes,(President of Natural Science for Youth Foundation),the South Shore YMCA Nature Science Center is one of Massachusetts oldest nature centers. The Nature Center has been an integral part of the south shore community experience for multiple generations and currently serves a population of approximately 450,000 from 41 area towns south of Boston .Through our unique combination of education and cultural programs, multidimensional interactive live animal habitat exhibits, and nature trails, the Nature Center enjoys an established reputation as an outstanding resource for environmental education. Seasonal celebrations and Environmental Education visits in local after schools extend the Science Center's programming and attract wide audiences.

Our trails and outdoor areas are open daily from dawn to dusk 7 days a week and indoor areas from 9-12 Monday to Friday. The Center's main building includes the ECOZONE, an interactive living habitat exhibit area focusing on the region's ecosystems, classrooms, and greenhouse. The state EEC certified preschool onsite provides a nurturing beginning to environmental education and the summer day camp thrills young explorers.

Revised 6/2025  
Nature Center Preschool  
South Shore YMCA Nature Center  
48 Jacobs Lane, Norwell, MA 02061  
781-659-2559

# Family Guide Signature Page

Please initial each item and sign/date below.

**I have read the Family Guide and understand Nature Center Preschool Policies.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read and understand the Nature Center Preschool Confidentiality Policy.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I give permission for Nature Center Preschool to send a class list home to each family in my child's class including my name and email address.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand my child's photo will be used for classroom/yearbook purposes unless an opt-out form is on file.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand my child's photo may be used for SSYMCA marketing and/or social media unless an opt-out form is on file.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand that Nature Center Preschool is a peanut/nut free environment.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I give permission for Nature Center Preschool to apply hand sanitizer to my child upon arrival and when hand washing is not available.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read and understand the Nature Center Preschool Absence Policy.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read and understand the Nature Center Preschool Late Policy.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I understand that if my child is showing any signs of illness they must be kept home from school.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**I have read and understand the Nature Center Preschool 2 week notification policy for withdrawal from the Preschool.**

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please contact the Preschool Director, if you would like to have any of the above policies clarified before signing.**

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_