



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Child Watch Policy Guide | *Parents & Guardians*

YMCA of Central Ohio | Updated: Jan 22, 2026

All family memberships include complimentary drop-in Child Watch services from ages 6 weeks through 9 years old while parents/guardians utilize the YMCA facility.

Children can enjoy a safe and engaging environment while adults participate in wellness activities or community programs.

A parent or guardian must remain on-site while their child is in Child Watch.

Daily Time Limits | 6 Weeks through 9 Years Old

- Infants aged **6 weeks to 6 months**: up to **90 minutes** at one time, not to exceed 2 total hours daily. Visits may not be scheduled consecutively.
- Children aged **6 months to 9 years**: up to **2 hours** per day.
- Recurring late pickups may result in suspension of the amenity for a period of time.

Schedule, Reservation & Identification Procedures

- Schedules & Reservation requirements vary by individual location; these can be confirmed on our Child Watch page, ymcacolumbus.org/join/child-watch.
- Walk-ins are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis at all locations and are subject to space availability.
- At select locations, reservations are available and strongly encouraged; reservations may be made in 30-minute increments through Quick Links on the YMCA360 Mobile app, or online through Manage Your Account (see tutorial instructions on the [Child Watch](#) page).
- A secondary check-in within the Child Watch room is used to verify the identity of both children and their authorized guardians.
- Children may **only** be released to any of the following who are listed in our member database:
 - a parent/guardian,
 - a sibling aged 16 or older, or
 - a designated authorized pickup.
- Staff reserve the right to verify identification at any time and may request a valid photo ID.

Diapering Policy

Staff are unable to change diapers. If a child needs to have their diaper changed, the parent/guardian will be summoned and asked to use a changing station or locker room. After a diaper change, children should return to Child Watch in clean, dry clothing.

Restroom Use

Restroom access within Child Watch varies by location:

- If a restroom is within the Child Watch area, children may use it independently.
- If the restroom is outside the room and staff coverage allows, a staff member will escort a group of children.
- If staff coverage is insufficient, the parent/guardian may be contacted to assist.
- Please encourage your child to use the restroom before entering Child Watch.

Food & Drink Policy

- Food is not allowed in Child Watch.
- Water bottles, sippy cups, and baby bottles brought from home are permitted.
- Only water is allowed for children who are not bottle-fed infants.
- Bottles and cups will be kept on the reception counter and handed to children upon request. Children must drink while seated or standing still and then return the container to staff.
- Children must be fed prior to entering Child Watch. Staff will not bottle-feed children. Children must be able to hold their own bottle or cup.
- Parents are welcome to breastfeed or bottle-feed their children in the Child Watch area.

Toys

- Age-appropriate toys are provided and sanitized after each shift.
- Personal toys from home are discouraged.
- Larger equipment is sanitized after each shift and deep cleaned monthly.

Illness Policy

- Children must be symptom-free of communicable illnesses including, but not limited to:
 - diarrhea
 - vomiting
 - rashes
 - lice infestation
 - colored discharge from eyes, ears, or nose.
- A temperature of 100°F or higher requires removal from the program.
- Children must be symptom-free without the aid of medication for at least 24 hours before returning.
- Documentation will be provided if there is exposure to a communicable illness.
- Staff may remove any child displaying signs of discomfort or illness.

Behavior and Biting

- Staff use redirection as the primary behavioral guidance strategy.
- If behavior does not improve, the parent/guardian may be asked to remove the child from Child Watch for the day.
- A biting incident may result in immediate removal for the day.
- Repeated incidents or behavior inconsistent with YMCA Core Values may lead to temporary or permanent removal.
- Staff reserve the right to determine whether continued participation is in the best interest of the child and others.

Discipline Philosophy

- Our approach is rooted in understanding developmental needs and fostering self-regulation, responsibility, and respect.
- Methods include positive reinforcement, logical consequences, redirection, temporary removal from group activities, or temporary suspension from the program if needed

Staffing & Ratios

- A minimum of two staff must be present at all times.
- At least one staff member will hold current First Aid and CPR certifications.
- Staff receive training in Child Development, Child Abuse Prevention, and Communicable Disease protocols.
- A target staff-to-child ratio of 1:8 is maintained, with lower ratios for infants or as facility needs require. Ratio changes may be determined by center managers/supervisors.

Crying Policy

- If a child is inconsolable for more than 10 minutes despite staff efforts, the parent/guardian will be contacted for pick-up.

Parent Presence in Program Area

- If you need to help your child adjust to Child Watch, please limit your time in the Child Watch area to 10 minutes. This limit does not apply to breastfeeding.
- Due to state regulations, any adult with prolonged access to the space must pass a criminal background check.
- If your child has special needs, please speak with the program supervisor.

Playground Use (Availability Varies by Location)

Children ages 3 and older may use the playground under staff supervision if the following criteria are met:

- Weather conditions are deemed appropriate by staff.
- The following behaviors/actions are prohibited on the playground or in play areas:
 - Jumping from equipment
 - Climbing up the slide
 - Roughhousing or unsafe behavior

- Picking up or throwing mulch

Infant Area (Availability Varies by Location)

- Designed for children under 2 years of age who need a quieter, safer environment.
- Staff may hold and comfort infants within view of another staff member.
- Infant equipment such as rockers or bouncers may be used.
- Parents may leave infants in a carrier or car seat.
- Toys in this area are exclusively for infants. Outside toys are not permitted.