



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Child Care Guide

YMCA of the Northern Sky

Learning Centers for:
Infants | Toddlers | Preschool | School Age
Est. 1963

Learning Center Hours

Monday - Friday
6:30 am - 6 pm

89%

of our Early Learning Center children were kindergarten ready*

*Per academic results and comparisons once they reached 3rd grade.

5 Standout Features of YMCA Learning Centers

1

We employ qualified teachers who want to be at the YMCA every day

2

We serve nutritious meals and snacks including whole grains, fruits, and vegetables

3

Our programs provide activities to support school success

4

We offer access to financial assistance programs

5

We provide transportation to and from most area schools and select YMCA programs

You want the very best for your child, and so do we. YMCA Learning Centers are a place for children to explore, learn, and grow, while feeling safe, cared for, and celebrated. We encourage positive relationships between children, staff, and families to ensure a high-quality experience.

YMCA Philosophy:

In accordance with our goals and philosophy, our program is play-based. Each day your child will be provided time for free play with a wide variety of materials and spaces. Some activities are teacher-planned and guided, but each child can freely choose which activity, materials or spaces they wish to use. The YMCA strives to challenge and stimulate each child at their own developmental level and foster a positive self image by accepting each child as an individual.

Specific Needs:

In every program, and every classroom, we address the specific needs of children based not only on age, but also individual pace of development. We believe the values and skills learned early on are vital building blocks for quality of life and future success.

Child Development:

At the YMCA, babies develop trust and security; toddlers learn to explore their world; preschoolers experience early literacy and math; and school-age kids make friends and learn new skills. Most importantly, children learn how to be their best selves. That makes for confident kids today, and contributing and engaged adults tomorrow.

Safety:

The safety and health of your child is our top priority. That's why the YMCA Learning Centers go above and beyond state licensing requirements.

Early Learning Centers (Infant - 5 years):

- In our North Dakota Early Learning programs, the Y achieves high rankings through the Bright & Early North Dakota system.

YMCA School Age Learning Centers (Grades K - 5)

- Our North Dakota School Age Learning Centers are all licensed.
- Our Moorhead and Fergus Falls School Age programs are certified per state requirements.

YMCA Learning Centers | Established 1963

1963	Start of KinderKamp Preschool, the Fargo YMCA's first preschool
1980	Start of Full Day Early Childhood Care at Fercho YMCA
1986	Start of YMCA School Age Child Care
1987-89	Started School Age care at Madison, Jefferson, and Moorhead
1997	Schlossman Family YMCA opened with a new Learning Center
1999	Y-South, a full-time child care for ages infant through preschool opened
2000	Fercho child care remodeled
2005	Started child care in West Fargo
2008	Started school age programs in West Fargo
2014	Started school age programs in Moorhead
2024	YMCA of Cass & Clay Counties and Fergus Falls Family YMCA merge to become YMCA of the Northern Sky, bringing their communities together with expanded school-age programs
2024	Opened state-of-the-art YMCA Learning Center at Urban Plains in South Fargo



Quality Staff

At the YMCA Learning Centers, your child's growth and development are in the hands of passionate, dedicated, and qualified educators. We are proud to employ teachers and staff who not only love working with children, but are also committed to continual growth in their profession. At the YMCA, we believe that when we invest in our teachers, we're also investing in your child's future.

All YMCA Child Care staff are CPR, AED, and First Aid certified, and have passed background checks based on state licensing requirements. Staff also provide a thorough orientation so your entire family feels comfortable at the Y!

Professional Development

All YMCA Early Learning Centers are a part of a professional development program for early childhood educators. We keep up on new curriculum and technology, and our teachers are continually learning to provide the best care possible for your child.

We strive to hire individuals who hold 2- or 4-year degrees in Early Childhood Education, or a related field and have valuable experience in early learning settings.

For those who join our team with experience but without formal education, we wholeheartedly invest in their journey. We support these individuals in earning their **Child Development Associate (CDA)** credential while working and we cover the cost of their CDA process. This allows them to learn and grow on the job, ensuring every staff member brings both passion and professionalism into the classroom.



Early Learning/Preschool (Infant - 5 years)

Many of our teachers have a degree in Early Child Education (or related field), or a Child Development Credential, along with practical experience working with young children. Warm, caring teachers bond and develop trust with families. Each child has a primary caregiver, your main point of contact, to guide your child's development.

School Age Learning (Grades K - 5)

In our School Age Programs, we seek to hire Site Supervisors and individuals:

- Actively pursuing careers in education
- Earned a degree in Elementary Education (or related field)
- Have or working on a Child Development Credential
- Experienced working with school-age children.



Learning Healthy Lifestyles

Your child shares meals and snacks with their peers, where they learn to make healthy food choices. All meals exceed USDA requirements, as we follow the **Healthy Eating Standards** put forth by the YMCA of the USA.

These standards include:

- a fruit or vegetable at every meal (fresh when available),
- water or milk as a beverage,
- very limited sweet treats,
- 60 minutes of physical activity per day,
- limited screen time per day (with none for children under four). Screen time is limited to educational viewing only.

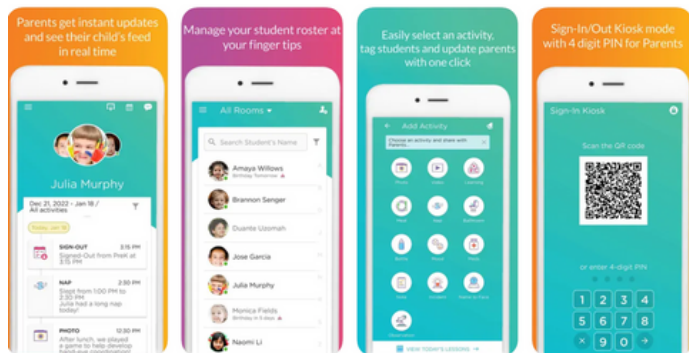
In 2011, all YMCA's across the country made the commitment to the [Partnership for a Healthier America \(PHA\)](#).

Stay Connected

Families are welcome visitors to our programs at all times. We hope parents/guardians will attend family functions, help with classroom projects, and attend field trips with us. We encourage families to occasionally join us for lunch. Just give us a heads up and we'll prepare additional meals.

For infants through preschoolers, families meet at least twice a year with their child's teacher to discuss their child's development. Families may continue to meet with child care staff as needed.

Parents also have the opportunity to stay connected using our ProCare mobile app, receiving regular updates and frequent pictures, so you'll always be connected to your child throughout the week!



Our success as a community relies on collaboration. The YMCA of the Northern Sky is a United Way of Cass-Clay **Verified Impact Partner**.

Receiving a United Way grant means we are a nonprofit deemed the best at what we do. Our child care programs stood the test of critical and smart community members, financial reviews, and strategic alignment to our mission and rose to the top.



Financial Assistance

We believe that every child should have the opportunity to succeed. That's why we offer multiple resources to help families pay for child care expenses. To qualify for financial assistance, you must be currently enrolled or in the process of enrolling at one of our child care programs. Financial assistance is designed to help cover expenses based on your family size and gross income per your household.

It is possible for families to qualify for both North Dakota/Minnesota Child Care Assistance and YMCA financial assistance programs. However, we ask families to apply for State Child Care Assistance before applying for YMCA Financial Assistance.

Please visit our ymcanorthernsky.org/tuition webpage for details and instructions regarding applying for financial assistance. Our team is here to help you.

My son has really enjoyed his first few weeks of the Y Program. I was so glad to hear that they started a reading program to encourage kiddos to keep reading and make it a part of their everyday lives. We already know that the research shows that kids can lose their reading achievement over the summer, and for my kindergartener going into first grade, I have already noticed the benefits.

When my husband travels for work, he leaves little sticky notes for our 3 boys, and it was the first time he eagerly read his whole note by himself. Reading does not come easy to all, and sometimes the mental perseverance to learn it varies from kid to kid. When your child care center includes reading as a value AND implements it, everyone benefits.

I can tell my son has gained even more interest and confidence in his reading. Thank you Y!

– Greta B.
YMCA Learning Center Parent

Membership Benefits

YMCA Learning Center families can join the YMCA's fitness facilities and pay a discounted monthly rate! Membership includes access to Fitness Centers, Group Fitness, Aquatic Centers, Basketball Gyms, Climbing Wall, lots of spaces to play as a family, like the Play Loft and Kids' Gym, and virtual programming through YMCA360! **All enrolled children get the discounted member rates on programs!**

The **Family Household Package Membership** even includes access to PlayTown (drop-in child care) for up to two hours/day for children ages eight years and younger. Visit ymcanorthernsky.org/membership for more information.



LITTLE ONES

Ages
6 weeks – 3 years

Learning to Explore Their World

In YMCA Learning Centers, children feel safe, secure, and happy while watching and absorbing knowledge and skills from everything and everyone around them. Teachers strive to attain balance and harmony with your child's home schedule – this means that we work with families to establish the right eating and sleeping routines for your child. We believe high quality child care is a partnership – together, we'll give your child the best start possible.

INFANTS 6 weeks – 18 months

Infant classrooms maintain a ratio of 1 adult to 4 infants

Infants learn through active, hands-on play with activities that help them learn and master new skills. That's why our classrooms are staffed with people who understand the cognitive, physical, and social development of infants, as little ones need to feel connected and supported. We use The Creative Curriculum® for Infants to effectively support the unique needs of infants during these critical periods of rapid development.

Teachers work closely with families to introduce foods to your child in a timely and safe manner. All food and Parent's Choice brand formula are provided by the YMCA. Mothers may choose to provide their own milk and are welcome to stop in anytime during the day to nurse.

Daily Activities

Our infant's daily schedules are based on the individual needs of the child.

Infants spend their day playing with sensory objects and toys, enjoying stroller walks outside, and participating in activities like bubbles, water buckets, finger painting, dancing, and more.



TODDLERS 19 months – 3 years

Toddler classrooms maintain a ratio of 1 adult to 5 toddlers

Toddlers love to move, discover, and play! We provide guidance as they develop their skills, gain independence, and master milestones. In the toddler classrooms, we use The Creative Curriculum, an award-winning, research-validated curriculum to guide this increasingly independent age group.

Daily Activities

Toddlers spend their day exploring materials in the block area, science center, art station, and go outside for gross motor play.

In addition, toddlers spend daily group time together enjoying painting projects, story time, sensory activities, and themed lessons like letters, sign language, colors, seasons, shapes, and more that foster their development.



EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM 6 weeks – 2 years

Together, the Mayville State University Child Development Program and the YMCA of the Northern Sky provide **Early Head Start**® services to eligible families at our West Fargo and South YMCA (Urban Plains) Learning Centers. Early Head Start is an income-based program that provides families with quality child care for ages six weeks through two years. Enrollment is through the Mayville State Head Start Program. Applications are accepted any time during the year. Learn more at ymcanorthernsky.org/tuition.

PRESCHOOL

Ages
3 – 5 years

Ready for a Bright Start in School

Our preschool programs use The Creative Curriculum.® This curriculum was specifically chosen because it prepares children for a smooth transition into kindergarten. The curriculum supports skills in the areas of language development, communication, body awareness, character development, and socialization skills. Children learn how to play politely, take turns, listen to their teachers, clean up after themselves, and take responsibility.

Is Your Child Ready for Kindergarten?

Full Day Preschool 3 – 5 years

Full day preschool is a licensed, full day, year-round school readiness program. You have the flexibility to drop off and pick up your child anytime between 6:30 am – 6 pm.

Preschool classrooms maintain the following ratios:

- 3-year-olds are 1 adult to 7 children
- 4-year-olds are 1 adult to 10 children
- 5-year-olds are 1 adult to 12 children



North Dakota Best in Class – at all locations 4 years

The **ND Best in Class program** aims to address the need for high-quality early childhood experiences for all children in the year prior to kindergarten. North Dakota's Best in Class program is a targeted state investment in programs committed to delivering the highest quality experiences to the children and families they serve, and whose actions can demonstrate the return that is possible with intentional, research-supported investments in early childhood.

ND Best in Class is built on program characteristics that drive results – high quality, supported interactions between adults and children based on developmentally-appropriate experiences.

Daily Activities

Children join in an interactive large group experience to engage the brain and talk about weekly themes, calendar, weather, letters, shapes, colors, and numbers.

Children focus their energy on reading and writing. They also use their imagination through creative art.

Play is a child's work. Children are encouraged to socialize in a variety of learning centers such as dramatic play, art, sand and water, library, construction, science, and games.

Children participate in large motor activities to move their bodies. At our YMCA locations, children utilize other areas of the facility like play areas and Aquatic Centers.

Engaging reading materials are read aloud to children.

Meals and snacks are included in your tuition. Meals are served "family-style" to make mealtime a pleasant social experience. Manners are practiced during mealtimes as well.

Children attending our full day preschool program rest or nap daily on their individual cot.

Children that
went through our
program were

20%

higher* academically
in 3rd Grade

*Per academic results and comparisons once they reached 3rd grade



Transportation

Transportation is provided for full-day preschoolers to participate in swimming lessons and other activities at various YMCA sites. Opportunities to register for these programs are shared with families throughout the year.

SCHOOL AGE

Grades
K – 5

Reaching Their Full Potential

Before & After School | School Out Days | Summer

YMCA School Age Programs offer before and after school fun and learning during the school year, and full day programming during the summer months. Incorporating the latest research in youth development, the YMCA of the USA has developed a unique program model for grades K-5 that combines fun with learning and exploration. The careful balance between social time, educational activities, and physical activities makes the YMCA so much more than “just” after school child care.

7 Components of YMCA Learning Centers Daily Schedule



Curriculum

In the School Age Program, kids love using their hands and brains to take our daily plans to the next level. Along with physical games and activities both outside and in the gym, we also allow children to choose their focus each day in activity areas like arts and crafts, music and drama, science, technology, math, reading, and more.

We strive to make every child knowledgeable of our **YMCA Core Values** through character development lessons and role modeling.



Daily Activities

Children share lunch and snack family style with their peers to promote social skills and using manners.

Children can freely explore interests with friends in our many learning centers, from Art and Makerspace to Science and Math.

Whether playing outdoors on the playground or an organized game in the gym, children are physically active every day!

Opportunities for swimming, rock climbing, and occasional field trips on school out days and Summer.

Our signature Explore Zone activity time provides children hands-on learning opportunities to conduct science experiments, complete art projects, develop their talents, and explore their interests in many hands-on activities.

Character development inspires kids to become ethical, responsible citizens through engaging conversations and activities.

Engaging and enriching reading materials are shared through group reading, buddy reading, and individual reading time.



School Out Days

When school is out, the Y stays open! YMCA Learning Centers are open from 6:30 am – 6 pm on days when there is no school. Each day is packed with activities to keep minds sharp and bodies moving. Kids will unplug from technology and engage in fun activities and socialize with friends. Breakfast, snack, and lunch are provided! Children not currently participating in a YMCA School Age Program are also welcome to participate in School Out Days, so we encourage participants to invite their friends! Registration is required at least two weeks in advance. Learn more online at: ymcanorthernsky.org/schooloutdays.

INVESTING IN CHILD CARE, INVESTING IN COMMUNITY

At the YMCA, we know that access to quality child care is essential – for children, for families, and for the health of our entire community. That's why in 2024, we made a major investment in the future by opening the **YMCA South Learning Center at Urban Plains**.

For working families, reliable child care means stability, security, and opportunity. The new Learning Center expands access to early learning and school-age care, giving families a safe, enriching environment for their children.

This state-of-the-art secure facility was designed with kids in mind, and includes thoughtful touches like no-pinch doors, car seat cubbies, benches to change boots, built-in fidgets to get out the wiggles, modern and creative classrooms, 2 indoor gyms and 2 outdoor playgrounds for age-separated play, and a large outdoor classroom.



Our Learning Centers support development at every stage – from infants and preschoolers to elementary students in our before- and after-school programs.

Every day, the children in our care experience the power of **Youth Development** as they discover new skills and grow into confident learners.

They benefit from **Healthy Living** not just through movement and active play, but also through nutritious meals and snacks that fuel their growth.

And they experience **Social Responsibility** as they learn values like teamwork, kindness, and respect in a caring, supportive environment.



LET'S CONNECT!

Questions about YMCA
Child Care Programs?

We'd love to help! Please contact:
enroll@ymcanorthernsky.org or
701.364.4117

GET SOCIAL!



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