

YMCA Little Seeds Nature Preschool at Camp Ihduhapi: Family Handbook

About Little Seeds

Welcome to Little Seeds Nature Preschool. The YMCA has a great reputation for providing quality preschool programs throughout our community. Our preschool programs have high quality programming and expert staff. At Camp Ihduhapi, we will be utilizing our safe, welcoming, and beautiful space as an outdoor classroom for our preschoolers. We are excited to be expanding our programming reach by offering a premier and unique Nature Preschool Program. This family handbook is intended to help you navigate our program and expectations. In our preschool program, students will create a lifelong connection with nature through exploring diverse nature landscapes, developing relationships through music, art, play and growing in their love of the outdoors. Our experiences are built on the Y's Core values of caring, honesty, responsibility, respect, and equity.



Our goal is to give all students the opportunity to discover who they are and what they can achieve, through nature and environmental education.

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Contact Information

Little Seeds Nature Preschool at Camp Ihduhapi

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- Website: ymcanorth.org/campihduhapi

- Facebook: YMCA Camp Ihduhapi

Address: 3425 Ihduhapi Trail, Loretto, MN 55357

YMCA Customer Service Center

Questions about registration, payments, financial assistance etc.

- 612-230-9622 or visit online at [www.ymcamn.org/contact us](http://www.ymcamn.org/contact-us).

Diversity & Inclusion

It is the YMCA of the North's' vision to serve relentlessly with our community until all can thrive in each stage of life. At the Y, we gladly welcome participants regardless of race, ability, creed, national origin and gender.

Please contact us if you have perspective on your child that may help us better support them while they are at preschool. Families will also be asked to fill out a Pre-school Developmental History form that helps inform and prepare our teachers and staff.

About Little Seeds

Our Community

YMCA Programs are about learning skills, developing character and making friends. But few environments are as special as nature preschool, where kids become a community as they learn both how to be more independent and how to contribute to a group as they engage in class activities.

Preschool Groups

Classrooms will follow a ratio of 1 teacher to 6 students with a maximum of 18 students in one class.

Nature Preschool Activities

Preschoolers will experience a variety of activities during the school year. Our program aims to encourage creativity, skill development, and understanding the world around them. During these creative learning experiences, students are exposed to the natural elements of our property. They will experience dirt, mud, bugs, plants, and various types of weather—but preschool will go on.

Our staff are trained to recognize and avoid unsafe situations. If your child has a specific reaction (allergies, fears, etc) to any outdoor elements; be sure to indicate this in their Preschool Developmental History form.

Animals

Preschoolers will have the opportunity to interact and/or observe a variety of animals while at school. Children will be supervised at all times while interacting or observing animals and will wash hands before and after touching or handling animals. Children will occasionally interact with bunnies and chickens. Students will observe other animals such as tortoises, snakes, fish, and other small aquarium or caged animals. Other animals children may have the opportunity to interact with or observe while at Nature Preschool include; horses, goats, and dogs.

Families will be notified via weekly communication should any new animals join us at preschool or come for a special visit.

Please be sure to indicate on your preschoolers health form should there be any pet/animal allergies.

Staff

At Little Seeds, we value the diversity of experiences our teaching staff hold in various fields, including early childhood education, psychology, social work, environmental science, art, and more. They are certified in CPR and First Aid and have also completed numerous hours of in-service training for preschool.

Each staff member goes through an extensive hiring process including criminal history, background check, reference checks, and interview. Little Seeds staff members are committed to being positive role models and embodying the 5 core values of the YMCA, caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, and equity.

Weather

We embrace the idea that there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing! We appreciate that changing weather helps children develop resiliency. We find when children are dressed appropriately for the weather, they enjoy rain, snow, and mud just as much as sunshine.

When weather does not support a full session of outdoor learning, we may modify class in the following ways:

Significant Cold/Wind Chill: In significant cold, we follow a sliding scale of wind and temperature developed by the National Weather Service to determine the appropriate amount of time to spend outdoors. Some winter days may result in shorter outdoor visits and more time spent interacting with nature indoors to help balance safety and fun. <https://www.weather.gov/safety/cold-wind-chill-chart>

For weather delays or school cancellations we follow the Orono School District decisions.

- **Nature Preschool will NOT follow cold only delays.**
- **ONLY snow delays or cancellations will be followed.**

Storms: In the event of a thunderstorm, we will remain in the classroom for 30 minutes after the last lightning strike or boom of thunder. Time spent inside may include investigation stations, stories, journaling, nature themed activities, or free play.

A Day in the Life at Little Seeds

Sample Schedule

8:30-8:45	Flexible Drop Off
9:00	Welcome
9:30	Outdoor Exploration
10:30	Snack
11:00	Adventure Hike
12:00	Lunch
12:30	Peace time
1:15	Storytime
1:30	Investigation Station
2:30	Snack
2:45	Choose your Adventure
3:30-3:45	Flexible Pick Up
3:45-4:30	Optional Extended Care

Snacks & Lunch

All meals are provided. Morning and Afternoon snack and lunch. Food will be provided by our Kitchen Manager and will be safe and healthy. Families may choose to provide their own food.

Peace Time

Peace time items and bags will be kept at Pre-school and sent home at the end of each week. Cots/mats will be provided. Items your child may bring for nap/rest time:

- Blanket
- Small pillow
- 1 stuffed animal

Bring Everyday

- Weather appropriate clothes (please drop your child off in their outdoor clothes)
- Layers appropriate for the weather of the day
- Extra pants, shirts, gloves, hats, mittens
- Re-fillable water bottle
- Indoor Shoes
- Backpack/Bag (labeled)

Dress your child for a day of outdoor fun. Please do not send your child's best clothing/shoes, as activities are outside and rugged. All items should be clearly labeled with your child's full name. This will assist us with claiming lost and found. Valuables and meaningful items should be left at home. Note- items that are soiled, damaged, or otherwise deemed not able to be safely stored will be disposed of.

Little Seeds is not responsible for any lost, damaged, or stolen items.

Medications

Medication will be turned into the teacher upon arrival. Medication must be in the original container and marked clearly with dosage, frequency and child's name. This includes over-the-counter drugs. Please only send medication that will be needed for the time your child is at preschool. Additionally, a [Medication Release Form](#) will need to be completed upon arrival and turned in with medications. The form can be found on our website.

Pro Tip: Watch for our newsletters and updates in your email! We'll highlight the next week's themes, special projects, birthday shout outs, and Little Seeds event updates!

Pick-up & Drop-off

Drop-off & Pick-up

Families will provide all transportation to and from Preschool.

We offer flexible pick up and drop off options:

Morning Drop off: 8:30—8:45am

AM Half Day Pick Up: 11:45-12:00pm

Full Day Pick up: 3:30-3:45pm

Extended Care: 3:45-4:30pm

Please park outside of the dining hall and enter through the doors on ground level.

Authorized Pick-up Contacts

The safety of your child is our number one priority. Participants can only be picked up by someone listed on their authorized to pick up list (emergency contacts) and carrying their photo ID.

If you need to add an authorized pick up or change an authorized pick up, please provide the change in writing. Please give a hand written note to staff or email the change.

If you are late for pick up please call. If we do not hear from you, we will attempt to reach you by phone. If you are not reached, we will call persons listed as emergency contacts. After 30 minutes, the authorities will be called to ensure the safety of your child.

Registration and Forms

Registration

Registration can be completed online at https://www.ymcanorth.org/adventure/experiences/nature_preschool

Please note, we will take registrations for waitlisted programs. You will be notified should your child get off the waitlist.

All children must be potty trained by the first day of class.

Forms

All forms must be submitted for all children by their first day of school. *Forms will be sent to registered families in a 'Welcome Packet' late July.*

- Preschool Developmental History Form
- Basic Safety Awareness Acknowledgement Form
- Optional: [Medication Release Form](#) must be submitted if you are sending medications, prescription or nonprescription, with your child to preschool.

Changes and Cancellations

Changes or cancellations must be made, in writing, to the Director, two weeks prior to the start of a new month of school. Cancellations made less than two weeks prior to a new month will not be refunded or pro-rated. Please contact Customer Service for questions related to billing or third party payments. Change fees may apply.

- 612-230-9622
- customerservice@ymcanorth.org

Please note, we do not offer refunds or pro-rated payments for injury, illness, weather or outdoor related ailments. We occasionally make exceptions for extended leave due to illness or injury with a doctor's note, please contact us if that is the case.

Scholarships

Scholarships are a needs-based fund that we are able to provide via annual donations and fundraising events. To apply for scholarship, go to www.ymcanorth.org/scholarships. Follow the online process to submit your request. Customer Service will notify you of the percentage and amount within about 5 business days.

Behavior Policy

At the Y we believe that every family and child should have access to programs that fit their needs. We aspire to create a community that is safe, inclusive, welcoming, and exemplifies the Y's core values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility, and Equity. We recognize that children come to us with a range of backgrounds, experiences, and history, and that this may be reflected in their mental or behavioral health while at Nature Preschool. While working with children our goal is to collaborate with families. To help in this effort, we check in with families frequently, have bi-annual parent-teacher check ins, and utilize a Preschool Developmental History form to help inform and prepare our staff. The more detailed information and helpful "tips" you can give us, the better prepared we are to work with your child.

It is our goal that our staff make every effort to ensure all children have a safe and positive experience. We believe our success stems from a safety-first mentality. Nature Preschool is designed to be a fun and amazing outdoor experience for kids, but we recognize that the small and large group programming may not always be the best fit for all students.

In order to best support the safety and enjoyment of preschool, we approach Social Emotional Learning as strategy for systemic improvement for all as it supports adults to strengthen practices that promote equity. Social Emotional Learning is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. We believe that our students have the opportunity for growth and support within the five pillars of Social Emotional Learning and development- self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness. While working toward our goals of providing a safe and positive experience we may implement Action Plans. Action Plans are tailored to children and their specific needs. We work in partnership with students, families, and staff to determine appropriate action plans for a student. When determining action plans we strive to partner with families and meet children where they are at in their development, all while keeping safety at the forefront.

We train and empower our teachers and staff to support students individual needs with the implementation of action plans. These action plans are designed to work with children on a personal basis to reach success while ensuring we are meeting each child where they are at.

When a situation becomes harmful to an individual, the group, or when it cannot be resolved, then we will bring in additional support from the Leadership team. Examples of this could be a child running away from their group or not staying within sight and hearing range of their staff members, bullying toward another child or staff. Our Leadership teams include a small team of Blue Card® holders trained in CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention®. This team is trained in crisis intervention, de-escalation, non-restrictive and restrictive intervention. If a child's behavior escalates to physical violence, endangering the health and safety of themselves, other children, or staff, purposefully hurting themselves, another child or staff, restrictive intervention will only be deployed as a last possible resort due to extreme danger or intent to harm. Our teams hold a range of compassion and expertise, but we are not mental health professionals, social workers, or 1:1 child to staff support.

We will support your child the best we can to make preschool as successful as possible. If change has not been made after a thorough action plan, should a child need support that goes beyond what we can safely provide, or, should a situation escalate to a level where we can no longer safely find a resolution for the child an action plan may determine the need for a child to be removed from a program for any amount of time, including the remainder of the school year.

The above serves as an overview of how our preschool program helps to ensure the success and safety of all our children. If you have questions regarding further details of our procedures, or if you have concerns regarding your child's needs, please contact the Directors.

Health & Safety

Illness Procedures & Guidelines

For the health & safety of all children, please do not send your child to preschool if they are ill. If your child is ill and must miss class, please notify preschool by text or email.

If your child contracts a communicable disease, families must notify the Director as soon as possible. The Director will inform other families in writing about the communicable disease. Please follow the below guidelines before sending your child back to preschool:

- Fever over 100F: please keep your child home until they are fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours
- Influenza like illness: Keep your child home until fever free for 24 hours, without medication.
- COVID: Please follow most up-to-date recommendations from the CDC.
- Vomiting or Diarrhea: please keep child home for 24 hours after last episode of vomiting or diarrhea.
- Bacterial Pink-Eye/Conjunctivitis: please keep child home until they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours or until doctor has determined they are no longer contagious. This includes no more mattering or drainage from the eyes.
- Strep Throat: please keep child home until they have been on antibiotics for 24 hours and are feeling well.
- Possible Impetigo/Other Rash: keep child home until doctor determines whether or not rash is contagious. If treatment is started, child should be on medication 24 hours before returning.
- Head Lice: Keep child home until first completed treatment and no lice and/or nits are visible.

Injury & Illness

Staff are First Aid & CPR certified. We will treat bumps, bruises, and scrapes. For an injury that requires more attention than our staff are trained to do, Y Staff will:

- Call 911, perform immediate first aid and contact you or emergency contacts, if you cannot be reached.
- If emergency transport is required, a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital and remain until the parent/guardian arrives.
- In the case of illness, parents or emergency contacts are called to make arrangements for treatment or pick-up. If your child is ill and must miss school, please notify us by text or email.

Child Protection Policy

Your child's safety is our top priority. If you witness or feel that your child is in danger of any type of verbal, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, please report it to our Human Resource Department at 612-465-0551. Families may observe the program at any time by contacting the Directors.

Risks at Preschool

YMCA Day Camps are members of the American Camp Association, meaning we are rigorously held accountable on over 300 standards regarding health & wellness, transportation safety, aquatic and program safety and more. These standards guide us to use the best practices regarding child safety & behavior, staff training and much more.

Nonetheless, like all other experiences, nature preschool is not risk-free. Staff will do everything they can to keep students safe and free of harm. Students will interact with nature, animals, garden equipment, and outdoor materials, as well as many other items, supplies, and equipment during their time in preschool. Please be sure to review our 'Basic Safety Awareness Form' for more information.