

mini MACK

DISCOVERY PRESCHOOL

2026–2027 OPENING EDITION

PRESCHOOL FAMILY HANDBOOK

WESTPORT WESTON FAMILY YMCA

the YMCA

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SECTION 1 | WELCOME & PROGRAM INFORMATION

A LETTER FROM KATHY

Welcome to Mini Mack Discovery Preschool! We want every child to have a place where they feel safe, known, and ready to explore. Children learn through relationships, play, and time outdoors. We look forward to getting to know what makes your child curious, what helps them feel at home, and what your family would like us to know.



KATHY GIGLIO
Camp Mini Mack & Childcare Director

Hablo Español

Direct Line: **(203) 571-6040**
Main Line: **(203) 226-8981**
Email: **kgiglio@westporty.org**

LOCATION AND CONTACTS

Mini Mack Discovery Preschool is at the Westport Weston Family YMCA, 14 Allen Raymond Lane, Westport, CT 06880. For everyday questions, email kgiglio@westporty.org or call Kathy at (203) 571-6040. For a time-sensitive message during care, call the YMCA main desk at (203) 226-8981 and ask for preschool staff.

ABOUT US AND OUR MISSION

The YMCA strengthens our community through youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility. At Mini Mack, we put our values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility into practice as children build friendships, explore their interests and learn to care for themselves, one another and their environment.

EARLY LEARNING STAFF

Our program is led by the Childcare Director, Administrative Assistant, a designated Head Teacher, Lead Teacher, and two assistant teachers per classroom. The Director oversees the program and posts who is in charge when she is away. The Head Teacher supports curriculum, classroom supervision, staff mentoring, and family communication. Staff meet applicable qualifications, screening, fingerprint-supported background checks, and ongoing training requirements. We maintain required first aid, CPR, and medication training. YMCA staff may not arrange private babysitting, transportation, or other outside contact with children enrolled in the program.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY & EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Our preschool follows a Reggio Emilia–inspired philosophy. Children investigate through hands-on learning in classroom centers and outdoors. Teachers build the curriculum around children's questions, interests, and experiences, and use Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) to guide planning and observation. We support language, early literacy and math, creativity, movement, independence, and social-emotional growth through play.

YMCA AMENITIES

Preschool enrichment is planned to include swimming, dance, and gymnastics. Other YMCA offerings, including family swim, aquatics, recreation, and summer camp, have separate schedules and may require membership, registration, or additional fees. Visit westporty.org or contact the main desk for details.

SECTION 2 | ADMISSION AND GETTING STARTED

ADMISSIONS AND REGISTRATION

The program will open January 4, 2027, with up to 13 children in its opening classroom, subject to the license. Children must be at least 2 years and 8 months (32 months) on their first day and within the approved preschool age range. To enroll a child under three in the preschool group, the YMCA must have written authorization from the parent or guardian and Director on file.

Apply through the YMCA. An application is not a space reservation. Offers depend on available licensed space and schedule. If the requested schedule is full, contact the Director about waitlist availability and next steps. We welcome families without discrimination and work with families to identify reasonable accommodations.

REQUIRED ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK

- Signed enrollment agreement, behavior guidance acknowledgment, release forms, payment authorization, and current parent, provider, emergency, and authorized pickup contacts.
- A signed health history, physical examination, and age-appropriate immunization record, subject to applicable exceptions. The physical examination must be within one year before enrollment and renewed annually from the initial examination, with the regulatory allowance.
- Written permission for emergency procedures and, where applicable, off-premises activities and transportation. Provide court orders, medication authorizations, emergency action plans, and individual plans of care as applicable.

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES AND INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Tell us how to support your child's participation, including medical, developmental, communication, sensory, dietary, or toileting needs. We will talk with you about reasonable modifications and develop an individual plan of care when required. With your permission, we can coordinate with providers and early intervention or the local school district. Placement and supports are considered individually.

INTRODUCTION WEEK AND PROVISIONAL ENROLLMENT

Children start with shorter visits and build toward their regular day. We agree on the schedule with you in advance and adjust it as needed. An example is a short classroom visit on Day 1, play and snack on Day 2, staying through lunch on Day 3, adding rest and afternoon play on Day 4, and trying the regular day on Day 5. Please plan for earlier pickups during the week.

The introduction week is an orientation, not an automatic trial or a reason to end enrollment. Any separate provisional enrollment period and terms will be described in the signed preschool agreement before enrollment.

SECTION 3 | GENERAL GUIDELINES & BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

OPEN ACCESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents and guardians have immediate access during operating hours unless prohibited by law, and subject to WWFY guest policies. Check in with staff when visiting so they can keep track of who is in the room. We protect child, health, and family records. Staff share information with authorized personnel as needed for care and otherwise only with written permission or as allowed or required by law. Families can request their child's records. Photos and public sharing follow YMCA policy and family permissions.

DISCIPLINE AND POSITIVE GUIDANCE

Teachers model how to name feelings, take turns, and solve problems. They set clear limits, offer choices, and redirect children to safe activities. A child who needs a break stays with a staff member; the quiet room is for supervised support and is never used for isolation or punishment. We do not use corporal punishment, humiliation, threats, frightening treatment, coercion, or withholding basic needs. Physical restraint is never used as discipline and is permitted only when necessary to protect health or safety, using the least restrictive appropriate method.

PREVENTING SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

If a concern persists, staff document patterns, notify the family, and meet to plan supports. We consider changes to routines, materials and supervision, reasonable accommodations, and consultation with family permission as appropriate. We document what was tried and review how it is working. Biting, tantrums, toileting accidents, and difficulty separating do not automatically result in exclusion.

Staff address immediate serious safety risks first and contact the Director and family. An early pickup or shortened day for behavior is not a routine guidance strategy. Suspension or disenrollment is a last resort after individualized review and is subject to applicable law and funding requirements. The Director provides written reasons, dates, any return plan, and reasonable notice when safe, and helps the family plan next steps. We do not retaliate for complaints, reports of suspected abuse, or questions about program policies.

PARENT BEHAVIOR AND SAFE PICKUP

Adults are expected to communicate respectfully. Bring concerns to the teacher or Director privately. Threats, harassment, or physical aggression may require immediate safety action and review of continued participation. If an adult appears unable to transport a child safely, staff contact the Director and an authorized alternate, and call police or emergency services if safety is threatened. Staff report to DCF when the legal reporting threshold is met.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Speak with your child's teacher, then the Director, or ask for YMCA leadership if the issue remains unresolved. You may contact the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) directly at any time: (860) 500-4450 or (800) 282-6063. The license and complaint procedure are posted, and the latest inspection report is posted or available on request.

SECTION 4 | ARRIVAL, PICKUP AND ATTENDANCE

DAYS AND HOURS

Preschool is scheduled Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. or 7:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m., depending on your agreement. Please pick up by your contracted time. Public-school bus service and school dismissal procedures do not apply.

DROP-OFF AND PICKUP

An authorized adult brings your child to a staff member and signs in at the actual arrival time. Share any important change in health, routine, or pickup plans. At pickup, the authorized adult signs out with the actual departure time. Staff verify written authorization and may request photo ID. Send changes to the Director in writing before pickup. A child will not be released to an unauthorized person.

LEGAL CUSTODY AND COURT ORDERS

Provide a current copy of any court order that limits access or pickup and notify the Director of changes. Staff follow the order on file and applicable law. A verbal request alone does not replace a court order.

LATE PICKUP AND CLOSING TIME

If you are running late, call (203) 226-8981 and ask the front desk to reach preschool staff. Do not rely on voicemail. Staff contact you or an authorized alternate if pickup does not occur as planned. Staff will follow the preschool agreement for any charges tied to the 3:30 p.m. pickup option.

At the 6:00 p.m. program closing, at least two program staff aged 18 or older remain on the licensed premises. WWFY's closing policy provides a first-time warning and then $15 for each 15-minute interval of late pickup. At 6:15 p.m., staff call the emergency contacts. If no authorized adult can be reached by 6:30 p.m., staff contact police and DCF as appropriate, remain with the child, and follow agency instructions. Repeated late pickups may prompt a meeting or enrollment review.

ABSENCES AND FAMILY VACATIONS

Let us know before your expected arrival if your child will be absent or late. For a planned absence, tell the teacher or Director in advance. If a child is unexpectedly absent and we have not heard from you, staff may contact you to confirm the child's whereabouts. Call promptly to report a diagnosed communicable illness.

SUMMER VACATION AND PROGRAMS

Preschool pauses while Camp Mini Mack operates separately, approximately early-June through mid-August. Camp requires separate registration and is subject to availability and camp eligibility. There is no preschool programming during the August training and classroom reset gap. Any YMCA vacation care is separate and follows its own registration, ages and availability. Mini Mack Discovery Preschool students receive priority registration for summer camp. Please contact the director for more information.

SECTION 5 | EMERGENCIES, CLOSURES AND ANNUAL CALENDAR

EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

The site plan covers fire, evacuation and relocation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, severe weather, environmental hazards, medical emergencies, and family reunification. Staff account for children, maintain supervision, carry emergency information, follow the site plan, and contact families when safe. We practice emergency drills with children. The Director coordinates individual emergency accommodations with families. For an emergency pickup or relocation, follow YMCA instructions and bring photo identification.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS AND REUNIFICATION

For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911. For urgent program messages, call the YMCA main desk at (203) 226-8981. DCF Careline: (800) 842-2288. OEC Licensing: (860) 500-4450 or (800) 282-6063. Keep your phone numbers and authorized alternates current.

The designated family reunification site is Beck Lodge, at the Mahackeno Outdoor Campus located behind the main YMCA building. Wait for pickup instructions from YMCA staff or emergency responders. If Beck Lodge cannot be used, staff will tell families where to go. Bring photo identification.

WEATHER, SNOW CANCELLATIONS, AND RELATED EMERGENCIES

The YMCA communicates preschool delays, closures, and early pickups by its designated text or email channel and by phone when needed. Public-school cancellations do not automatically determine preschool operations. When unsafe conditions or staffing prevent safe care, the program may delay opening, close, or request early pickup. Keep a backup pickup plan and arrange for an authorized adult to respond as promptly and safely as possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

We monitor site and weather conditions, including air quality, and follow our emergency plan and public health directions for issues such as loss of utilities, unsafe water, smoke, or other hazards. The YMCA restricts access to affected areas, moves children or closes when necessary, and tells families how to reunite with their child.

CLOSING SCHEDULE AND ANNUAL PRESCHOOL CALENDAR

Preschool operates Monday–Friday, except for the listed breaks or separately announced closures. Use the preschool calendar and YMCA notifications to plan your child's care.

DATES	PROGRAM STATUS
January 4–June 4, 2027	Preschool open
June 7–August 13, 2027	Camp Mini Mack • separate registration; no preschool
August 16, 2027	August break • preschool closed
August 30, 2027	Preschool resumes for new school year
November 25–26, 2027	Thanksgiving break • preschool closed
December 24, 2027–January 1, 2028	Winter break • preschool closed

SECTION 6 | HEALTH, ILLNESS AND INJURY

HEALTH GUIDELINES AND SERVICES

Children wash hands at arrival and at key times such as before eating and after toileting or outdoor play. Our health consultant supports staff in implementing health procedures and individual plans. Families may ask for help locating medical, dental, hearing, vision, mental health, and developmental services or insurance resources. We will notify families and obtain appropriate permissions for any screening offered; routine on-site screening is not assumed.

SICK CHILD AND EXCLUSION

If your child becomes ill, we notify you immediately. Staff keep the child comfortable and supervised away from group activity when appropriate. Arrange pickup within one hour of the call, as in WWFY's childcare policy. If you cannot come, send an authorized alternate.

Keep your child home if they cannot participate comfortably or have symptoms requiring exclusion, including a temperature of 100°F or higher under the YMCA policy, vomiting, diarrhea, unexplained rash, significant pain, marked fatigue, or cold symptoms that interfere with participation. Staff consider the child's overall condition, the need for care beyond what staff can safely provide, and any public health directions.

Children with any of the following symptoms will not be allowed to remain in our program:

- Too sick to participate normally in the day's activities, including going outside
- Fever of 100 degrees or above, with or without accompanying symptoms
- Any pain, fever, or lack of normal participation due to an ear infection
- Any diarrhea
- Any vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Unexplained rash
- Excessive cold symptoms—cough, sneeze, constant runny nose
- Other unexplained pain, discomfort, or listlessness
- Lice/ringworm/scabies

RETURNING AFTER ILLNESS

Under WWFY's routine illness policy, allow one full day at home after a child is sent home, not counting the day of dismissal, and at least 24 hours free of fever without fever-reducing medication, vomiting, or diarrhea, as applicable. A specific diagnosis may require different timing or documentation. Follow the Director's instructions based on the program health policy, health consultant, and public health guidance. Please discuss individualized plans for ongoing symptoms that are not due to an infectious illness.

Guidelines for returning to the program:

- Temperature has been 99.9 degrees or less for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medications
- Chickenpox (varicella): when all lesions have scabbed over (usually 7-10 days)
- Bacterial Conjunctivitis (pink eye): 24 hours after treatment starts
- Strep throat/scarlet fever: 24 hours after treatment starts
- Ear infection: when fever free (see above) and drinking, eating, and sleeping comfortably (pain-free)
- Impetigo: 24 hours after treatment starts
- Diarrhea: 24 hours diarrhea free
- Vomiting: 24 hours vomiting free
- Lice – deemed nit-free by Health Consultant
- Ringworm/scabies: if the ringworm can be covered by a bandage, the child member may return immediately after treatment has started

CONTAGIOUS DISEASE

Notify the Director promptly about a diagnosed communicable disease or exposure that may affect the classroom. The YMCA informs families about relevant exposure while protecting identity and reports reportable diseases as required. Return and any outbreak measures follow applicable health directions.

INJURED CHILD

Staff provide first aid and immediately notify a parent when a child becomes ill or is injured in our care. For emergencies, staff call 911 and contact the family or emergency contacts. If emergency transport is necessary and a parent is unavailable, the Director or designated staff member accompanies the child while supervision is maintained for the group. The YMCA provides a copy of the required incident report no later than the next business day and notifies OEC by the next business day of an enrolled child's death during care or a sponsored event, or a program-related injury resulting in a diagnosed fracture, second- or third-degree burn, concussion, or hospital admission.

SECTION 7 | MEDICATION ALLERGIES, MEALS & SNACKS

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION AND PRESCRIPTIONS

Contact the Director before attendance if your child needs medication. Please bring current written instructions from an authorized prescriber and signed parent permission when required. Supply medication in its original, properly labeled container, with the correct dose, route, and expiration date. WWFY asks that families arrange to provide forms and medication about a week before the start date when possible so staff can review them and plan coverage.

Only properly trained or licensed staff administer medication within their authorization. Under the prescription policy, staff do not give the first dose except in an emergency. Staff store medication securely, keep emergency medication promptly accessible to authorized staff, document administration, and call families when prescription medication is given. If an error occurs, staff notify parents immediately, provide written notice within 72 hours, and report significant errors to OEC immediately by phone and in writing by the next business day. Pick up unused or expired medication as directed by staff.

NONPRESCRIPTION TOPICALS AND MEDICATION LIMITATIONS

Ask the Director before sending sunscreen, repellent, diaper ointment, or another topical product. Bring the original labeled product and complete the applicable written permission or orders. Do not leave medications in cubbies or bags. If a medication or route needs different authorization, training or clinical support, the Director will work with you and the health consultant to arrange safe care and consider reasonable modifications.

ALLERGIES AND INDIVIDUALIZED CARE PLANS

Tell us before attendance about allergies, dietary needs, asthma, seizures, or other health needs. Provide prescribed emergency medication and current plans when needed. Staff review symptoms and response steps, check ingredients and take steps to avoid cross-contact and food sharing. We do not promise an allergen-free environment. Follow classroom food restrictions communicated by the Director, and check with staff before bringing shared food.

MEALS, SNACKS, AND DRINKING WATER

The planned daily routine includes a morning snack around 9:00 a.m., lunch around 11:30 a.m., and an afternoon snack around 2:15 p.m. The proposed arrangement is YMCA-provided snacks and a labeled lunch from home. For a child in care eight hours or more, the schedule provides a meal and two nutritious snacks.

Water is available throughout the day. Staff supervise meals, take steps to prevent choking, and do not force or withhold food. Ask about safe preparation and allergy procedures for food from home. Menus for food the program provides are posted in advance as required.

SECTION 8 | LEARNING ACTIVITIES & DAILY CARE

LEARNING CENTERS AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Children choose from blocks and construction, literacy, art, math and manipulatives, dramatic play, and science and sensory exploration. Teachers provide open-ended materials and time to revisit ideas. In art, we value the process: mixing paint, telling a story about a drawing, or trying a new tool matters, more than making matching products.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, GROUP TIME, LITERACY, AND MUSIC

Children move outdoors when conditions are safe and take part in indoor movement when needed. Group time includes conversation, songs, stories, and shared investigations. Books, storytelling, puppets, music, fingerplays, and movement help children build language, express ideas, and participate at their own pace.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS, AND MATH

Children observe changes in nature, build and test structures, sort and count, and use simple tools to investigate. Teachers ask questions and document discoveries. Personal electronic devices stay home.

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

APPROXIMATE TIME	ACTIVITY
7:30–9:00 AM	Arrival and classroom centers
9:00–11:30 AM	Morning snack, group time, projects, and outdoor play
11:30 AM–1:00 PM	Lunch, toileting, and rest or quiet activities
1:00–2:15 PM	Enrichment or small-group activities
2:15–3:30 PM	Afternoon snack, play, and first pickup
3:30–6:00 PM	Extended care, indoor and outdoor play, and pickup

The planned enrichment rotation may include dance class, swim lessons, and gymnastics center usage. Activities depend on facility availability, permissions, and safe staffing. Swimming uses applicable age-based staffing and lifeguard coverage; the Director confirms the approved plan before participation. We offer a supervised alternative when needed.

SUPERVISION, REST, AND TOILETING

Staff maintain required ratios and group sizes during indoor and outdoor play, bathroom routines, transitions, and rest. The standard preschool ratio is at least one staff member for every 9 children; actual group size is limited by the license. At least two program staff age 18 or older are on the licensed premises when children are present. Children remain supervised in approved spaces. Rest takes place daily; children who do not sleep are offered quiet activities as appropriate. We support toilet learning without shame or punishment. Tell us about your child's routine and any diapering or changing needs so we can agree on supplies and support before attendance.

SECTION 9 | FAMILY PARTNERSHIP & CHILD DEVELOPMENT

ASSESSMENT AND CHILD GROWTH

Teachers observe children during everyday activities and use CT ELDS and DOTS to guide planning. Notes, work samples, and other documentation help teachers see progress and choose what to offer next. Staff share observations with families at conferences and as needed. Classroom documentation is not a diagnosis. Discuss developmental screening, evaluation, or referrals with the Director; the YMCA seeks permission when needed before sharing information.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND TEACHER CONFERENCES

Families are welcome to ask for a meeting at any time. Teachers plan two opportunities for a conference each school year, with additional conversations as needed. We use calls for urgent matters and email or the designated classroom communication tool for routine updates. Share changes at home that may affect your child. Families are welcome to contribute ideas, share a skill, or help with an approved classroom activity.

FAMILY LITERACY AND HOME LANGUAGE

We encourage families to read, sing, and tell stories in the languages they use at home. Share favorite books, songs, words, and family traditions with us. Tell us your preferred language and how you prefer to receive information. We will work with you to arrange language support where needed.

TRANSITIONS

Families and teachers plan together for introduction week, changes in classroom or routine, and the move to kindergarten or to summer camp, if enrolled. We share records with another program only with appropriate permission or legal authority. Ask the Director for support locating local kindergarten or early childhood transition resources.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND SURVEYS

We use family feedback, staff observations, and program reviews to improve care. Families may be invited to complete a survey, attend a meeting, or share comments privately. You can offer feedback at any point in the year.

OUTDOOR PLAY AND WHAT TO BRING

Bring labeled weather-appropriate layers, secure shoes, a water bottle, and spare clothes. Bring swim gear when scheduled and toileting supplies as arranged with staff. Children use labeled cubbies for belongings. Leave toys, valuables, and personal electronics at home. Talk to the teacher about a comfort item that helps with the transition or rest.

COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Ask the Director for referrals to local libraries, early intervention, public-school preschool services, family supports, health providers, or child care assistance. We welcome family ideas for community connections, visitors, and experiences that reflect children's interests and cultures.

SECTION 10 | CHILD PROTECTION

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Connecticut mandated reporters report when they have reasonable cause to suspect abuse, neglect, or imminent risk of serious harm. Staff report as soon as practicable and no later than 12 hours after the reporting threshold is met. For an oral report, staff submit the required written follow-up within 48 hours. Staff follow applicable DCF procedures and any separate OEC reporting requirement. They do not delay reporting for an internal investigation or permission. Parent notification follows agency direction and applicable law.

Anyone may call the DCF Careline at (800) 842-2288. Call 911 for immediate danger. Families may also contact the Director at (203) 571-6040 or YMCA leadership through the main desk at (203) 226-8981. Reporting to the YMCA does not replace a report to DCF or law enforcement when required.