

# YMCA Children's Educational Services



## Child Care Parent Handbook







# The Best Start for a Happy, Healthy Life

## **Welcoming your Family to our Family**

Thank you for choosing the YMCA. The YMCA is one of the largest and most trusted providers of high quality licensed child care in Canada. When you get the best possible start in childhood, you have the best possible opportunity in life. In addition to our child care and school age programs, your child and your family will benefit from our health and fitness branches, summer day camp and overnight camps, as well as a huge variety of unique programs and services. We are proud to provide a safe, high quality learning environment for children 2 weeks to 12 years of age, across London-Middlesex, Elgin, Windsor-Essex, Sarnia-Lambton, Chatham-Kent, Oxford and Huron-Perth, since 1987. The YMCA is a place where everyone belongs. We are committed to the development of people of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, abilities and experiences.

## **What's Inside**

In this booklet, you will find everything you need to know about child care at the YMCA, beginning with information we believe you and your child will need to know to get started, including practical program information, fees and hours, clothing needed, and what to do during absences or emergencies, followed by our safety policy, and information about our child care philosophy, our educator team, and our curriculum.

## **Want More?**

If you have any questions or want to discuss your child's progress, we would be happy to talk to you one-on-one at a time most convenient for you. If you have any further questions about the YMCA and all the services it offers, please contact your director.



## YMCA Program Statement

Welcome to YMCA licensed child care. Our program statement describes how our programs support and foster early learning. It will outline our view of the child, our philosophy and pedagogy as well as the goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development. It will also outline how we evaluate our programs to maintain quality and how we support the professionals who work with the children. The YMCA Program Statement is reviewed annually to ensure it is aligned with the Minister of Education's Policy Statement.

## Our View of the Child

Every child is special in the eyes of their family and those who love them. The children are also special to us. As educators of young children, we know that each child is an individual of great human worth and potential. Every child is different in their looks, their growth patterns, their genetic make-up, their previous experience, the way they think and in every aspect of what makes them human beings. We appreciate each child's uniqueness and view the child's growth and development occurring in a holistic manner.

At the YMCA we understand that children learn through play. Play by definition is enjoyable, spontaneous, active, and undertaken without external goals and sanctions. This means children are self-learners and do not require an adult to choose what or how they should learn. When the child's natural activity of play is supported by caring and responsive professionals in positive, developmentally appropriate learning environments, we believe a child will flourish. The child's innate competence, capacity, curiosity and potential will be maximized.

*"[YMCA Playing to Learn] is a wonderful, academically sound, and highly accessible document. At the heart is a view of children, teachers and families as capable and competent. This is one document that will be highly valued in the field, not just sitting on a shelf"*

Jean M. Clinton, BMus MD FRCP(C) Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University

## GOAL

An aim of desired result.

## APPROACH

A means of attaining a goal.

## HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The philosophy or view of human development that recognizes the necessity to include all aspects or domains of development in order to understand the whole person.

## SANCTION

For a recognized authority to give approval of something.

## INNATE

Existing from birth (i.e. born with).

## PHILOSOPHY

The study of the theoretical basis of a particular branch of knowledge.

## PEDAGOGY

The method and practice of teaching.



## YMCA Curriculum

The YMCAs across Southwestern Ontario has a well-established, research-based approach to early learning. Our curriculum YMCA Playing to Learn has been successfully implemented in all programs for children 0-6 since 2011. All YMCAs across Canada have adopted this curriculum.

YMCA Playing to Learn 2nd Edition was published in 2015. This edition incorporates new research, best practices, knowledge and experience. There is more information on infants and toddlers, and it has a greater focus on the social and emotional development of the young child.

A Place to Connect curriculum for children 5-12 rolled out nationally in 2016.

The YMCA has been involved in shaping the development of the provincial early learning framework by sharing YMCA Playing to Learn and our training materials to support educators in implementing a play-based approach. The goals and approaches of the YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards, and recommendations with the provincial frameworks below. It is gratifying to see Ministry of Education embrace play and adopt a very similar approach.

✓ **Minister of Education's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy**

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/programCCEYA.pdf>

✓ **"How Does Learning Happen?" Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years**

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

✓ **Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)**

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/>

## CURRICULUM

The deliberately organized part of the child's experience and the experience that occurs through everyday aspects of life. Playing to Learn is a curriculum based on play development.

## SOCIAL LEARNING

The process of acquiring knowledge about individuals and groups by observing, imitating and interacting with others.

## EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The complex changes within the individual over time that involves the self and feelings and regulating behavior.



## Our Statement on Play

Each child can reach his or her full human potential through play. Our intention is to provide the best possible environment that allows the best possible play for all children in our care. We endeavour to meet the play needs of all children and must do whatever possible to support the natural urge to play.

Play helps the child to be both engaged with everyday realities and to be absorbed in an ecstatic self-forgetfulness. It ensures involvement, enjoyment, and various forms of success. Play can be powerful or profound, but it is always purposeful. Play is a vehicle that propels learning and development. Play and development are intertwined; neither precedes the other. All domains of development are supported by play, and play has the additional benefit of being self-initiated and therefore a joy rather than a chore. Play makes discovery pleasurable, but it also propels the child into the vast realm of learning. Play provides a way for children to be healthy in body, mind and spirit.

Play fosters skill development. It offers opportunities for gaining new skills as well as refining existing ones. Play is directly linked to the child's learning. His or her cognitive development and academic success are enhanced by the play experience. Play is physical and increases activity levels, fitness, balance, gross motor skills and fine motor actions. A wide range of scientific, mathematical, perspective-taking and other cognitive processes in discovery and other types of play. Play is social and aids in language learning while supporting social skills development. Self-concepts and emotions are better understood through play, as is the building of emotional intelligence. Important self-regulatory skills may be acquired and reinforced through play. Play builds resilience and can help children manage stress. There are often therapeutic benefits to play.

### **BODY**

The physical self.

### **MIND**

The individual's place of thinking; human consciousness emanating from the brain.

### **SPIRIT**

The part of the self that transcends the physical self or thought processes.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS**

The categories that academics and practitioners use to manage the vast amount of information about human development.

### **SKILL**

A learned behaviour.

### **COGNITIVE**

Related to thinking or reasoning.

### **LEARNING**

The process of changing existing understanding to accommodate new ideas; acquiring new knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions; discovering through play.



Typically, children direct their play in ways that address their own socio-emotional issues.

*"The YMCA's Playing to Learn is a curriculum guide built on the importance and value of play for young children. The document makes, and backs up, arguments of why and how children's play is essential to the healthy social, physical and cognitive development of all children."*

*Martha Friendly, Executive Supervisor of the Childcare Resources and Research Unit*

## YMCA Curriculum Goals & Approaches

### 1) Promoting health, safety, nutrition & well-being:

Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority at the YMCA and we understand that the well-being of their child is a parent's # 1 concern. Therefore, we have developed comprehensive, research-based procedures to support children.

Some of the procedures in place at the YMCA include:

- ✓ Safe supervision of children
- ✓ Child Protection procedures and training
- ✓ Sanitation and disinfection procedures
- ✓ Menu planning following the Canada's Food Guide
- ✓ Communicable disease prevention
- ✓ Emergency procedures
- ✓ Standard First Aid and CPR training

### 2) Supporting relationships:

At the YMCA we understand that young children flourish in all areas of development when they are in positive and responsive relationships

### GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Learned actions involving the large muscles of the body.  
(E.g. kicking a ball)

### FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Learned actions involving the small muscles of the body, including the hands, mouth and feet. (E.g. cutting with scissors)

### SELF-REGULATION

The child's conscious or unconscious control of her body, relationships and other aspects of him or herself.

### RESILIENCE

The ability to recover quickly from difficulties.

### WELL BEING

The state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

### RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

The process of offering consistent, reliable care via careful observation of cues.



with adults. YMCA educators build a foundation of trust with children by being available, sensitive, responsive, and caring.

YMCA educators create an inclusive and respectful environment to foster positive, equitable, and collaborative relationships. When children feel safe, secure, valued and a contributing member of their world they are able to explore, discover, try new things, grow, learn and develop.

To support your child's care, growth and development YMCA educators interact and communicate with families on a daily basis sharing observations, documentations, and reflections.

### **3) Encouraging children to interact, communicate, & self-regulate:**

The YMCA believes that it is the role of the adult in a child's life to support them to learn how to interact effectively with the world around them including other children, adults, and the environment. Generally self-regulation involves gaining a degree of control over one's bodily functions and impulses, managing one's emotions, changing one's behaviours and maintaining focus our attention on something or someone.

*"The better a child can stay calmly focused and alert, the better he integrates the diverse information coming from his different senses, assimilates it and sequences his thoughts and actions." (Shanker 2012)*

*"Caring consistent relationships with adults provide external supports that serve as the basis for developing self-regulation." (Gillespie & Seibel 2006)*

Some of the approaches implemented by YMCA educators to set the stage for positive interactions among children include:

- ✓ Educators provide small group experiences that allow for more individualized adult attention

#### **DISCOVER**

To find something unexpectedly.

#### **OBSERVATION**

The informal or formal perception of an individual or group of people, or the perceptions gained from looking at an environment or object.

#### **DOCUMENTATION**

The process of observation, data collection, careful analysis and reflection resulting in displays that are an integral part of a play curriculum.

#### **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE**

The capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.

#### **STRATEGY**

A plan or method of achieving a goal.





- ✓ Educators role model inclusive, respectful, and collaborative interactions with children and other adults
- ✓ Educators ensure the learning environment is flexible so they can respond in the moment and build on or scaffold the children's interests
- ✓ Educators ensure toys, equipment, and materials are plentiful and available to children at all times
- ✓ Children are given freedom to make choices
- ✓ By engaging as a play partner with children, educators are able to demonstrate pro-social skills including promoting discussion, problem solving when conflict arises, and understanding how their actions affect others
- ✓ Educators attend trainings that address self-regulation and resilience

#### **4) Fostering exploration, play & inquiry:**

Children are born with a natural sense of curiosity and wonder. They play naturally.

As families and educators, we watch children explore their world through their senses, repetition of tasks, imitation, asking questions, and pretending. But what are children really doing? Children are putting together all the pieces of how the world works through exploration, play and inquiry.

YMCA educators understand the importance of play. They foster, expand and scaffold this natural talent called play by being:

- ✓ Active participants
- ✓ Architects of the playscape
- ✓ Keen observers
- ✓ Planners
- ✓ Reporters

#### **ROLE-MODELLING**

Demonstrating appropriate behaviour that can be seen by the children so that they can observe and internalize what they see; showing how a particular role is conducted.

#### **SCAFFOLD**

The role of the adult (or more mature child) in providing a mental bridge to support a child's learning.

#### **PRO-SOCIAL SKILLS**

Learned behaviour that demonstrates empathy, esteem, honour and consideration to another person.

#### **CURIOSITY**

Mental interest that leads to behaviours of discovery and learning.

#### **INQUIRY**

The act of asking questions in order to gather information.





- ✓ Collaborators
- ✓ Reflective Practitioners
- ✓ Co-learners

Observing a day-in -the-life of a YMCA child care program, you will note that the majority of activities are directed by the children.

Children decide where, when, what and how they wish to play. Their decisions are based on their interests and curiosity. The educator responds by adapting the environment by adding new toys, materials and equipment, posing questions, and being a play partner. This sets the stage for further play, inquiry, discovery and learning. The educator's role is to support play so that learning and development flourishes.

### **5) Providing child-initiated & adult-supported experiences:**

Children and families are warmly greeted upon arrival and after a brief check-in to share news from the evening before, the children get down to the serious business of playing.

The room is set up with a variety of activities that support the observed interests of the children and naturally invite them into play. The children might join some friends at the creative art table to work collaboratively on a collage, or they might work on a Lego structure they safely stored on the counter to complete the next day.

There are no expectations imposed by the educator or curriculum on where children play, or whom they play with, or how long they play at one activity. That is for the child to choose based on their interests.

You may overhear a small group of children in the dramatic play centre dressed in costumes acting out a scene of being "mama, papa, and baby at the doctor". The educator has been assigned the role of "doctor" by the children and takes this opportunity to ask the children questions that expand their understanding of what happens at a check-up.

### **CHILD DIRECTED PLAY**

Spontaneous activity initiated by the child that is allowed to take the course decided upon by the child; may involve careful adult planning.

### **PLAY PARTNER (SHIP)**

One or more individuals playing together with a shared interest; in the case of adult-child play partnership, the adult allows the child to take the lead.

### **DRAMATIC PLAY**

Sustained pretend play in which the child acts out a role using movement and props.

### **CHILD CENTERED EDUCATION**

A philosophy of child care and education that emphasizes the importance of the child's need to direct his own activity, to make play choices spontaneously, and to learn at a self- determined level.



Tomorrow the educator supports the children's interest by adding books about doctors and hospitals to the dramatic play centre hoping to build on the children's interest and spark more questions and play – resulting in more learning.

### **6) Planning learning environments to support every child's learning:**

YMCA Child Care programs are located in a variety of facilities including neighbourhood schools, and in cooperation with community partners.

At the YMCA we understand that the parent is the child's first teacher, the YMCA educator is the second teacher and the learning environment is the child's third teacher.

The YMCA's unique approach to planning and creating learning environments supports children's play so that early learning and healthy development is maximized.

YMCA learning centres are designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the children.

We have and continue to strive to create home like environments that include calm colours, soft furnishings, items from nature like plants and pets, family photographs, and accessories that are intended to make children feel comfortable and safe.

YMCA educators understand that children learn holistically not in one area of development at a time. We understand that riding a tricycle involves gross motor and fine motor skills, but the play children engage in while riding a tricycle involves many more - communication skills, social skills, etc.

Therefore, you may find books, paper and crayons in the block area because children are using these items to figure out how to build a bridge from one shelf to another. Or you may find play dough in the dramatic play area where children are making pizza. And on a beautiful day you may see indoor furniture move outdoors to take advantage of the weather.

### **PLANNING**

The act of preparing and designing experiences and activities (in this instance in accordance with YMCA curriculum).

### **ENVIRONMENT**

Aspects of the immediate surroundings including the delineation of space, the presence or absence of objects, furniture, light, colour, toys and play things and the inclusion/exclusion of indoor and outdoor space.

### **LEARNING CENTRES**

Specially prepared places where materials are provided to respond to children's interests or trigger new ones; spaces for learning in content specific areas; discovery or inquiry-based spaces designed by educators for small groups of children.

### **PLAY MATERIALS**

Any found items or purpose-made manufactured items that are used for props, for creative enterprises or construction.



### **7) Incorporating indoor, outdoor, active, rest & quiet activities:**

YMCA educators design a daily schedule that meets the needs of the children and provides for a balance of activities throughout the day.

Consideration for the care requirements, age, developmental level, energy level, and interests of the children are included.

Generous blocks of time for children to explore, play, and inquire are included both indoors and outdoors.

The daily schedule is not rigid but operating in small groups is mandated. One small group of children may be observing bugs in the outdoor classroom, while the other small group may prefer to stay indoors and build a tall tower.

Periods of active and quiet play are interwoven throughout the day both indoors and outdoors. Children are supported to be competent, capable explorers in an enriched, unstructured playspace.

At the YMCA we don't let the weather stop us from having fun in nature. The children love to bundle up in warm dry clothes and head out to jump in puddles or make snowballs. In very poor weather active play takes place indoors so that children get the physical activity their bodies require.

YMCA educators are trained to keep transitions from activity to activity to a minimum, so children get to play more.

However, young children thrive on regular schedules and feel secure when they can predict what will occur throughout the day therefore snacks and meal times are consistent as is the rest period in the afternoon for young children.

### **WHOLE CHILD**

A concept of the child that sees all developmental domains as interacting, the child being more than the sum of domains.

### **TRANSITIONS**

Aspects of the planned and un-planned day that create changes from one type of activity or event to another.

### **FAMILY**

A number of people who decide to live together or who are bonded by birth-ties, who share a home and who share common values and similar life-styles; adults taking on a parental role, and one or more children living and functioning as a unit.

### **ENGAGEMENT**

Time spent paying attention to something or someone.

### **COMMUNICATION**

The two-way process of sending and receiving information to reach a shared understanding.





### **8) Fostering engagement & communication with families:**

At the YMCA we understand that a parent is the most important person in a child's life. YMCA educators play a supporting role while families go to work and school.

YMCA educators and families communicate on a daily basis about children's activities and health. YMCA educators keep a journal of each infant, toddler, and preschool age child's learning and development which is accessible to families to read each day.

Getting to know family members is critical as an educator and including family members in program helps a child to feel a greater sense of belonging.

Other strategies to engage families and gain input include:

- ✓ Documentations that describe play and its connection to learning
- ✓ Parent/Educator interviews
- ✓ Celebrations & events
- ✓ Parent surveys
- ✓ Displays of children's artwork, sculptures, and creations
- ✓ Photographs of children at play
- ✓ Posting planning documents that include observations of children's interests and activities introduced by YMCA educators

### **9) Involving community partners:**

While our range of community partners is broad, the largest and most important is the education system. Many of our centres are located in schools, so relationships with principals, faculty and educators are critical. The YMCA works closely with local community agencies and partners in order to support the children and families in our programs. We view the community as a valuable resource and our educators plan learning opportunities to engage the community in our programs. The YMCA actively seeks out opportunities to share our knowledge and to learn from others in the community through networking opportunities, community planning tables and conferences.

### **10) Supporting educators' continuous professional learning:**

The YMCA is committed to the ongoing professional development of all our educators. After all, what the educator learns informs practice and the benefit is passed onto the children. YMCA educators attend a series of YMCA curriculum training sessions throughout their career with the YMCA. Additionally, the YMCA provides opportunities for educators to attend external learning



events and conferences and keep legislated training requirements like Standard First Aid & Infant and Child CPR up to date.

On a day-to-day basis the Supervisor is responsible for the leadership, mentorship, coaching and development of educators. Based on the learning needs of the educators the supervisor may meet with educators to suggest strategies, conduct learning huddles to focus on a particular area of YMCA curriculum with the entire team, conduct regular educators' meetings to reflect and plan, invite speakers from other YMCA departments or community agencies to attend the centre, or provide materials including links, articles, and various readings to supplement educators' professional learning.

### **11) Pedagogical Documentation:**

YMCA educators participate in a continuous cycle of observation;

- ✓ Documenting play and its significance
- ✓ Determining the children's interests
- ✓ Planning activities that support the interests
- ✓ Discussion with team members
- ✓ Reflections that informs the planning of activities and the learning environment

Links are made between theory, research, YMCA curriculum, the YMCA Program Statement, government pedagogy, and children's interests to inform the planning decisions YMCA educators make. You will see this cycle reflected in the toys, materials, and equipment provided in the play areas, the furniture arrangement, the creative work of children, the activities children are engaging in, on the planning documents posted weekly for families to read and discuss with the educators, in individual children's journaling in child care programs, and in photographs and written descriptions of activities and observations in school age programs. This process of continuous program assessment is called reflective practice. Daily educators are observing and engaging with children and evaluating the effectiveness of the learning environment such to build on children's interests. Weekly they are reviewing planning and discussing with their classroom colleagues to ensure that they are supporting children's learning and development and monthly, they are meeting as a team to reflect upon what did and didn't work and then plan for the future.



Program Statement Reviewed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo-elle Rinker".

Jo-elle Rinker  
Vice President Child Care

Our Program Statement has been designed as a living document as of January 2016.

## **About YMCA Child Care Services**

### **Qualified Professionals**

We ensure that all educators at each of the child care centres are trained, Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) who hold a diploma or a degree in Early Childhood Education and are members in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators. We also benefit from the expertise of a YMCA Playing to Learn Training Team who provides our educators with current information and professional development about techniques and approaches to early childhood education, and its benefits to the children. All educators have successfully completed a Criminal Reference Check through their local police services and hold current certifications in both CPR and First Aid.

Although many decisions about your child's day are made by the director and the educators, general policy decisions are made by the management of the child care department. Your director works closely with the child care's management team.

### **Changes to Family Information**

It is very important that the child care centre is able to contact you or your designated alternate in an emergency. Please, notify us immediately of any changes in your home address, employment address, and phone numbers. If for any reason you will not be at your regular place of employment, we ask that you ensure that we are able to contact you should the need arise. If necessary, please arrange for an alternate adult that we can call in case you are not available in an emergency.





## **Payment Information**

### **Enrolling Your Child**

Before your child is enrolled in one of our centres, a meeting will be scheduled with the director to discuss your child's needs and the hours of care you require. Prior to your child starting at the centre, you are required to complete and submit a registration package for each child attending the program.

### **Hours of Operation**

All of our centres and programs operate Monday to Friday, year-round, except for statutory/civic holidays and an annual educator professional development day held on Easter Monday. The hours vary from location to location, so please inquire with the director.

### **YMCA Membership**

A YMCA membership is included free of charge for any child enrolled in full time child care. All part time children receive a 25% discount off their YMCA membership. YMCA memberships can be used at any YMCA location and can include free swimming lessons and 2 dry land classes. For information, please contact your director.

### **Fees and Financial Assistance**

All fees are due in advance of care with pre-authorized bank account debits. Details will be provided by the director. Non-payment of fees could result in withdrawal of your child from the program. Any payment, which is declined from the bank (non-sufficient funds – NSF) is subject to a \$30 service charge. Please note that fees are based on a monthly schedule, therefore, will not be reimbursed or reduced due to illness, emergency closures or absences. Fees are based on a daily rate calculated for the number of days in each month including statutory holidays and Easter Monday. The YMCA has purchase of service agreements with local Social Service Departments. If you require assistance with the child care fees, ask the director for an application for a child care subsidy form and contact telephone numbers. If you are approved to receive subsidized child care, you will be responsible for paying a daily parent fee assessed by your caseworker.

### **Income Tax Statements**

All fees are tax deductible. You will receive an annual income tax receipt every February.

### **Withdrawal, Termination, or Changes in Schedule**

We require 10 business day's written notice of withdrawal or 10 business days' worth of fees in lieu of notice. Any changes to your child's schedule must also be made 10 business days in



advance of care and in writing. The YMCA may terminate care if policies are not followed, fees are not paid, or we are unable to meet your needs.

## **Belonging: Cultivating Authentic Relationships and Connections**

### **Child Guidance to Support Self-Regulation**

We believe children grow through exploration, activity, and play. The YMCA Playing to Learn approach encourages children to play, learn, and socialize. They learn to work together to build ideas, solve problems and to self regulate.

A positive approach is used to guide the children and each situation is considered individually. Methods include redirection, logical and natural consequences, limit setting, providing choices, anticipating situations and recognizing appropriate behaviour.

Open communication is an essential component for a cooperative approach to child guidance. The YMCA is committed to ensure strategies are implemented to reduce or eliminate barriers to support each child's unique needs.

### ***"Kindness. Acceptance. Friendship. That's my Y!"***

Prohibited practices that infringe on the physical and emotional wellbeing of a child in our care include:

- The use of corporal punishment on a child.
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller, or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting themselves or someone else and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining the child or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- Using harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, or frighten the child or undermine their self-respect, dignity or self-worth.



- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, or bedding; or
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

### **Weemarkable™ – YMCA Child Care Mobile App**

Weemarkable™ is designed and developed by the YMCA with input from YMCA families, just like you, as well as YMCA educators. It is a communication tool to enhance the face-to-face (not replace) YMCA family and educator relationships. Through Weemarkable™ we are pleased to provide you with daily updates on your child, their development, photos, menus, messaging and more. In addition, you will have the ability to add followers such as grandparents or other extended family members. Your director will provide you with information at time of registration.

## **Nurturing Healthy Development and Well Being**

### **Nutrition**

Most child care centres have their own dietary planner or are catered by a reputable company who prepares nutritious, home-cooked snacks and lunches for the children. Our dietary planners/caterers have food safety certificates, and all kitchens are inspected regularly by the local Health Department. A nutritious lunch, based on Canada's Food Guide, is made from whole foods and served to the children family style at mid-day. Snacks are served in the morning and afternoon with more frequent snacks provided for infants and toddlers, and children who leave late in the day. The menu is posted in the centre and provides a good overview of your child's daily nourishment. Even though we provide your child with meals and snacks, it is highly recommended that you provide your child with a healthy, nutritious breakfast before coming to the centre. Menus are posted on Weemarkable™.

### **Allergies/Anaphylactic**

Food allergies are a serious concern for some children. Our programs strive to be nut-free. Although we cannot change the entire environment of the program due to allergies, every effort possible will be made to minimize contact with the offending allergens. If a child has allergies, is on a special diet or is unable to eat certain foods due to cultural and/or religious practices, it is your responsibility to notify the director so special arrangements can be made for your child's meals. Please, tell us about any special dietary concerns in your child's registration information package.





Children with anaphylactic allergies or serious medical conditions will be required to complete an Emergency Protocol Plan prior to starting the program. This plan will then be updated if necessary and re-signed annually.

For any families who must bring food into the centre or premises for their child/ren, they must follow these guidelines:

- Ensure approval has been given by the director or designate prior to the food being on the premise
- Food containers must be labelled with the child's full name
- Food must be stored appropriately (ie. cupboard, refrigerated)
- Food must be peanut free
- All site-specific allergies must be considered
- All food provided must be healthy and nutritious choices to ensure that each child receives the nutrients they need for a fun active day. The Canada's Food Guide website is a great resource for suggestions of healthy snacks and lunches for children.

### **Illness**

If your child is not able to attend due to illness, please advise the director of the illness and expected return date. This information will help our educators identify symptoms in other children with whom your child has come in contact.

If a child appears to be ill, the child may be separated from the other children, and the educator will notify the director and parents and/or guardians immediately.

In accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act, you will be required to pick up your child as soon as possible to protect the interest of the sick child as well as the other children and educators in the program.

Parents and/or guardians are strongly encouraged to keep ill children at home to prevent the spread of illness. Children must be free from symptoms before returning to the centre.

### **Communicable Diseases**

Children suspected of having a communicable disease, such as mumps or measles, should not be in the centre. Parents of children who develop symptoms during the day will be asked to pick up the child from the centre immediately. Children can return to the centre only with confirmation that they are no longer contagious.



### **Immunizations**

The Medical Officer of Health requires every child attending a licensed child care facility to have up-to-date immunization against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, and haemophilus influenza Type B (HIB). Children identified as not having been immunized must have a written objection in their records from either their parent(s) on grounds that the immunization conflicts with the sincerely held convictions or conscience; or a legally qualified medical practitioner who has provided medical reasons in writing as to why the child should not be immunized.

### **Giving Medication**

Parents are encouraged to give their child medication at home, whenever possible. Educators can only give prescription medications to your child with your written authorization. Non-prescription medication can only be administered with a doctor's note giving clear written authorization. If your child is on such medication, you will be asked to complete and sign an authorization form at the centre and discuss with the educator the timing and amounts of the medicine to be given. Medications must be in the original container with the prescription label intact. You must also provide a measuring cup and/or spoon. Please note that the YMCA educators cannot administer expired medication (epi-pens only may be excluded for times when there are shortages issued by Health Canada).

### **Blanket Notes For Over-the-Counter Products**

Due to the frequency and their longer term daily usage, sunscreen, diaper creams, moisturizing skin lotion, insect repellent, lip balms and hand sanitizers, a blanket authorization form must be completed by the parent to approve administration as long as they are non-prescription, and/or they are not for acute (symptomatic) treatment, whether they have a drug administration number (DIN) or not.

Licensees must ensure that these over-the-counter products are labelled with the child's name, stored in accordance with the instructions for storage on the label, and administered in accordance with the instructions on the label and the parent's authorization. Over-the-counter products must be in the original container or package.

### **Child Abuse Protocol**

The Child and Family Services Act requires that anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been abused or is at risk for abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect) shall immediately report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the Children's Aid Society. Further action will then be determined by CAS.



### **Sun Safety**

In high ultraviolet (UV) periods, we limit the amount of time children spend outdoors between 11:00AM and 3:00PM. It is our practice to apply sunscreen with a minimum protection factor of SPF 30. You will be asked to sign a parental agreement allowing us to apply sunscreen. You may provide your child with a sunscreen that has been approved by the YMCA. Please make sure to write your child's name on the bottle. While in the outdoors, children are encouraged to wear their own hat as additional protection from the sun.

### **Accidents or Injuries**

If your child is involved in a minor accident while in our care, our educators will immediately administer first aid. We will inform you of the accident when you come to pick up your child. You will be asked to sign an accident report to acknowledge that the educators have informed you about the incident and you will receive a copy.

Depending on the extent of the injury, you may be asked to pick up your child to seek appropriate medical attention. If we cannot reach you or your designated emergency contact, we will assume the responsibility and seek medical assistance for your child. A child needing emergency medical care will be taken to the closest hospital and you will be notified at once. All emergency expenses (ie. ambulance fee) will be the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s). If you have a special requirement about hospital treatment for your child, please let us know in writing when you register your child.

### **Fire Drills and Evacuations**

In an emergency, the safety and care of the children is our primary concern. Emergency and fire procedures are posted in each child care centre. Please read these procedures and be familiar with them.

Fire drills are held monthly and instructions, in case of fire, are posted in each room. In the event that the children and educators need to leave their centre due to a safety concern, each centre has a designated close-by emergency evacuation site. Please ensure you familiarize yourself with this information. In the unlikely event that the centre requires temporary emergency shelter, the educators and children will be moved to a designated location posted in the centre. In the event of a longer relocation, the YMCA will establish a plan and all families will be notified by phone.



## Centre Closures

Centre closures may result due to severe inclement weather conditions, power failure, school board/university/college closures or circumstances beyond our control. While we realize that closures at any time other than the normal closing time cause inconvenience, there could be times when such an action is necessary. In this event, each child care centre will follow the direction of the CEO of the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario about the cancellation of services. Families will be notified via Weemarkable™ and are encouraged to stay informed through various social media platforms as well as checking our websites [www.ymcaswo.ca](http://www.ymcaswo.ca).

## Engagement: Creating Contexts for Learning Through Exploration, Play and Inquiry

### Outdoor Play and Safety

As described in How Does Learning Happen, research suggests that allowing children to actively explore and investigate what they are naturally curious about, to test their limits, take manageable risks appropriate for their age and abilities and engage in creative problem-solving is critical for children's physical and mental health and well-being.

At the beginning of each day, an educator does an inspection of the outdoor playspace and equipment for potential hazards and litter. Activities are planned and occur spontaneously to enhance children's creative, motor, and social skills, and to encourage children to engage in constructive play.

Children are required to be outdoors for two hours per day. Thus, it is important that you ensure your child has the appropriate outdoor clothing each day. However, if there are severe weather conditions such as storms, low temperatures of  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$ , wind chill, or smog advisories, children may be kept indoors.

### Field Trips

Local field trips are fun for the children and enhance their learning experience. In all instances, you have the final say on whether your child participates in a field trip. Field trips may include walks to libraries, community parks, and local stores. These excursions are often a starting point to encourage children to explore their outside environment. Future program planning in the centre is based on the children's experiences during the field trip. You will be notified in advance of any trips and will be asked to complete a separate consent form, allowing your child to participate in the excursion.





## **Expression: Fostering Communication and Expression**

### **Inclusion of Children and Outside Community Agencies**

The YMCA welcomes families and children from all backgrounds, beliefs, and abilities. We welcome families and children with special circumstances. The YMCA promotes an inclusion philosophy in all our programs. Children will be welcomed into the program and will be supported to participate in all activities. Each YMCA Child Care Centre has partnerships with outside agencies, such as Tyke Talk and All Kids Belong, who will help us support children. We request you schedule an individual meeting with your director to develop the best support plan for your child. We will then determine together what accommodations your child may need to be successful in our program.

### **Departure and Child Pick Up**

Parents/guardians are responsible to initial and sign their child into the program upon arrival and sign them out of the program upon pick up each day.

Most parents have a usual time for picking up their children. If you need to pick up your child earlier or later than usual, please advise the educator in advance. When you pick up your child, please make sure the supervising educator acknowledges your departure and you sign your child out for the day.

If you cannot pick up your child, please arrange for someone else to do so. We require a note or a phone call from you describing who will be picking up your child. For your child's safety, we will not release them to anyone who is not listed on the "Child Information Sheet" or without your permission.

When arranging for someone to pick up your child, please give us the name and the name by which your child knows this person, as well as the time they will pick your child up. We will require photo identification before letting your child leave with anyone other than you.

If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up your child, they will be asked to wait until a parent or guardian can be reached by telephone.

No one will be allowed to leave with your child until you have given your permission. No child will be allowed to enter or leave the centre without an accompanying adult or designate 12 years of age or older. To request special circumstances, please talk to the director to document all special arrangements. A copy will stay in your child's file.



### **Custody**

In the unfortunate event of a difficult or dangerous custody situation where a court order is in place, please ensure you contact the director to arrange guidelines regarding the release of your child. We must have a copy of any court documents regarding the restriction of release of the children in our care.

### **Late Pick up of Children**

To be respectful of our educators, please ensure you pick up your child/ren before the centre closes. If a child is not picked up by the centre's closing time, you will be called. If there is no answer, we will call the emergency numbers you provided. If neither you nor the emergency contact can be reached within the first hour, the police and Children's Aid Society will be called.

All late pick-ups are charged \$1.00/minute/child as well as recorded and a letter of reminder is sent to you about the late pick up. After three warning letters, you may be given two weeks notice of withdrawal. We will assist you in finding alternative care arrangements if at all possible.

### **Driving Under the Influence**

Our educators care about the children's safety. For this reason, our educators are to follow specific procedures should a parent/guardian or authorized person for pick up, arrive at the centre who is under the influence of alcohol and/or illegal substance and is planning on driving home. The educator will help call a cab, contact a friend to come get the parent/guardian and the child. If the parent/guardian denies any of the help offered and drives off with the child, the police will be called to assist the educator.

### **Insurance for Assistive Devices**

Centres cannot be held responsible for lost or broken assistive devices, such as hearing aids, contact lenses, or glasses along with accessibility equipment. We ask that you have adequate replacement insurance for these items should they become misplaced or broken.

### **Partnership with Community Colleges/High Schools**

Our child care centres provide field placement opportunities for college students who are pursuing their early childhood education diploma and/or their resource educator/special needs certificates. These students contribute significantly to our programs and to the education of your child. The students are supervised and mentored by our educators and gain practical experience while bringing new ideas to the centre. Students and/or volunteers are never left alone with the children.



## Waiting List Policy

In partnership with the municipalities, families are asked to put their names on the Municipal ONEList. Spaces are offered by the child care director when vacancies arise and families are contacted based on the order of when they register their child on the ONEList. Priority is given to full time care over part time care, YMCASWO staff and current families enrolled. University YMCA Child Care priority is to faculty, staff, and students at Western University. The ONEList remains private and confidential at all times and parents can inquire where on the waitlist their child has been placed by calling Child Care Administration or the director of the child care program. There are no fees charged for the placement of a child on the ONEList. The YMCA will only hold an offer for a space for a maximum of 5 business days. For more information about registering your child or putting your child on the waitlist, please contact our Child Care Administrator by phone at 519-907-5500 x 1072 or by email.

## Emergency Management – Communication to Families

The YMCA has emergency management policies and procedures. Clear policies and procedures will support all individuals to manage responses and responsibilities during an emergency, resulting in the safest outcomes possible. Staff will follow their detailed emergency response procedures as required. Staff will ensure that children are kept safe, are accounted for and are supervised at all times during an emergency situation and follow site specific procedures.

- 1) As soon as possible, the director or the VP of Children's Educational Services must notify parents/guardians of the emergency and that the all-clear has been given.
- 2) Where disasters have occurred that did not require evacuation of the program, the VP, Children's Educational Services must provide notice of the incident to parents/guardians immediately.
- 3) If normal operations do not resume the same day that an emergency has taken place, VP of Children's Educational Services must provide parents/guardians with information as to when and how normal operations will resume as soon as this is determined.

## Addressing Parent Issues and Concerns

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in our child care centre and regularly discuss what their child(ren) are experiencing in our program. As supported by our program statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, child care providers and staff, and foster the engagement of, and ongoing



communication with parents/guardians about the program and their children. Our staff are available to engage parents/guardians in conversations and support a positive experience during every interaction. All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously by the YMCA and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. If the concern is directly related to a program, families should speak directly with program staff. If the concern is regarding a staff member, families should address this with the director. If the concern is regarding the director, families should address this with the Regional Manager or Vice President of Children's Educational Services. Responses and outcomes will be provided by staff and/or management to families verbally, or in writing upon request within 2 business days. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved. The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process. Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial, and respectful to parties involved.

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially, and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff, students and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

Our programs maintain high standards for positive interaction, communication, and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any party. If at any point a parent/guardian, staff, student, or volunteer feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused, or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the director and/or licensee. Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) directly.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to CAS as per the "Duty to Report" requirements under the Child and Family Services Act.

For more information, visit

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaid/reportingabuse/index.aspx>





Escalation of Issues or Concerns: Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may escalate the issue or concern verbally or in writing to the VP of Children's Educational Services.

Issues/concerns related to compliance with requirements set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act., 2014 and Ontario Regulation 137/15 should be reported to the Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch.

Issues/concerns may also be reported to other relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. local public health department, police department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labour, Fire Department, College of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario College of Teachers, College of Social Workers etc.) where appropriate.

YMCASWO link to complaint policy and electronic submission:

<https://www.ymcaswo.ca/contact-us>

***Did you know 3 in 10 children in our Y programs are there because of the YMCA Strong Kids program?***

## **Contact Us!**

Please check out our website [www.ymcaswo.ca](http://www.ymcaswo.ca) or follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/YMCACES> and on Twitter @YMCAofSWO.

You can contact us via email at [childcare@ymcaswo.ca](mailto:childcare@ymcaswo.ca) or call 519-907-5500 X1072.