

YMCA Children's Educational Services



Child Care Parent Handbook

LONDON/MIDDLESEX COUNTY

June 2024





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.



with their physician in circumstances where a child continually refuses to eat. Additionally, food must never be used to reward children and the removal/deprivation of food/drink is prohibited.

All meals, snacks and beverages must meet the recommendations set out in the Health Canada documents "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide", "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis" or "Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants."

Proper hydration is important for children, particularly during hot summer months, and water suitable for drinking must be available at all times, including between snacks and meal times.

Meals and snacks will be planned to provide 2/3 of the child's daily food requirements in accordance with Canada's Food Guide. The dietary planner, under supervision of the Director, will plan the menu and order the food. The role of the dietary planner is to ensure that the children in your facility receive nutritious meals, learn good eating habits, and develop healthy attitudes toward food.

We decide what food is offered, when and how it is offered for meals and snacks. A child decides whether to eat, and what and how much to eat. Remember that children's appetites change from day to day. If we regularly offer a variety of healthy foods in a pleasant, encouraging environment, chances are good that over time, a child will eat well.

Planning nutritious menus that provide variety can be challenging. Children can be particular about what they eat and when they eat. We are striving to provide as many meals as possible to the children that are process free i.e., soups will be made from scratch; muffins will be homemade and will not be made from a package etc. The YMCA of Southwestern Ontario strives to be free of as many processed foods as possible.

At all times, the current and following week menus must be posted in a centrally located place in the centre and labelled accordingly (i.e., "this week", "next week"). In addition, the "Menu Change Form" must always be posted by the menus. This form is used to log ANY & ALL deviations to the menu as it occurs. (i.e., change of vegetable due to spoilage or availability).

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.



Doctor's Note Requirements for Non-Prescription Medication:

- All doctor's notes are updated every 12 months.
- The doctor's note must contain the following information:
 - Name of Child
 - Name of Medication
 - Dosage amount
 - Time/Duration
 - Reason for medication

At no time, can a doctor or parent/guardian override a prescription label.

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/guardian 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/guardian's authorization. Over-the-counter products must be in the original container or package.

Discretion of the Director/Designate

At the discretion of the Director/designate, and in consultation with a Regional Manager, the Program may refuse to administer medications or procedures (e.g. insulin, injections, oxygen, suppositories) that the staff does not have the expertise or confidence to administer.

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.

The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may need protection must make the report directly to a Children's Aid Society. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on their behalf. It is the staff's responsibility to report.



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/guardian 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>

Contact Us!

Please check out our website 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 or call 519-907-5500 X1072.