

YMCA Children's Educational Services



Child Care Parent Handbook

OXFORD 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.



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.



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. There is a two days/week minimum requirement for registration for each child in our programs.

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.

Please see hours of operation at each site here: <https://www.ymcaswo.ca/locations>

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.

Waiting List Policy

In partnership with the municipalities, families are asked to put their names on the Municipal ONEList or OneHSN (Windsor). 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 or OneHSN (Windsor). Priority is given to full time care before 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 or OneHSN (Windsor) always remains private and confidential at all times and parents/guardians 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 or OneHSN (Windsor). 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.

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



The centre will purchase sunscreen and apply it to the children if they do not have their own sunscreen. A blanket note for sunscreen is required.

In high ultraviolet (UV) periods, we limit the amount of time children spend outdoors between 11:00AM and 3:00PM. It is our recommendation that a minimum protection factor of SPF 30 be used. While in the outdoors, children are encouraged to wear their own hat as additional protection from the sun.

Accidents or Injuries

All programs are required to complete an accident report describing the circumstances of the injury and any first aid administered for any child who has sustained an accident or injury. A copy of the report must be provided to a parent/guardian of the child.

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.



Every program will have an approved "Fire & Emergency Procedure". This procedure will be posted in a conspicuous place at the exits of each room throughout the program that is used for the care of children (i.e., this includes all classrooms, washrooms, cloakrooms, kitchens etc.).

On the first day of employment, as per the program orientation policy, all new employees to the program (this includes supply staff and students) are required to review the programs "Fire & Emergency Procedure" as well as the location of fire exits, fire extinguishers, emergency bells and location of designated shelter in the event of an emergency evacuation.

If the program is in a school setting, staff are also required to read and understand all of the stated school emergency response procedures. Programs located in a school setting are also required to conduct a fire drill with the custodian once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Directors are to share all fire drill dates with the school principal.

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.

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

Outdoor Play and Safety

It is recognized that outdoor play is an integral part of a child's healthy development. Activities that promote the children's interests as well as gross motor development should be planned and followed through on. Educators will supervise the children and are to be actively involved in extending the children's learning during outdoor play.

Each program will develop an outdoor playscape supervision policy specific to their playscape location and equipment. The outdoor playscape supervision plans will include the YMCA staff members' role and responsibilities to ensure safety.

As described in How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH), 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.



DAILY INSPECTIONS:

Prior to the children entering the outdoor playscape, a child care staff is required to conduct an inspection, checking the entire outdoor area for hazardous debris or litter, any damage caused by vandalism and to identify emerging problems. School age staff will follow arrangements as discussed with the custodian of the school.

MONTHLY INSPECTIONS (Child Care Only):

The program Director/designate will be responsible to conduct a comprehensive monthly inspection, which shall include checking for any damage: any broken or missing components to equipment; anything tied to, or added to equipment, or to other outdoor features; damage caused by vandalism and wear; any broken or missing parts and for any damage to fence, gates, benches, signs and retaining walls.

In each monthly inspection damage/concerns will be noted on the checklist under Action needed, and then transferred to the Playscape Repair Log. When the issue has been rectified the Director/designate will note that under Action Taken within the monthly checklist as well as in the repair log.

ANNUAL INSPECTIONS (Child Care Only):

An annual inspection and comprehensive written report will be completed, along with a plan of action and a timeline for any required repairs. This report will remain a permanent record that will be examined by the Ministry of Education.

The Director/designate of the center is responsible for ensuring that all staff members are knowledgeable of the location and contents of the Outdoor Playscape Policies.

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 (minus 25°C with or without wind chill), or smog advisories, children may be kept indoors.

Field Trips (Learning Trips & Spontaneous Excursions)

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



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/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/childrensaidthereportingabuse/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 Community Starts Here Campaign?"

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.