



**YMCA of
Niagara**

Ontario Early Years Centre
Participant Handbook

*Learning through play,
together.*

Ontario Early Years Centres
A Place For Parents And Their Children.



Centres de la petite enfance
Un endroit pour les parents et leurs enfants.



OEYC Handbook

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Welcome to Ontario Early Years Centres

A place for:

Children (birth to age 6) to:

- Play and learn with their parents/caregivers
- Explore and experience activities to stimulate brain development
- Interact and play with other children

Parents/Families/Caregivers can:

- Drop in with your child to participate in play-based learning activities
- Interact with your child and program facilitators
- Attend workshops and learn parenting tips
- Meet and share ideas with other parents and caregivers
- Borrow resources from the Resource Room/Library
- Learn about and be referred to other Early Years Services in our community
- Ask questions related to child development
- Receive information, support & guidance from early childhood specialists



Joining Us

Our Staff

All program facilitators are qualified Early Years Professionals committed to offering high quality programs. Supervisors of the program have years of experience in child development, program planning, curriculum development, and working with families. In addition, our facilitators have received training in Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN) initiatives which support professionals in the use of using standardized screening tools and planning programs to maximize children's developmental learning opportunities. Our caring, supportive staff possess a strong understanding of community supports and of other early learning service providers in Niagara.

Registration

Registration is required for the use of our services. It is important for us to understand the children and families that we serve in order to plan appropriately. This registration information also assists us in communicating with you about special events and allows you to borrow resource materials. Advance registration by phone is required for the specific workshops and field trips described in our monthly newsletter.

Once registered with an email account, we will send you our monthly newsletter and calendar filled with information including our upcoming parent education programs and children's workshops.



Sign In

Please ensure that you and your child sign in upon arrival (neatly printing both first and last names) and check for special events that are posted.

Please ensure that the name you gave on your registration form is the same that you record on the daily sign in when you visit.

Parent/Caregiver Expectations

We offer this handbook to ensure that every visit to our OEYC is enjoyable and to answer questions that you may have about our programs and services. We hope that you gain a full awareness of the opportunities available at our centres and understand how the program facilitators are able to support you in your visits. Our OEYCs are a great partnership between early years professionals, parents and caregivers who all work together to provide meaningful experiences to young children.

Our Program

Interactive Play and Learn Program

Play is how children learn.

Our service is based on this fundamental principle. We encourage, support, promote and nurture the opportunity for children to learn through a stimulating environment with guidance and encouragement from caring adults.

We believe that it is critical to offer opportunities for:

- Communication, language and literacy development
- Knowledge and understanding of the world
- Personal, emotional, and social development
- Physical development and movement
- Artistic and creative development

What does our program look like?

Each location is unique, however:

- Each site has an Interactive Play and Learn program that sets the stage for developmental learning.
- Each site has learning centres which promote opportunities for growth, development and fun.
- Staff will adapt program and learning activities based on observations of the children's interests.
- Experiences are documented by photos, samplework, learning stories to capture the learning that has occurred and serve as a basis for future planning and exploration.

All activities within the program are designed to meet the developmental and educational needs of children from birth to six years of age and their parents/caregivers.

Our program is intentionally aligned with the kindergarten curriculum.



Benefits of Our Learning Centres

Our program is arranged in child directed learning centres with a daily program of activities which will foster child development. Language, literacy and numeracy skill development opportunities have been incorporated into every aspect of the program. We believe in the importance of repetition and exploration in children's learning and play. By repeating activities, children have opportunities to master new skills, use experimentation to make predictions, determine outcomes and to acquire confidence in their abilities. Play materials from one learning centre may be incorporated into another centre to foster connections and deepen the learning.

Creative Art

This area encourages children's natural creativity. It offers opportunities for the development of pre-reading skills, pre-math skills, and hand-eye coordination through the use of a variety of materials, tools and objects. Children need to develop skills in drawing, painting, cutting and gluing. We recognize the importance of the creative process rather than the end product. Adult made sample crafts are not encouraged. Children need to have opportunities to explore their own creative potential and represent their own image rather than reproducing someone else's.

Fine Motor

The fine motor area encourages cognitive development including the ability to think and solve problems using such toys as puzzles, number matching games and other manipulatives.

Gross Motor

Gross motor activities allow the opportunity to develop large muscle skills like jumping, running and throwing. *Limited availability in some sites due to space and safety restrictions.

Blocks

Children can role play, explore, plan, create and demolish in this area.

Science, Technology and the Natural World

This area encourages curiosity, with opportunities to explore, discover, create and test their own theories about the world. In addition, facilitated science experiments and activities are planned for every location.



Literacy

Early literacy activities are found throughout the entire program. The literacy centre offers the opportunity to read books alone, or with other children and/or adults.

Circle

The coming together of individuals to participate in circle encourages communication, literacy and social skills. Circle time generally includes interest related songs, interactive stories, finger plays and discussion making it a valuable learning experience. If you and your child choose not to participate, we ask that you enjoy a quiet activity in another area so that others will not be disturbed.

Dramatic Play

Children can explore their world through role playing in a safe, non-judgmental setting, using real world materials, such as dress up clothes and accessories. Puppets also encourage language development.

Sensory Centre

Using all of their senses, children have the opportunity to touch, experiment and manipulate a variety of materials encouraging children's natural inquisitiveness.

Workshops

Each site offers a variety of workshops. These programs focus on specific learning concepts and are designed to provide opportunities for adults and children to play, learn and enjoy positive interactive experiences. Parent education and children's workshops are described in detail in our monthly newsletter as well as in our sign up areas at each site. To register for a workshop, please call the OEYC Administration Office at 905 938 9392. Some sessions are limited in size due to space requirements. Registration for workshops can begin on the first business day of the month. Child care is available during some adult workshops.

Special Events

From time to time special events such as field trips are offered. Specific learning activities will be planned for each field trip. Parents/caregivers are responsible for their own transportation to the field trip location. Please refer to your calendar for upcoming events. Follow the registration procedures.



Working Together

Parents, Caregivers and OEYC Program Facilitators

You are responsible for the children in your care at all times. In order to ensure the safety of the children and a positive experience for all, parents and caregivers need to remain in **reasonable proximity** to their children. This is particularly important in our centres where we have multiple rooms available for play. Should you leave the room for any reason, please ensure that you have passed responsibility for your children's care to another participant or ask staff for assistance.

You are responsible to tidy up any materials that you or the children in your care use. We appreciate your assistance in maintaining a healthy, safe and tidy environment. If you find equipment that is not clean or in good repair, please report it to staff immediately.

Our program facilitators would be happy to explain the purpose and value of each learning centre.

Occasionally an older child may wish to visit the centre with his/her younger sibling. These older children are welcome to play, and also act as helpers and positive role models in the program. Please remember that

our equipment and resources are geared to the 0-6 year old age group and some may not be appropriate for the older children to use, particularly our riding toys.

Please leave valuables in your vehicle or at home. We cannot accept any responsibility for lost or stolen items. The OEYC creates opportunities for face to face interactions for both children and adults. For this reason, we encourage you to **limit cell phone/smartphone use to emergencies.**

Students

From time to time, we offer educational opportunities for students to learn skills in child development. Student's pictures will be posted on the notice board and they will wear name tags identifying themselves.

Adult Role in Children's Learning & Play

At all times, adults have a critical role in children's play. We believe that adults should always:

- Value children's play and speak with children about their play.
- Participate in your child's play as much as possible. When adults engage in children's play, children receive the message that play is valuable and that they are important. This increases a child's overall self-esteem and self-concept.
- Recognize that children's play with their peers and adults increases a child's level of trust and their sense of belonging.
- Create a playful atmosphere. Provide materials that are developmentally and age appropriate for children to explore.
- When play appears to be stuck, unproductive or dangerous, please intervene appropriately to redirect the child or offer a new prop or experience.
- During play, always follow the child's lead. Let them be the director or leader of their play. This increases creative thinking, communication skills and supports their developing leadership skills.

Program Facilitator Role in Children's Learning and Play

OEYC staff are responsible to facilitate opportunities for you to interact with your children. We will:

- Provide leadership and direction to the program.
- Manage the program in accordance to YMCA of Niagara and Ministry of Education guidelines, policies and procedures.
- Develop programs that serve the needs of participants.
- Act as a support and resource for families.



Opportunities to Become More Involved in the OEYC Suggestions

We are always open to suggestions that will enhance our program. You are encouraged to let us know how we might further meet your needs. Comment cards are available for you to record your thoughts and suggestions. Although there is no requirement to sign your comment card, we appreciate knowing where ideas and suggestions originate. This enables us to follow up with you.

Evaluation

In order to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our participants, we conduct surveys/evaluations of our services on a regular basis. We ask that you take a few minutes to participate. However, should you wish to discuss any aspect of our program, please feel free to speak to staff. We welcome discussion.

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

Resource Lending Library

Each site has a wealth of resources: books, DVDs, information sheets, brochures and pamphlets. Some materials are available for you to keep and others are available for borrowing for a two week period. Literacy backpacks are also available for you to enjoy with your child. For more information about available resources, please speak to the staff.

Workshops

Parent education sessions are offered on a regular basis. You are invited to participate in any session that is offered at an Ontario Early Years Centre. Pre-registration is required, so please contact the OEYC Administration Office at 905 938 9392 to reserve your space. Registration begins on the first business day of the month between 8:30am-4:30pm.



Health and Safety

Allergies

All Ontario Early Years Centres within the St. Catharines riding are "Nut Aware". For the safety of our participants, it is imperative that all food items brought to the site are nut free.

Diapering

An area for changing diapers is available as per Ministry of Health regulations. Please remember to disinfect the change table before and after each use with the disinfectant solution provided. Soiled diapers must be placed in a plastic bag. Please follow directions for the disposal of diapers at your site. Gloves are available.

Toys

Toys and equipment are disinfected on a regular basis. In the event that a child mouths a toy, please place this item in the container provided for toy disinfecting.

Medication and Illness

Please do not bring medication to the site. Children and/or adults who are ill should refrain from attending the program in order to protect the health of other participants and our program facilitators.

Accidents

Should an accident occur, the staff is required to complete documentation regarding the incident. You will be asked to review and sign the document which will then be forwarded to the Coordinator for review. A first aid kit is available at all locations.



Emergency Evacuation Procedures

Please read and follow the evacuation procedures which are posted on site to ensure you are knowledgeable regarding safe evacuation for your children and yourself. Fire and evacuation drills take place on a monthly basis.

Closures

The centre may be closed due to inclement weather. Closures will be announced on local radio stations and on the YMCA of Niagara website at www.ymcaofniagara.org. Please call the OEYC Administration Office at 905 938 9392, or the Walker Family YMCA at 905 934 9622 if you are uncertain. Occasionally, conflicting events in our shared facilities also take place. We strive to provide advance notice for any closure through our monthly newsletter, emails and signage at our centres.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Confidentiality

All staff, students, and volunteers are required to sign confidentiality forms. The YMCA of Niagara and the Ontario Early Years Centre, St. Catharines are dedicated to respecting the confidentiality of program participants and staff. As a participant of the OEYC, please respect your agreement to hold confidential all information learned by you in the course of your participation in our programs and services, even after you are no longer a participant.

Locations

St. Catharines Locations:

Walker Family YMCA 25 YMCA Drive	905 934 9622 x 265
Grantham Mennonite Brethren Church 469 Grantham Avenue	905 937 7007
Niagara Region Social Services Building 234 Bunting Road	905 980 6000 x 6211
Trinity United Church 15 Pine Street South, Thorold	905 227 9783

Mobile Locations are available within St. Catharines. Call the Main Site or visit www.ymcaofniagara.org under Community Initiatives for a location in your area.

Contact Us:

Ontario Early Years Centres, St. Catharines
Main Site & Administration Office
Walker Family YMCA
25 YMCA Drive
St. Catharines, ON L2N 7P9
T: 905 938 9392

ontarioearlyyears.ca ymcaofniagara.org



Strong Kids Annual Support Campaign

Every kid deserves a chance...

Kids can help create strong communities for today and for the future, but only if they have the chance to reach their full potential. Donations to the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign help support proven programs that give kids the opportunities they need to live healthier, happier lives now, but also to grow into productive adults. By supporting the Strong Kids Campaign, you can help our kids build a better community for tomorrow.



Please consider a charitable gift to Strong Kids.

You can give online by going to ymcastrongkids.ca or through your Ontario Early Years Centre or your local YMCA Health, Fitness & Aquatics Centre.

Other YMCA Programs

YMCA Health, Fitness & Aquatics

The YMCA builds healthy communities by helping you to achieve your personal goals as part of a community of people that nurtures both your success and the success of your local community. When you join the Y, you will have access to people, programs and facilities to help you become healthier, feel better about yourself, and feel more connected to your community. As a leading charity, we offer opportunities to all individuals regardless of race, age, sex, creed, ability or economic circumstances. Men, women and children come to the YMCA to grow and develop into happier, more productive people.

For information call your local branch:

Fort Erie EJ Freeland YMCA	905 871 9622
Niagara Centre YMCA	905 735 9622
Niagara Falls YMCA	905 358 9622
Niagara West YMCA	905 309 9622
Port Colborne YMCA	905 835 9622
St. Catharines Walker Family YMCA	905 934 9622

Or visit us online at ymcaofniagara.org for more information.

YMCA Child Care

The YMCA is the largest and most trusted providers of high quality Child Care services in the Niagara region. Our Child Care programs deliver stimulating learning experiences in a safe environment that will enhance your child's social, intellectual, physical and emotional development. We stimulate children's natural curiosity and encourage personal expression so that they develop into confident, caring, happy individuals.

For more information about our YMCA Preschool & School Age Child Care centres, please visit our website, ymcaofniagara.org.

YMCA Day Camp

Preschool and school age children can participate in a Y Day Camp programs during the school breaks. Holiday Camp in December and January, March Break Camp and Summer Day Camp programs in July and August provide children with a fun and active experience. Please visit ymcadaycamp.ca for more information.

YMCA Day Camp

905 934 9755 x 280
ymcadaycamp.ca

Employment & Newcomer Services

Employment & Newcomer Services fulfills the mission of the YMCA by helping individuals to find, create, and maintain meaningful employment, thereby supporting personal development and motivating participants to reach their potential as contributing members of society.

The YMCA of Niagara Employment Services has been successfully helping people in Niagara find work since 1985. Visit us and let our experienced Job Coaches see how we can start helping you.

YMCA Employment & Newcomer Services

905 684 3500
getajobniagara.com

Mission

The YMCA of Niagara is a charity, open to all, providing leadership and opportunities for people and their community to grow in spirit, mind, and body.

Visit us online at ymcaofniagara.org

YMCA of Niagara
Ontario Early Years Centres
 25 YMCA Drive, St. Catharines ON, L2N 7P9
 T: 905 938 9392
 E: srobbins@ymcaofniagara.ca

Charitable Number: 11930 7064 RR0001

Privacy Statement

As a charitable, community-based association, the YMCA of Niagara is committed to protecting your right to privacy. The personal information you share with the YMCA will be used to support the work of the YMCA. For further privacy information, please visit our website at ymcaofniagara.org.



We never met a kid whose
 potential we couldn't see.

Visit ymcapotential.ca

