



Niagara Region is responsible for the local planning and administration of EarlyON Child and Family Centres, on behalf of the provincial government. The EarlyON system, as it is currently, developed gradually based on available resources and infrastructure, under different provincial ministries, with different program goals and funding levels. With no overall service system planning locally, program and service delivery across centres are inconsistent. While some areas of Niagara receive an abundance of service, others have limited or no access to EarlyON programs.

Niagara Region is working with organizations such as the YMCA of Niagara, as the EarlyON service provider for St. Catharines and Thorold, to transform the existing service system to best meet the needs of children and their families.

The YMCA of Niagara has delivered high quality EarlyON programs and services for children and their parents/caregivers since 2002. The YMCA of Niagara is excited to have been selected to operate EarlyON Child and Family Centres in the cities of St. Catharines and Thorold. The dedicated team of early years professionals support early learning and healthy child development through interactive play experiences, parent education, early identification and referrals to other community and specialized services that help address the unique needs of the whole family.

Beginning in April, the hours of service will be as follows:

<p>Walker Family YMCA Centre 25 YMCA Drive, St. Catharines Monday & Wednesday: 9am-4pm Tuesday & Thursday: 9am-6pm Friday: 9am-12pm</p>	<p>Bunting Road Centre (until June 26th) 234 Bunting Road, St. Catharines Monday through Thursday: 9am-12pm and 1-4pm Friday: 9am-12pm</p>
<p>Grantham Centre 469 Grantham Avenue, St. Catharines Monday through Thursday: 9am-1pm Friday: 9am-12pm</p>	<p>Thorold Centre 15 Pine Street South, Thorold Monday through Thursday: 9am-12:30pm Friday: 9am-12pm</p>
<p>St. Anthony’s Catholic Elementary School Centre (opening September 2020) 81 Rykert Street, St. Catharines Monday through Thursday 9am-1pm Friday 9am-12 pm</p>	

For more detailed information including the YMCA EarlyON newsletter and calendars, please visit <https://ymcaofniagara.org/programs/community-initiatives/earlyon-centres/>

For information related to other EarlyON Child and Family Centres across the Niagara region, please visit <https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/childcare/early-years/locations.aspx>

Over the coming months, parents and caregivers will also notice a number of service improvements at EarlyON centres across Niagara, such as:

- Many locations will see new play equipment and resources, including items that support play for children of varying abilities.
- More consistency of programs and services offered at locations across Niagara.
- One main registration portal, so families only have to register once, and not every time they go to a different centre. Families will also be able to register at the centre, or from their home before coming to the centre. Once registered, families will receive a fob that they will swipe when visiting a centre. No more having to complete a sign-in sheet.
- Full day centres will now be open during the lunch hour, to better accommodate nap schedules for children of all ages.
- Families and caregivers will be engaged more often for their ideas and thoughts in designing the programs and services they want to see offered at centre.
- All centres will respond to parent concerns about a child's development, with tools and resources for parents, with referrals to specialized community services if needed.

The YMCA looks forward to working with the Niagara Region, other EarlyON service providers, educators, community agencies, and parents and caregivers to ensure EarlyON Child and Family Centres continue to provide quality programs and services that meet community needs, and support the healthy development and learning of children across Niagara.

If you have questions, please contact Tracey Cosco, Director of YMCA EarlyON Child and Family Centres at tracey.cosco@niagara.ymca.ca