



YMCA Child Care Parent Handbook

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Welcome to YMCA Child Care

The YMCA warmly welcomes your family to our esteemed Child Care program. By choosing YMCA Child Care for your child, you have entrusted them to one of the most reputable and reliable providers of top-notch child care services in the Niagara region. Our Child Care Programs at the YMCA of Niagara create a secure, nurturing, and inclusive environment, where children flourish and families thrive, contributing to the overall well-being of our community.

As a charitable organization, the YMCA of Niagara operates 48 Child Care Centres across the Niagara Region. This parent handbook serves as a comprehensive guide, detailing essential program and policy information about our YMCA Child Care Programs. Should you need more information, please contact your dedicated Child Care Centre Supervisor.

We eagerly anticipate fostering strong relationships with your family and delivering exceptional care to your children within our programs. Thank you for joining our YMCA family!

“Not every child is born into wealth or high status, but every child is special in the eyes of their parents and those who love them”

Martin and Huggins, YMCA Playing to learn 2015 pg.4

YMCA Program Statement

The YMCA Child Care programs strive to deliver stimulating learning experiences in a safe environment that enhances children’s social, intellectual, physical, and emotional development. At the YMCA we understand that children learn through play – it is the cornerstone of our curriculum.

YMCA Child Care promotes and incorporates the YMCA Core Values of caring, health, honesty, inclusiveness, respect, and responsibility throughout our curriculum and daily interactions with our children and families. Values are the principles of thought and conduct that help distinguish right from wrong and provide a foundation for decision making. Living with and acting on good values contributes to the development of self-esteem and overall personal happiness.

Our Program Statement describes how our programs and our educators support and foster early learning. It outlines our view of the child, our philosophy and pedagogy, as well as the goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development.

The goals and approaches of our Program Statement, and our YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards, and recommendations with the province’s documents:

“How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years,”

“Think, Feel, Act – Lessons from Research about Young Children,” and

“Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)”

YMCA 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.

Vision

Inspiring health, wellness, and community – for life.

YMCA Core Values

Caring • Health • Honesty • Inclusiveness • Respect • Responsibility

YMCA Child Care is open to all, regardless of race, gender, creed, or economic circumstance.

Values, sometimes referred to as character, are the basis of who we are, how we live and how we treat others. Living with and acting on good values contributes to the development of self-esteem and overall personal happiness. YMCA Child Care promotes and teaches these values through our curriculum and daily interactions with our children and families. We encourage our families to support these values.

Full Program Statement can be found in Appendix A.

YMCA Curriculum and Support

YMCA Playing to Learn – Early years (0-5)

The YMCA Playing to Learn national curriculum implements an approach that incorporates how play provides the foundation for learning to read and write, for learning mathematics, science, technology, and a foundation for the arts. As a research-based curriculum, we believe that YMCA Playing to Learn provides the best approach to ensure a child's continued enthusiasm and capacity for life-long learning.

Our infant, toddler and preschool Educators are trained in the curriculum which views the child as active, curious, capable, and rich in potential. YMCA Playing to Learn also sets the stage for your child to successfully transition to school and the Early Learning Kindergarten curriculum.

Program Curriculum – School Age

All YMCA Child Care programs take a child-initiated, educator-directed approach that focuses on play-based learning, allowing the child to take the lead and then focusing on his/her interests. Educators' understanding of child development is critical in helping children reach their maximum potential in the environments we create, including outdoors where planned activities are designed to promote physical activity.

Research tells us that children learn primarily through play. Play is the cornerstone of our curriculum – understood to be essential to the healthy social and cognitive development of children and future academic success. This approach and these principles are the cornerstone to our program planning in all our before and after school programs, as well as our full day Holiday Care for 3- and 4-year-olds.

"Experts recognize that play and academic work are not distinct categories for young children: creating, doing, and learning are inextricably linked. When children are engaged in purposeful play, they are discovering, creating, improvising, and expanding their learning. Viewing children as active participants in their own development and learning allows educators to move beyond preconceived expectations about what children should be learning and focus on what they are learning"

(Think, Feel Act. 2013 Pg.7).

Our Educators

Our Educators are carefully chosen and have educational background and experience to ensure quality care and understanding of child development. They have personal qualities of friendliness, warmth, and the ability to relate openly to children and adults. Our Educators are dedicated to the needs of the children, the concerns of the parents and the high expectations of the YMCA.

All YMCA Child Care staff complete a Criminal Reference Check with a Vulnerable Sector Check through Niagara Regional Police services and hold current certification in First Aid and CPR-C.

Our Child Care Educators participate in ongoing professional development opportunities such as YMCA Playing to Learn for preschool staff, training in Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN), YMCA Healthy Child Development and internal curriculum training, among others.

We continue to strive for excellence in all our programs, and regular evaluation of Educators and programming ensures ongoing high-quality care for your children.

Students and Volunteers

The YMCA promotes opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and volunteerism. Students and volunteers aged 18 years or older are welcome in our licensed Child Care centres, and they participate in an orientation and review of relevant policies and procedures. All volunteers and students complete a Criminal Reference Check with Vulnerable Sector Check through Niagara Regional Police services.

Students and volunteers do not have unsupervised access to the children in the centres; they are not alone with a child. They are paired with and mentored by a YMCA Educator.

Child Guidance

At the YMCA Child Care, our educators employ a positive and values-based approach to effectively guide and promote positive behaviors among children. We expect children to adhere to the behavior expectations set by YMCA Child Care and engage in appropriate interactions with their peers, educators, and volunteers.

We utilize various methods tailored to individual situations and children, ensuring a positive and smooth guidance process. These methods include:

- Redirection: Guiding children towards acceptable options when they engage in unacceptable activities.
- Logical and Natural Consequences: Helping children understand the outcomes of their actions.
- Limit Setting: Establishing boundaries for both group and individual children, considering specific situations.
- Modelling: Demonstrating appropriate ways of interacting.
- Providing Choices: Presenting children with suitable options and encouraging them to make decisions on their own.
- Anticipating Trouble: Proactively planning and preparing the environment to prevent issues.
- Ignoring: Choosing to overlook certain inappropriate behaviors while emphasizing and reinforcing appropriate behavior.
- Positive Reinforcement: Utilizing encouragement to reinforce positive behaviors.

By employing these strategies, we strive to create a smoother and more effective approach to guiding children's behavior at our YMCA Child Care facilities.

Prohibited Practices

A prohibited practice is any behaviour by a staff, volunteer or placement student that puts children at risk or that can inhibit a child's growth, self-esteem, or healthy development. All YMCA staff, volunteers and placement students are aware that the following practices are unacceptable at the YMCA.

- Corporal punishment of the 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 himself, herself 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 or home child care premises 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;
- Use of 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, frighten the child, undermine his or her 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.

Duty to Report

A report must be made immediately if a child is, or appears to be, suffering from abuse or is at risk of harm. While the Duty to Report applies to the public, it also includes special reporting responsibilities for professionals in the child care field. Registered Early Childhood Educators have this obligation under the College of ECE. The YMCA supports its staff in their Duty to Report responsibility. The YMCA does not investigate these reports; we cooperate fully with FACS' investigations.

Our Families our Partners

Permission to Share Information

In our School Age Child Care program, we kindly request parents to complete a Permission to Share Information form. This form enables us to facilitate open communication and collaboration between the school and Child Care, all for the benefit of your child's best interests.

Child Care Approach to Inclusion

At the YMCA, we have extensive experience in providing inclusive programming for children with special needs and behavior challenges. We work closely with parents, YMCA educators, the school network, and other community partners to ensure that each child's individual needs are fully addressed.

Our dedicated YMCA Child Care Educators in preschool programs undergo comprehensive training through Quality Child Care Niagara. This training equips them with the necessary tools to create an optimal experience for all children in our programs, including those with cognitive, physical, or behavior challenges.

To ensure that we can best support each child, it is essential for parents and guardians to provide our YMCA staff with all relevant information regarding their child's unique needs during the registration inquiry process. Before finalizing the registration, parents will have the opportunity to meet with our YMCA Director of Inclusion to complete a Participant Profile. This profile enables us to develop an appropriate support plan and implement effective strategies when the child enters our program.

It's important to note that we do not offer 1:1 staff support; instead, all children are integrated into groups according to regular staff-to-child ratios. Additionally, in our school-age programs, children are expected to be toilet trained, as individual toileting support is not available due to child care ratios. While a group setting in licensed child care may not meet the needs of every child, we strive to create an inclusive environment for as many children as possible.

We rely on parents/guardians to inform us about any medication their child may be taking and any changes in medication. This ensures that we can provide appropriate care and support.

In instances where our YMCA Child Care program is unable to accommodate the unique needs of a child, we will work collaboratively with the family to reach a final decision. We will also connect them with local agencies that specialize in supporting children with similar needs.

Our commitment to inclusion and supporting children with diverse abilities is unwavering, and we are dedicated to creating a smooth and supportive environment for every child in our YMCA Child Care programs.

Respectful Environment Agreement for YMCA Child Care Centres

We are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment for all members of our community, including educators, children, and parents. Our core values—honesty, respect, responsibility, inclusivity, and caring—guide our actions and interactions. We believe that by upholding these principles, we create a positive and supportive community for everyone involved. The YMCA is committed to providing a respectful and inclusive environment where all individuals, including children, educators, parents/guardians, volunteers, and visitors, are treated with dignity and respect. We recognize that creating a safe and nurturing environment is essential to supporting the well-being and development of children.

General Guidelines for All

- **Respect and Safety:** Promote respect and safety for all participants.
- **Communication:** Maintain open and honest communication.
- **Report Concerns:** Promptly report any concerns or breaches of this agreement.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Regularly review and improve practices to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants.

Expected Behaviors

- **Respect:** Show respect and dignity to children, families and educators.
- **Fairness and Equality:** Treat everyone equally and fairly, avoiding favoritism or exclusion.
- **Communication:** Express yourself constructively and listen to others' perspectives.
- **Responsibility:** Take responsibility for your actions and behavior.
- **Safety:** Follow the program rules to ensure a safe environment for all.
- **Involvement:** Engage positively with educators and participate in your child's learning and development.
- **Support:** Encourage and support participation and behavior in accordance with program guidelines.
- **Positive Feedback:** Provide constructive feedback and support positive behaviors.
- **Transparency:** Avoid situations that could be misinterpreted; work in open environments.

Prohibited Practices

- **Derogatory Language:** Using harsh, degrading, or discriminatory language towards any child, youth, community members, or educators.
- **Violence:** Engaging in any form of verbal or physical aggression.
- **Privacy Violations:** Intruding on the privacy of other children, families, or educators.
- **Inappropriate Interactions:** Forming inappropriate emotional, physical, or sexual relationships with children or youth.
- **Bullying:** Engaging in bullying, harassment, or intimidation.
- **Inappropriate Language:** Using derogatory, discriminatory, or profane language.
- **Unsanctioned Activities:** Engaging in activities not approved by the program or that pose a risk to safety.
- **Corporal Punishment:** Any form of physical punishment.
- **Neglecting Basic Needs:** Depriving children of food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing, or bedding.

- **Sexually Suggestive Behavior:** Engaging in or allowing sexually suggestive comments or behaviors.
- **Secrecy:** Asking children to keep secrets from peers, staff, or parents.
- **Neglecting Allegations:** Ignoring or not acting upon allegations made by children or youth.

This respectful environment agreement is a living document, subject to updates to address emerging needs and challenges. Adherence to these guidelines ensures a positive, respectful, and safe environment for everyone involved.

We encourage open communication to resolve any issues. We value a respectful environment for all. If challenges arise, we will work collaboratively to address them. This may include guidance, educational opportunities, or, in some cases, changes to childcare arrangements. In severe cases, continued enrollment may not be possible.

Parent Participation & Communication

At the YMCA, we believe that parents and YMCA Educators share the responsibility of Child Care. We understand that you want to stay informed about your child's experiences, but it can be challenging during busy drop-offs and pick-ups. We offer several ways to ensure communication between parents and educators.

Open Communication: Our YMCA Child Care Educators are committed to sharing information with you daily. If you have any concerns about your child's needs, please talk to your Child Care Supervisor in person, through email, or over the phone.

Weemarkable App (Infants to Preschool): Weemarkable® is a secure app that allows you to receive notifications, messages, and photos from your child's center. It keeps you connected to their exciting moments in Child Care and provides valuable information like menus and educator observations.

Family Events: We encourage you to participate in our programs and special events, such as Strong Kids events and Family Socials. Stay updated by reading letters, bulletins, and checking the YMCA website for information.

Newsletter: Periodic newsletters will be distributed in our Early Learning & Care centers, providing news and updates about the YMCA of Niagara and your center. We welcome your suggestions and comments.

Evaluation: We invite parents to complete our annual online Parent Satisfaction Survey, and we appreciate feedback and suggestions at any time. If you would like to discuss your child's progress, we can arrange a parent-teacher meeting.

We aim to make parent participation and communication as simple and effective as possible in our YMCA Child Care program.

Issues and Concerns Resolution

At the YMCA we recognize that our engagement and communication with parents and guardians helps a child to feel a greater sense of belonging and is key as we strive to build relationships with our YMCA families.

The YMCA is committed to finding resolutions to issues and concerns that may arise for families while participating in YMCA Child Care. We are committed to engaging with families and addressing their concerns in a timely manner, and all efforts will be made to resolve concerns within YMCA Child Care policies. During this process confidentiality will be always maintained. Maintaining necessary documentation and reports is an important aspect of the process and will remain confidential.

Resolution Process

- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to share their concern with the Centre Supervisor or directly with Educators at the child care centre. Educators will bring the concern to the Supervisor.
- If the Supervisor receives the information through a third party, he/she will contact the parent/guardian within one business day.
- Centre Supervisor gathers information and determines if he/she can provide a solution to the concern or issue within two business days of initial contact.
- Centre Supervisor contacts the parent to resolve the concern. If the process for resolution is extended, the parent/guardian will be informed.
- If the Centre Supervisor cannot provide resolution to the conflict, the information will be shared with the Child Care Regional Director for advice and assistance on how to proceed.
- The Regional Director will determine if the conflict needs to be brought to the attention of the Child Care General Manager or another manager who will review the information and provide direction and/or advice regarding resolution.
- Follow up with the parent/guardian will take place within two business days of the information being shared with a Regional Director.
- If the parent/guardian is not satisfied with the resolution or information as presented to them, they may request that the concern be escalated to the next level of leadership. (Centre Supervisor – Regional Director - General Manager – Vice President – CEO) YMCA staff will provide the parent/guardian with the requested contact information.

YMCA Child Care Programs

Licensed Child Care

The YMCA of Niagara’s Child Care Centres are licensed and inspected by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA). Provincial Government standards and the YMCA’s practices and initiatives ensure that all programs provide a safe, healthy, and stimulating environment and quality care for the children we serve. We adhere to all legislated staff to child ratios.

Hours of Operation

At YMCA Early Learning & Care Centres (ages 0-5), we are committed to providing convenient and reliable care for your child. Our centres are open Monday to Friday, year-round, from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, except for statutory holidays. In cases where statutory holidays fall on a weekend, they will be observed on the following Monday.

For YMCA School Age Centres, we align our hours of operation with school schedules. We open every school day from 7:00 am until school begins and provide care after school until 6:00 pm. Please note that our School Age Centres are closed on statutory holidays and during school holiday breaks.

We strive to accommodate your scheduling needs while providing quality care for your child. Our flexible hours of operation and supplementary programs are designed to ensure a positive and engaging experience for your family throughout the year.

PA/PD Days, Easter Monday & Early Release Days

During Professional Activity/Development (PA/PD) Days and Easter Monday, we may offer full day child care services in designated School Age Centres (please note that care is not available in every location). Parents who sign up for PA Day/Easter Monday care will be charged the full-day PA Day fee. If you decide not to utilize the PA Day/Easter Monday care, your normal daily fee will apply.

We also provide care in School Age Centres on school Early Release days. Parents who enroll their child for care on an Early Release Day will be charged the Early Release Day fee. If you choose not to use care on an Early Release Day, your normal daily fee will apply.

We understand the importance of accommodating your scheduling needs, and our PA/PD Day, Easter Monday, and Early Release Day services aim to provide a convenient child care solution during these specific periods. Please note that fees associated with these services are separate from the regular daily fees.

YMCA Day Camp

During periods when our School Age programs are closed, we offer engaging YMCA Day Camp programs for school-age children. These programs are available during Holiday Camp in December and January, March Break Camp, and Summer Day Camp programs in July and August. They provide a fun and exciting complement to our regular School Age program. For more details on program schedules and locations, please consult the brochure provided by your Centre Supervisor or visit our website at www.ymcaofniagara.org.

YMCA Holiday/Summer Care (for children 4-5 years old)

Our full-day licensed Holiday/Summer Care program is specially designed to offer a safe and enjoyable transitional experience for children aged 4-5. This program is specifically tailored for children who are either in Junior/Senior Kindergarten or preparing to enter Junior Kindergarten. We take great pride in providing this program at four convenient YMCA Child Care locations.

What will your child need at the YMCA Child Care program?

By packing a few essential items for your child and providing any specific details about your child's health, rest, feeding, and activity, you help the YMCA staff to provide individualized care for your child.

Infant (0 - 18 months)- Ratio of Adults to Children - 1:3

What to bring for your infant: (Please ensure all your child's belongings are clearly labelled with their name)

- Diapers, wipes and any creams or lotions labelled with your infant's name and written instructions for application
- Bottles/sip cups
- Formula (labelled with your infants' full name, the date prepared) or expressed milk labelled with your infant's full name, the mother's full name, date milk expressed) and written instructions for feeding (baby foods and whole milk or 2% milk will be provided by the YMCA)
- Changes of clothing
- Seasonal outdoor clothing

Toddler (18 months - 30 months) Ratio of Adults to Children - 1:5

What to bring for your toddler: (Please ensure all your child's belongings are clearly labelled with their name)

- Diapers, wipes and any creams or lotions labelled with your toddler's name and written instructions for application
- Bottles/sip cups
- Formula (labelled with your toddlers' full name, the date prepared) or expressed milk labelled with your toddler's full name, the mother's full name, date milk expressed) and written instructions for feeding (baby foods and whole milk or 2% milk will be provided by the YMCA)
- Changes of clothing
- Seasonal outdoor clothing
- Blanket and/or sleep toy for rest time

Preschool (2 1/2 years – 5 years) Ratio of Adults to Child - 1:8

What to bring for your preschooler: (Please ensure all your child's belongings are clearly labelled with their name)

- Pull ups or training pants (for toilet training)
- Change of clothing
- Seasonal outdoor clothing
- Blanket and/or sleep toy for rest time

YMCA Program Procedures

Health & Illness

At our Child Care center, we prioritize maintaining a high standard of health for all children. As part of this commitment, we conduct daily health checks. It is essential for parents to make alternative care arrangements if their child becomes ill. If a child's health condition prevents them from participating or feeling comfortable in regular program activities, they will be considered too ill to attend Child Care. In such cases, we will promptly contact you to arrange for your child to be picked up (see specific symptoms below).

To ensure the well-being of all children, we kindly request that parents keep their child at home if any of the following symptoms are present:

- Fever: A temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, as measured by a thermometer.
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Undiagnosed rash/skin condition
- Communicable disease outlined by Niagara Public Health
- Obviously infected discharge
- Lethargy and irritability, preventing active participation in the program
- Persistent pain
- Acute cold, nasal discharge, or coughing

Common cold

Children should stay home and not attend child care or school until they are fever free (without the use of fever-reducing medication) and other symptoms have been improving for 24 hours and they have not developed any new symptoms.

Diarrhea

A child can attend the child care centre or school 48 hours after symptoms have been improving. If there is an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness at the child care centre, it is recommended a child wait until 48 hours after symptoms of diarrhea have resolved before returning. This may vary depending on the cause of illness, number of cases and source of infection.

Fever

A child can return to the child care centre or school once they are fever free, without the use of fever-reducing medicine, for 24 hours.

Other illness or disease

For other childhood illnesses and in the event of an outbreak, our staff will follow the guidelines provided by Niagara Region Public Health.

When children return to the center, they should be prepared to participate in all aspects of the program, including outdoor play.

If a YMCA Educator notices any of the symptoms when a child arrives, they will kindly request that the child be taken home or to a doctor. In some cases, a doctor's note may be required to confirm that the child is healthy and not infectious.

We prioritize outdoor play for all children every day. If you believe your child is not well enough to participate in outdoor activities, we kindly ask that you keep them at home. It is not feasible for us to accommodate individual schedules for keeping children indoors.

The health and well-being of our children are of utmost importance, and we appreciate your cooperation in maintaining a healthy environment at our Child Care center.

Medication

Parents/guardians are encouraged to personally provide drugs and medication to their children at home, if it doesn't disrupt the treatment plan. When a child is unwell, it is beneficial for them to stay in the comfort of their own home, where they can rest and recover. The YMCA is obligated to administer drugs and medications solely under the following conditions:

- They must be prescribed by a doctor, nurse practitioner, or licensed health provider,
- The original container should have a prescription label or be accompanied by a doctor's note. The note/label needs to include:
 - the date it was written,
 - the specified administration time or the detailed reason for administering (such as fever above 38°C, wheezing, coughing, itchy and watery eyes, sneezing, etc.),
 - the expiry date of the note,
 - the child's full name,
 - the name of the medication,
 - the prescribed dosage.

Whenever you bring prescription drugs or medications for your child to the child care center, the YMCA staff will provide you with a Medication Administration Authorization form. This form outlines the dosage, administration times, and grants permission for the YMCA to administer the medication to your child.

Regarding pain relievers, fever reducers, and anti-inflammatory medications like Advil, Tylenol, and Motrin, it is not the YMCA's policy to administer these for cold or flu symptoms. It is advised that children with such symptoms remain at home to rest and recover. However, if a child has a chronic illness (e.g., headache, migraine, seizures) or is teething, the YMCA may administer medications like Advil or Tylenol with a valid doctor's note. The doctor's note should be updated annually or as the child's age, weight, or medical condition changes.

All external creams, lotions (such as diaper creams and sunscreens), as well as natural/holistic products, must be kept in their original containers. These containers should have clear labels indicating the product name, ingredients, application instructions, and the child's name. Parents are required to complete a permission form authorizing the administration of these products.

Medical Needs

Parents of children with specific medical needs, such as asthma, epilepsy, and diabetes, must complete a Medical Needs Action Plan before their child begins child care. If an over-the-counter medication is necessary as part of the plan, the medication should be in its original container with the child's name, date, storage instructions, and administration instructions.

Anaphylaxis

To ensure the safety of children with allergies, our Child Care Centres follow the YMCA's Anaphylaxis Protocol. Parents of children at risk of an anaphylactic response will complete an Anaphylaxis Action Plan and provide the necessary emergency medication to the centre before their child begins child care.

If an over-the-counter medication is required as part of the Anaphylaxis Action Plan, a prescription is not necessary; however, the medication should be in its original container with the child's name, date, storage instructions, and administration instructions.

Reporting Absence

It is important that you contact the program to report that your child will be absent and the reason for their absence. This information is required for determining who else must isolate, get tested, or whether the program must close.

If Child Becomes Ill at Program

If a child becomes ill while at the program, a staff member will separate the child from the others and the parent/guardian will be contacted to immediately pick-up the child from the program. If the YMCA is unable to reach the parent(s)/guardian to arrange pick-up, then all other contacts including emergency contacts and authorized pick-ups will be contacted. The ill child will be supervised by a staff member while waiting to be picked up. If the child is over 2 years of age and can tolerate a mask, they will be asked to wear a mask.

Accident/Incident Reports

Communication about their child's well-being is important to parents. Parents will be informed regarding any incidents affecting their child's health, safety or well-being. Parents will be provided with a copy of the Accident/Incident Report.

Serious Occurrences

YMCA Child Care Centres comply with all legislation regarding the reporting of serious occurrences, which supports the safety and well-being of all children in our care. In alignment with the Ministry of Education's intent to provide greater transparency for parents, all YMCA Child Care Centres post Serious Occurrence Notification Forms to keep parents informed of reported serious occurrences in their child's centre.

Inclement Weather & Emergency Closures

Child care centres will not operate if schools are closed due to inclement weather or emergencies. It is the responsibility of parents in both Early Learning & Care and School Age Centres to determine if the child care centre/school is closed due to inclement weather or emergency situations. To receive closure information, please tune in to local radio stations or check social media and websites for updates from YMCA of Niagara or the school boards. Regular daily fees will apply during closures.

Emergency and Crisis Policy

YMCA Child Care programs have established Emergency and Crisis Management Procedures and Policies. In the event of an emergency, parents and guardians will be contacted via phone using the contact numbers provided during centre registration. Please ensure that these contact details are reviewed and kept up to date for accuracy.

Program Information

Food/Lunches from Home & Allergies

Food brought from home to the centre must adhere to the allergy restrictions in place, and any shared treats should include the manufacturer's ingredient list. Most of our centres are peanut-free environments, ensuring the safety of those with severe allergies and meeting Public Health expectations. This includes daily lunches and snacks brought from home for your child.

In our School Age programs, lunches and snacks brought from home should:

- Comply with nut awareness and any other food restrictions.
- Include an ice pack (lunches will be refrigerated on PA Days if the ice pack is forgotten).
- Have the lunch bag and individual containers labeled with the child's name.

During before or after school periods, if children wish to eat items from their lunches in addition to or instead of the provided snack, staff will ensure that:

- Only non-perishable items are consumed (such as bread, cereals, fruits, and vegetables).
- Children do not share items from their lunches with others.

Nutritious Meals & Snacks

Preschool Child Care Centres offer morning and afternoon snacks, as well as a hot and nutritious lunch. All meals follow Canada's Food Guide and adhere to government standards. We encourage children to try different types of food, aiming to develop their taste for a variety of foods.

In School Age Child Care, children are provided with morning and afternoon snacks based on a balanced menu guided by Canada's Food Guide. The YMCA promotes the healthy consumption of water using reusable bottles. It is crucial to label personal water bottles with children's names to ensure identification and prevent mix-ups.

Sun Safety

All children go outside every day, weather permitting, and our YMCA Educators promote sun safety. All children should have hats to wear outdoors, as well as sunscreen. Parents must fill out a Sunscreen Permission form for sunscreen to be applied.

Rest Period

It is a requirement that all children attending a licensed Early Learning & Care Centre have a rest period each day. It is not necessary for your child to sleep, but he/she will be encouraged to rest quietly on his/her cot during this time. A child-sized blanket from home, labeled with your child's name, is required. Children may also bring a soft comfort item from home for rest time.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is vital for children's well-being and development. It provides them with opportunities to engage with nature, fostering social, psychological, and physical health. Being in a natural setting allows children to interact with the environment, appreciate nature's beauty, and develop lifelong connections with the natural world. YMCA Child Care programs prioritize daily outdoor time, adhering to requirements set by the Child Care and Early Years Act, weather permitting. During outdoor play, children may get dirty. We recommend sending them in clothes that can withstand outdoor exploration.

Your Child's Toys

Our centres provide age-appropriate toys and activities for children to enjoy, promoting sharing as part of their learning experience. We kindly request that children keep their personal toys at home. However, designated Show and Share days in preschool allow children to bring a special toy from home to share and discuss during group time.

Electronics

The decision to allow personal electronics in the School Age Centre during child care is at the discretion of the Centre Supervisor. This decision is based on the center's specific environment and needs, and if permitted, it is on a limited basis. Please note that valuable electronic items carry an increased risk of damage in a busy child care setting, and we cannot assume responsibility for any damages.

Safe Arrival Policy

Upon Arrival to Child Care

- Parents/Guardians will connect with the child care educator and educator will record child's arrival time on the attendance record.
- Parents/Guardians will communicate any relevant information regarding the child's departure routine. Educators will document any changes in a child's departure routine in the Daily Written Record.

When a child has not arrived by 9:40am

Early Learning Child Care Programs

- At their first opportunity, communicate via Weemarkable app, email, text, phone call or other means, with a family to confirm the absence. This communication will serve as the sole notification from the centre regardless of whether a response is received from the family. Families may choose to opt out of notifications by indicating in writing to the Supervisor/Designate.
- Document the child's absence on the attendance and any additional information in the Daily Written Record.

School Age Child Care Before School Program

- No additional steps will be taken as school will follow their own protocol regarding safe arrivals.

School Age Child Care After School Program

If a child does not arrive to the After School Child Care Program as expected the following steps will be taken;

- Educator will connect with school to confirm if child attended school that day or was picked up early. If school can confirm child's whereabouts the child will be marked Absent on the attendance record.
- If child attended school that day and is expected at the Child Care Program, educator will call parents/guardians/emergency contacts to communicate the Absence and confirm whereabouts of the child.
- If child's whereabouts cannot be confirmed educators will inform Supervisors/Manager. Supervisor/Manager will direct educator to call the police if child's whereabouts cannot be confirmed.

Safe Departure Policy

Children will be allowed to leave the centre only with a parent or person authorized on the enrolment form. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, the educator must be notified in advance in writing and this information will be documented in the daily written record. Children will not be released to anyone who is under 16 years of age. Parents/Guardians will connect with child care educator and educator will record child's departure time on the attendance record.

Identification

The educators must be notified if someone other than the parent/guardian, or an authorized pick-up person, is picking up the child. The information will be recorded by educators as per their centre's communication method, and that person will be asked for photo identification if they are not known by the educators.

If a Child is not picked up as expected

Our centres close at 6:00 pm. After that time, a parent/guardian is late. The following steps will be taken by educators:

- If no adult has called as of 6:00 pm to warn of late arrival, begin to call each parent/guardian's number in the child's file. Try to determine if the parent is enroute.
- If no parent/guardian is reached, and there is no indication that the parent is on the way, emergency numbers will also be called. Educators will continue to call all numbers until a contact is made. Contact your Supervisor and Regional Director. (If you cannot reach your RD, contact another RD or the Child Care General Manager.)
- At 7:00 pm, leave a sign on the door in case the parent arrives after the child and educator has left. The child will be transported with the educator via taxi to the designated Branch as listed below.

Niagara Centre YMCA
(Fonthill, Welland Centres)
310 Woodlawn Rd.
905-735-9622

Niagara West YMCA
(Grimsby, Beamsville, Smithville Centres)
325 Main St. East
905-309-9622

MacBain Community Centre
(Niagara Falls Centres)
7150 Montrose Rd.
905-356-7521

YMCA Administration Office
(St. Catharines, NOTL Centres)
3-300 Bunting Rd.
905-646-9622

Identification Policy

When parents notify educators if someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up. Educators will request a photo identification from the person picking up.

If a child is not picked up as expected, calls to parents/guardians' numbers begin at 6:00 pm. Provided emergency numbers are called if no response by 6:30 pm. Child will be transported to the designated YMCA Branch and authorities will be contacted if necessary.

Field Trips

During the year, our Early Learning & Care Centres may take trips to special places of interest. In School Age Centres there may be a special trip planned on a PA Day. Your centre will send a notice home in advance of the excursion to inform you of the destination, time, and date. A minimal charge may be required to cover transportation and entrance fees.

Registration Information

Age Eligibility for Child Care

Our child care program welcomes children up to 12 years of age (until their twelfth birthday) or until the end of grade 6, whichever comes first. In certain circumstances, with the approval of the Regional Director, a child may be allowed to stay longer if deemed appropriate. This ensures a seamless and supportive environment for all participants.

YMCA Early Learning & Child Care Centres are licensed to provide care for children from infants to five years of age, with infant care available in select locations.

YMCA School Age Child Care programs cater to children aged 3.8 to 12 years who are attending school. It is important for children to be toilet trained to participate. However, in cases where children have a medical or diagnosed condition, toileting support may be provided by staff based on the center's resources and needs. Please discuss this with our Director of Inclusion prior to enrolling (refer to "Child Care's Approach to Inclusion" section).

Full Time Care

Child Care space is available for full-time registration only. Part-time care may be considered under exceptional circumstances when a center is at risk of low child care demand and lacks a waitlist.

Parents seeking occasional care must request approval for each chosen day from their Supervisor. Children cannot be dropped off or sent to child care without prior approval. Please note that occasional care is not guaranteed.

Parents registering for occasional care will need to complete a form to confirm their understanding of this category of care.

Registration Process and Waitlist

All parents must place themselves on the Niagara Region's Registry, an online waitlist, for their preferred YMCA Child Care Centre. Visit www.niagara.onehsn.com to access the waitlist.

The YMCA will contact you when space becomes available.

YMCA follows a first-come, first-served registration process based on the application date on the waitlist. Priority is given to transfers between YMCA centers, siblings, and children of staff, depending on space availability.

When contacted for a space in your chosen YMCA Centre, you will receive an admission package and program information. All forms, including the completed immunization record (for infant to preschool only) and emergency contact details, must be returned before your child can attend child care. It is important to provide a valid email address to receive relevant YMCA information.

Regarding payment, you can choose to pay by preauthorized debit or credit card. The YMCA ensures the security and protection of your personal information through specific secure processes. Even if you receive a full regional subsidy, valid banking information must be provided.

If a child's care is being paid for by multiple payers/accounts, both parties must sign a Shared Payment Agreement.

Notice to Withdraw or Change Your Child's Registration

To withdraw or request changes to your child's registration, please submit a written notification to your Centre Supervisor at least two weeks in advance. Accommodating change requests depends on the capacity of the center. Please request the Change of Care Request form from the Supervisor.

Please note that no changes will be processed during the month of September. Families will be provided with a date in August in which all September changes are due by and if approved will be made effective Oct 1st.

Returning in September

The YMCA of Niagara has an ongoing registration system, this means that those currently enrolled in care will be continuously rolled over each year until they withdraw or age out of care.

If a change in location is required for September, a change of care form can be submitted. Please reach out to the centre Supervisor, please note when submitting the form this is not confirmation of availability. The YMCA administration department will confirm with families when the change is confirmed.

School Age Centres are closed in the summer; please contact the YMCA Administration office by emailing ccregistration@niagara.ymca.ca during July and August with your change requests or withdrawal notice.

Immunization

According to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, each child must be immunized as per the local Medical Officer of Health before admission. For school-age children, as their immunization records are kept up to date with their school, there is no need to submit records for our school-age program. However, for infants, toddlers, and preschool children, a copy of their immunization record must be submitted during admission and updated annually, or as new immunizations are received.

Medical exemptions from immunization are allowed, and parents must have a legally qualified healthcare professional complete a Medical Exemption form. Alternatively, if a child is not immunized due to conscience or religious belief, parents must complete a Statement of Conscience or Religious Belief form, which should be signed by a Commissioner for Taking Affidavits.

Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Plan (CWELCC)

The YMCA of Niagara has enrolled in the CWELCC plan. We will continue to communicate with Child Care parents as changes evolve and further information is received.

Under CWELCC, YMCA Child Care will charge the approved discounted Base Fees, per the guidelines; however, all other fees (Non-Base Fees) are not discounted under CWELCC guidelines and continue to be the responsibility of parents/guardians. Ex: late fees, field trips, etc.

YMCA Child Care 2023-2024 Daily Fees (Effective October 1, 2023)

The YMCA is enrolled in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care plan. We review Child Care fees annually (for children 6 and older) and adjust accordingly each September.

Under CWELCC, YMCA Child Care will charge the approved discounted Base Fees, per the guidelines; however, all other fees (Non-Base Fees) are not discounted under CWELCC guidelines and continue to be the responsibility of parents/guardians. Ex: late fees, field trips, etc.

Child Care Daily Fees 2023-24			
Early Learning and Care	Base Rate Pre-CWELCC (March 27, 2022)	Base Rate less 25% (effective April 1, 2022)	Base Rate less 50% (effective Jan. 1, 2023)
Infant	\$59.40	\$44.55	\$28.07
Toddler	\$47.96	\$35.97	\$22.66
Preschool	\$41.10	\$30.83	\$19.42
JK SK Child Care			
Before School	\$8.32	\$8.32	\$8.32
After School	\$10.92	\$10.92	\$10.92
Before and After School	\$19.24	\$14.43	\$12.00
P.A. Day	\$38.76	\$29.07	\$18.31
School Age Child Care – 6 years and older (not included in CWELCC)			
Fees effective September 5, 2023			
Before School		\$9.08	
After School		\$11.92	
P.A. Day		\$41.51	

Fees and Attendance

Payment Methods and Schedule: Child Care daily fees can be conveniently paid monthly using Visa, Mastercard, or pre-authorized payment. You have the flexibility to select the withdrawal date from your account, either on the 15th or the last day of the month, or have it split between both. The fees are calculated based on your child's registration. In the event of payments returned by your bank, the YMCA will apply a \$20 charge. If any adjustments to your payment are necessary, they will be reflected in the following month, unless you inform your supervisor by the 20th of the prior month.

Inclement Weather and Emergency Closures: On days when our centers are closed due to inclement weather or emergency circumstances, daily fees will apply. (Please refer to the "Inclement Weather & Emergency Closures" section for more information.)

Overdue Accounts: Parents with accounts past due will be notified by emailed letter; child care will be terminated unless payment arrangements are met successfully. Outstanding accounts will be referred to the credit bureau.

Closures

All programs are closed on:

- New Year's Day
- Family Day
- Civic Holiday
- Labour Day
- Good Friday
- Thanksgiving Day
- Victoria Day
- Christmas Day
- Canada Day
- Boxing Day

All School Age Child Care programs are closed on Easter Monday and Preschool Child Care programs running out of elementary schools may be closed on Easter Monday. Fees are required during holiday closures. All Child Care programs will close early on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Late Pickup & Late Fees

A late fee of \$10.00 will be charged for every 10 minutes, or part thereof, after 6:00 pm. If you anticipate being late due to an emergency, we kindly request that you contact the Centre to notify us and plan for an alternate pick-up.

It is important for parents to designate an alternate person who can pick up their child in the event of a late arrival. Multiple or frequent incidents of late pick-up may result in termination of care.

If a child is not picked up and we are unable to reach an emergency contact or approved person for pick-up, a staff member will accompany the child in a taxi to the assigned YMCA Membership Branch at 7:00 pm. If, by 8:00 pm, all attempts to contact a parent or guardian remain unsuccessful, the YMCA will contact Police Services for assistance.

Regional Subsidy and Absent Days

All parents who receive Regional Subsidy will be given a copy of the YMCA's policy regarding subsidy, absent days, and fees for additional absent days used, which is in alignment with the Region's policy.

Financial Assistance

If you require fee subsidy, please contact the Region of Niagara at 905 984 3750, or www.niagararegion.ca to begin your online application. You may also request application by emailing childcarecosts@niagararegion.ca.

Short term and emergency financial assistance is available through YMCA Stronger Together. Before determining if you may qualify, please ensure that you have first followed the process to apply for fee subsidy through Niagara Region. Speak with your Centre Supervisor for more information.

Invoices and Tax Receipts

Your child care invoices can be obtained at your center. We kindly suggest that you inquire with your Centre Supervisor about their specific location and make it a habit to collect them regularly.

Regarding tax deductions, Child Care fees are eligible for this benefit. To assist you in fulfilling income tax requirements, a comprehensive annual statement will be provided to each family by the end of February. For your convenience, instructions on how to request and access your YMCA tax receipt will be made available on our website starting in early January.

Stronger Together Annual Support Campaign

Participants in the YMCA 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 Stronger Together Campaign help support proven programs that give children, youth and adults the opportunities they need to live healthier, happier lives now, but also to grow and be productive. By supporting the Stronger Together Campaign, you can help children like yours build a better community for tomorrow.

Please consider a charitable gift to Stronger Together.

You can give online by going to The YMCA of Niagara website and clicking on the [DONATE NOW](#) button, through your YMCA Child Care 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. Adults, youth and children come to the YMCA to grow and develop into happier, more productive people.

For information call your local branch:

Niagara Centre YMCA	905-735-9622
Niagara West YMCA	905-309-9622
Port Colborne YMCA	905-835-9622

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

YMCA Employment & Immigrant Services

YMCA Employment initiatives fulfill 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.

There are 3 Employment locations to assist you, plus St. Catharines and Niagara Falls locations also have a Newcomer Information Centre:

St. Catharines	Niagara Falls	Thorold
285 Bunting Road	8123 Lundy's Lane	17 Albert Street W.
T: 905-684-3500	T: 289-296-8400	T: 905-397-8390

YMCA of Niagara EarlyON Centres

EarlyON Centres are places where parents and caregivers can:

- Participate with their children 0-6 years in play-based learning activities.
- Get answers to parenting questions, attend educational workshops and access various parenting resources.
- Learn about other programs and EarlyON services that are available for young children in our community.
- Talk to EarlyON professionals, as well as other parents and caregivers, while children socialize and interact with each other.

These parent-participating programs are free of charge and available in many convenient locations. For more information, visit our website.

YMCA of Niagara Child Care

For more information, please contact us at:




YMCA Administration & Training Centre
#3-300 Bunting Rd.
St. Catharines, ON
L2M 7X3

Phone: 905-646-9622

Email: cctraining@niagara.ymca.ca

Visit us online: www.ymcaofniagara.org

Follow us on Social Media:

-  <https://www.facebook.com/YMCANIagara>
-  <https://www.instagram.com/ymcaniagara/>
-  <https://twitter.com/YMCANIagara>

YMCA 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.

Charitable Number: 11930 7064 RR0001

Appendix A

Child Care Program Statement

The YMCA of Niagara’s Child Care programs strive to deliver stimulating learning experiences in a safe environment that enhances children’s social, intellectual, physical, and emotional development. At the YMCA we understand that children learn through play – it is the cornerstone of our curriculum.

YMCA Child Care promotes and incorporates the YMCA’s Core Values of caring, health, honesty, inclusiveness, respect, and responsibility throughout our curriculum and daily interactions with our children and families. Values are the principles of thought and conduct that help distinguish right from wrong and provide a foundation for decision making. Living with and acting on good values contributes to the development of self-esteem and overall personal happiness.

Our Program Statement describes how our programs and our educators support and foster early learning. It outlines our view of the child, our philosophy and pedagogy, as well as the goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development.

The goals and approaches of our Program Statement, and our YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards, and recommendations with the province’s documents:

“How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years,”

“Think, Feel, Act – Lessons from Research about Young Children,” and

“Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)”

Goals & Approaches

1. *The YMCA of Niagara promotes the health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children.*

Overview: Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority at the YMCA and we understand that the well-being of their child is a parent/guardian’s utmost concern. Therefore, we have developed research-based procedures that provide the basis for our staff to support children’s well-being.

YMCA educators’ approaches to promoting children’s health and well-being are woven into the compliance of policies and procedures, which include practices such as:

- Safe supervision of children
- Child Protection procedures and training
- Menu planning following the Canada Food Guide
- Emergency procedures
- Educators will promote physical activity, play and movement by encouraging and planning for gross-motor activities with the children.

2. *We support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff.*

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

YMCA educators incorporate the following approaches to support positive and responsive interactions:

- Educators will build a foundation of trust with children by being available, sensitive, responsive, and caring.
- Educators will create an inclusive and respectful environment to foster positive, equitable, and collaborative relationships.
- Educators will interact and communicate with parents daily sharing observations, documentations, and reflections.

3. We encourage children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.

Overview: 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. This includes self-regulation and the development of a sense of self as being capable and able to manage their emotions and behaviour.

Approaches implemented by YMCA educators to set the stage for positive interactions among children include:

- Educators will provide small group experiences that allow for more individualized adult attention.
- Educators will role model inclusive, respectful, and collaborative interactions with children and other adults.
- Educators will ensure that sufficient and appropriate toys, equipment, and materials are always available to children.
- Educators will ensure that children are given freedom to make choices.

4. We foster children’s exploration, play and inquiry.

Overview: Children are born with a natural sense of curiosity and wonder. They play naturally. Children explore their world through their senses, repetition of tasks, imitation, asking questions, and pretending. The YMCA believes that our role is to support play so that learning and development flourishes.

- YMCA educators use the following approaches to foster children’s play, exploration, and inquiry:
- Educators will be active participants in play.
- Educators will adapt the environment in response to children’s interests and curiosity.
- Educators will encourage children to decide where, when, what and how they play.
- Educators will ensure there is an appropriate amount of equipment, supplies, and planned activities available for children to choose from.

5. *We provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences.*

Overview: Our YMCA curriculum focuses on play-based learning, allowing the child to take the lead and then focusing on his or her interest to develop learning experiences. When this approach to learning takes place, along with the educator's understanding of child development, the child's competence, capacity and potential are maximized.

Approaches used by YMCA educators to provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences include:

- Children and parents/guardians are warmly greeted by educators upon arrival and children are invited to share news of their day.
- Educators will take opportunities to ask the children open ended questions and engage discussion that expands their curiosity, learning and interests.
- Educators will set up the room with a variety of activities and materials that support the observed interests of the children.

6. *We plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported.*

Overview: YMCA Child Care programs are in a variety of facilities within schools and YMCA owned buildings. We understand the importance of the learning environment and planned experiences as an integral part of supporting children's play so that early learning and healthy development is maximized. This includes doing our best to support children with special needs and Individual Support Plans to also experience this positive learning environment in our YMCA programs.

YMCA educators will use the following approaches to plan for positive learning environments and experiences:

- Educators will design learning centres to be flexible and responsive to the needs and interests of all the children.
- Educators will strive to create home like environments that include soft furnishings, items from nature, family and centre photographs, and accessories that are intended to make children feel comfortable and confident.
- Educators will strive to support the inclusion of children with special needs and ISPs (Individual Support Plan) to fully experience the positive learning environment in their group.

7. *We incorporate indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest, and quiet time into the day, and consider the individual needs of the children receiving child care.*

Overview: At the YMCA, we understand that a daily schedule should meet the needs of all the children and provide a balance of activities throughout the day.

YMCA educators' approaches to providing variety and balance throughout the day will include:

- Educators will ensure enough time is allotted for children to explore, play, and enjoy activities both indoors and out.

- Educators will keep transitions from activity to activity to a minimum so children get to play more and will strive to make transitions positive and fun.
- Educators recognize that young children in our toddler and preschool programs thrive on regular schedules and feel secure when they can predict what will occur throughout the day; therefore, educators in these programs will ensure snacks, mealtimes and rest periods are consistent.

8. *We foster the engagement of, and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children.*

Overview: At the YMCA we understand that a parent/guardian is the most important person in a child’s life. YMCA educators play a supporting role while the child is in our care. We recognize that our engagement and communication with parents/guardians helps a child to feel a greater sense of belonging and is key as we strive to build relationships with our YMCA families.

Approaches implemented by YMCA educators to foster engagement and communication:

- Educators will communicate with parents/guardians on a regular basis about children’s activities, health, and well-being.
- Educators will share children’s artwork, sculptures, creations, and photographs of the children at play.
- Educators will make program plans available that include observations of children’s interests, activities, and their connection to learning.

9. *We involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children and their families and staff.*

Overview: The YMCA works closely with local community agencies and partners to support the children and families in our programs. While our range of community partners is broad, the largest and most important are the two local school boards. Since most of our centres are in schools, relationships with principals and school staff are critical for us to be able to support our children and families.

YMCA educators will include the following approaches to involve community partners:

- Educators will seek out opportunities to share our knowledge and to learn from others in the community through formalized options and informal networking.
- Educators will work in close co-operation with specialized services, when required, such as Speech Services Niagara, Infant Mental Health, FACS, Pathstones Mental Health, and Preschool Services.
- Educators will strive to build positive relationships with members of their school’s staff community.

10. *We support our staff or others who interact with the children at a child care centre in relation to continuous professional learning.*

Overview: The YMCA is committed to the ongoing professional development of all our educators.

Approaches to support continuous professional learning include:

- Educators will attend a wide spectrum of training sessions throughout their career with the YMCA, including child care curriculum, legislated training requirements and YMCA-focused training.
- The YMCA delivers a system and opportunities designed to support all levels of leadership to mentor, coach and develop the educators in our centres.
- Educators are actively engaged in Quality Child Care Niagara (QCCN), as required.

11. We document and review the impact of the strategies set out in clauses (a) to (j) on the children and families.

Overview: The YMCA is committed to supporting children to grow to their fullest potential in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment. This Program Statement describes YMCA of Niagara specific goals for children’s learning and development, and the approaches that will be implemented. Each member of the program team holds a role and responsibility in ensuring the approaches in the Program Statement are implemented.

Approaches by management, supervisors and educators in the implementation and monitoring of the Program Statement will follow a specific outline:

- All new educators, students and volunteers will be oriented to the YMCA Program Statement before they interact with children. A sign off sheet including signatures of educators, students and volunteers with witness signature and date of orientation will be kept on file.
- Educators, students, and volunteers will be required to formally review the YMCA Program Statement annually or when there are substantive changes to the Program Statement. Recorded verification of the review will be signed and dated by all educators, students, and volunteers.
- All educators, students and volunteers will be monitored, and observations documented for the implementation of approaches as set out in the Program Statement. For the year, a minimum of 2 observations in each period of September to January and February to June, and 1 observation in July to August (only centres in operation) will be recorded.
- Goals related to the implementation of, and observation(s) related to the Program Statement will be incorporated into the ongoing process of performance management.
- Annual YMCA parent/guardian survey results and evaluation of the Program Statement strategies will inform and influence regular and ongoing development of the Program Statement.