

Parent Information Sheet

Welcome to EarlyON Child and Family Centres



Child and Family Centre

Every parent wants the best for their child.

We can help you.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are welcoming places where parents and caregivers gather with their children ages 0-6 years to enjoy interactive play environments and meaningful learning experiences together. The YMCA of Niagara offers EarlyON programs in St. Catharines and Thorold. Our team of EarlyON professionals are here to support you and your little one's healthy early development through free drop-in programs that offer active play, exploration and inquiry-based learning.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres:

- Are places where parents, caregivers and children build strong relationships with each other and connect with other families and EarlyON professionals
- Offer a variety of programs and services that meet the unique needs of children and families in an inclusive environment
- Provide resources and workshops with up-to-date information for all stages of your family life, from preconception and prenatal care, to nutrition, toilet training, toddler curiosity, and early school experiences
- Are funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education through Niagara Region Children Services

Our Staff

All program facilitators are qualified Early Years Professionals committed to offering high quality programs. Our caring, supportive staff have years of experience in child development, program planning, curriculum development, and working with families. They possess a strong understanding of community supports and of other early learning service providers in Niagara.

Registration

A one time registration is required. For each subsequent visit, you will sign in and out upon arrival and departure.

What does our program look like?

Each location has unique amenities, 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 and 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 How Does Learning Happen? The Ministry of Education's professional learning resource for child care and child and family programs.

Parents and Caregivers

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.

For health and safety reasons, please ensure your child is wearing shoes or non-slip slippers during your visit.

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.

Please leave valuables and toys in your vehicle or at home. We cannot accept any responsibility for lost or stolen items. The EarlyON Centres create 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.**

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.
- Intervene appropriately to redirect the child or offer a new prop or experience when play appears to be stuck, unproductive or dangerous.
- Always follow the child's lead during play. Let them be the director or leader of their play. This increases creative thinking, communication skills and supports their developing leadership skills.

EarlyON 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 with 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.

Allergies

Each centre has a designated area for you to enjoy the snacks you bring from home. No peanut products please.

Diapering

An area for changing diapers is available as per Ministry of Health regulations.

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.

Closures

The centres may be closed for reasons including inclement weather. Closures will be announced on our social media channels and families registered for that day will be contacted.

Occasionally, conflicting events in our shared facilities also take place. We strive to provide advance notice for any closure through our monthly newsletter and signage at our centres.

Confidentiality

All staff, students, and volunteers are required to sign confidentiality forms. The YMCA of Niagara and the EarlyON Child and Family Centres are dedicated to respecting the confidentiality of program participants and staff. As a participant of the EarlyON Centre, please respect the privacy and confidentiality of the other participants in the program.

Locations

Fairview Mall Centre

285 Geneva Street, St Catharines
(905) 646-4988

Grantham Avenue Centre

469 Grantham Avenue, St. Catharines
(905) 937-7007

St. Anthony Centre

81 Rykert Street, St. Catharines
(905) 650-7019
(This location is closed during the summer and other school holidays)

Thorold Centre

25 Whyte Avenue North, Thorold
(905) 658-6907

Grimsby (Niagara West) Centre

325 Main St E, Grimsby
(905) 359-3049
(open until December 2026)

Contact Us

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EarlyON is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education through Niagara Region Children's Services.