Shine On Niagara

Day Camp Handbook

Updated October 2026

Welcome to YMCA Day Camp

Thank you for choosing YMCA of Niagara Day Camps! We cannot wait to have your child come to camp, and provide them with a safe, fun, active and exciting experience this season!

At the YMCA we believe in the limitless potential of every young person. As a leader in child development, the YMCA understands the impact recreational and social experiences, physical activity, and positive environments can have on the growth and development of children.

YMCA of Niagara Day Camp Outcomes

At the YMCA of Niagara our goal is for each camper to have an amazing experience that positively influences their development.

Our programs are planned so that each camper can experience the following at YMCA Day Camp:

- Play and have fun
- Be creative and use their imagination
- Develop fundamental movement skills
- Participate in 60 minutes of physical activity
- Demonstrate the YMCA values
- Be challenged or learn something new
- Develop social skills and friendships
- Feel safe and included

Our Day Camp Staff

- Our Camp Staff have personal qualities of friendliness, warmth, and the ability to relate openly to children and adults. Our Staff are dedicated to the needs of the children, the concerns of the parents/guardians and the high expectations of the YMCA. All YMCA Camp staff complete a Criminal Record Check with a Vulnerable Sector Check through Niagara Regional Police services and hold current certification in First Aid and CPR-C.
- Our Camp Staff participate in professional development opportunities such as YMCA Healthy Child Development, Child Safeguarding Training, cooperative games, group management, communication, diversity and belonging, and other topics. We continue to strive for excellence and regularly evaluate our staff and programming to ensure ongoing high-quality camp programs for your child(ren).
- The YMCA promotes opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and volunteerism. Assistant Counsellors and Volunteers are welcome in our Day Camps, and they participate in an orientation, review of relevant policies and procedures and other

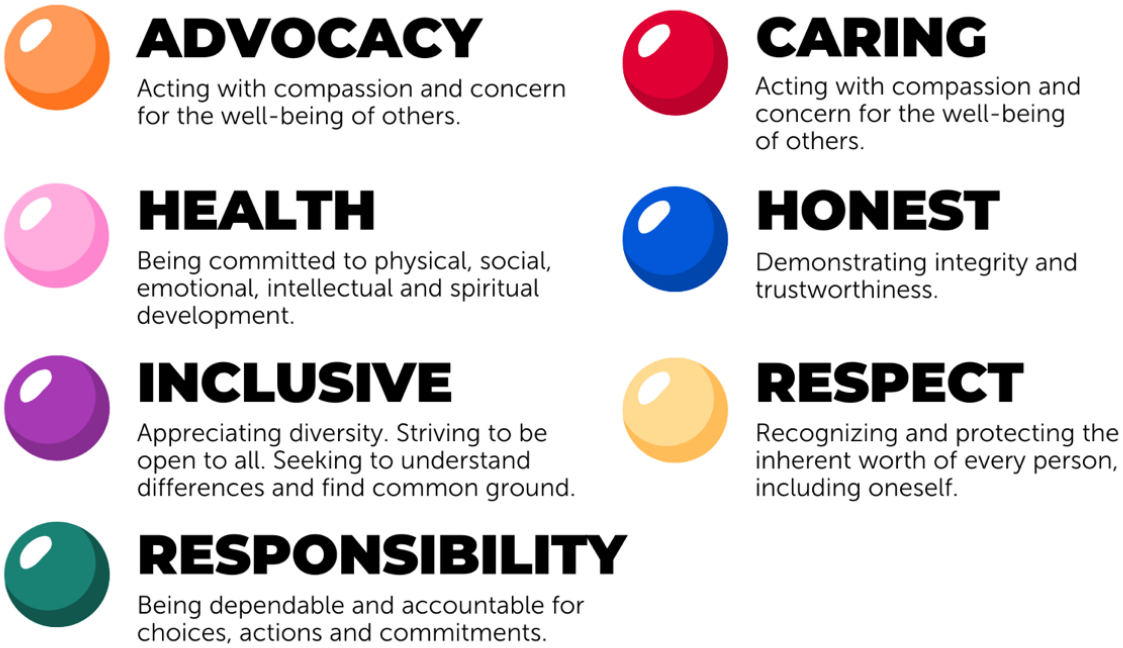
leadership training. Volunteers are not part of our supervision ratios and do not have unsupervised access to the children in the program.

Our Values-Based Approach – The YMCA Way

- Our values help us distinguish right from wrong and provide a foundation for sound judgment and decision making. Values, which are sometimes referred to as character, are the basis of who we are, how we live and how we treat others. The values we try to instill at the YMCA, through character development are the seven "Core Values" of Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Honesty, Health, Inclusiveness and Advocacy.

Value Beads

- At YMCA Day Camp, value beads play an important role as a sign of character and personal achievement. As an important form of recognition, beads at camp promote positive interactions, and are worn as a constant reminder of what we value as a camp community. At the beginning of the week, each camper will receive a necklace or bracelet and a white bead representing friendship. Throughout the week, campers will be presented with opportunities to earn beads. This can be achieved through participation in each program area and by demonstrating each of the seven core values. Beads are awarded at the end of every day.



Prepare for the Ultimate YMCA Camp Experience

Getting Ready for Day Camp

Prior to the start of your child's week at camp, you will receive an email with some reminders about day camp. This is a great opportunity for you to email us and ask any additional questions you may have.

Please visit ymcacofniagara.org to review more details related to our camp program, our camp locations and important registration information. Camp runs daily from 8:30am – 4:30pm with drop off from 8am and pick up by 5pm.

Please note that extended care before and after camp is not available. A late fee charge of $1.00 for every minute will be charged when campers are picked up after 5:00 pm. If there is an emergency and you are going to be late, we ask that you call the Day Camp Office to notify us. It is important for parents/guardians to have an alternate person who can pick up your child if you will be late. Numerous or persistent incidences of late pick up may result in termination of care.

Typical Day at YMCA Day Camp

TIME	ACTIVITY	TIME	ACTIVITY
8:30 am	Welcome and group building activities	12:30 pm	Camper's choice
9:15 am	Activity 1	1:00 pm	Activity 3
10:30 am	Snack	2:15 pm	Snack
10:45 am	Activity 2	2:30 pm	Activity 4
12:00 pm	Lunch	3:45 pm	Closing and wrap up activities

Activity periods will vary based on the camp selected and site. Activities may include outdoor games, creative activities, active games and sports, specialty programming and more!

What to Bring to Camp

Our Camp days are busy! To ensure your child is prepared, please make sure the following items are packed or worn:

- Weather & outdoor appropriate clothing (boots, hats, mitts, coat etc.)
- Running shoes
- Two snacks and healthy lunch that will fuel them for an active day
- Clean and refillable water bottle
- Extra clothes are recommended

As a parent, I can't ask for more and I'm thankful to have YMCA camps as an option for our children.

-A CAMP PARENT

YMCA Practices To Support Camper Safety & Well-being

Sign Out – Identification Required

Only individuals 16+ listed as authorized pick-ups or emergency contacts during the registration process will be permitted to sign participants out. Authorized pick-ups including parents/guardians will be required to show valid, government issued photo identification daily.

Custody

The YMCA must be notified of any legal custody arrangements and receive a copy of the signed legal documents. If parents/guardians do not provide documentation, the YMCA will release campers to any individual listed on the camp registration form and who provide the necessary government issued identification.

Medication

The YMCA must be notified in advance of camper's medication and will only administer prescription medication. For safety reasons, parents/guardians will complete and sign a medication form outlining dosage and times to be administered. Please send only one day's dosage at time in the original, labeled container, showing the camper's name, date, name of drug, instructions for storage and administration. Parents/guardians must personally hand the camp staff any medication and are responsible for bringing it to camp each day. A medication form must also be completed for epi-pens and staff must be made aware at the point of sign in.

Snacks and Lunches

At the YMCA, we strive to be environmentally sensitive and encourage a healthy lifestyle. Please send your child with litter-less, nutritional snacks and lunches every day plus plenty of water. As we have children in our programs with life-threatening allergies to nuts and nut products, we respectfully ask that you provide nut-free snacks and lunches, which include labels that state may contain nuts. It is our policy that staff members check snacks and lunches for food items containing nut products. If necessary, food items will be removed and the parent/guardian will be called for next steps.

Some good alternatives for peanut butter sandwiches are: hummus, honey and fruit spreads, cheese, fruits and vegetables, “make your own” lunchables, pasta, salad or leftovers.

Litter-less Lunch Tips

- Avoid single-serve snack items in disposable packaging and use reuseable containers instead.
- Purchase a reusable drink container and fill it up each day with water.
- Use an insulated lunch bag to keep items fresh.

Nuts and Allergies

In serving the public, the YMCA develops and implements practices that encourage a safe, shared environment and recognizes that campers with severe allergies may be exposed to allergens while participating at the YMCA. Education and awareness are important components in the prevention of anaphylaxis. It is important to recognize that because of the public nature of our facilities, we cannot assume the responsibility to ensure an “allergen-free” environment.

To further promote safety and address high-risk allergies, specifically with food, we ask that parents/guardians:

- notify the YMCA of life-threatening allergies
- complete YMCA medical forms to provide authorization to administer EpiPen
- ensure the camper has their EpiPen Kit with them at camp
- ensure the camper is wearing a Medic Alert bracelet

Valuables and Belongings

Valuables such as collectable cards, tablets, handheld video games, cell phones, etc. are not permitted at camp. All necessary items should be clearly labelled with the child's first and last name. The YMCA is not responsible for the loss or damage of your child's belongings at camp.

Absenteeism

Parents/guardians should report any absences by 10:30am on the day of the absence by texting our administrator at (905) 658-2765. Please state the camper's name, camp location, and date of absence. We'll contact you if we require any clarification or additional information.

Inclement Weather

At Winter Break Camp, all our camp locations have indoor spaces but campers will play outside as much as feasible. We recommend that you send campers with extra clothing as outdoor activities still occur and clothing could get wet as a result of playing in the snow. In the event of extreme inclement weather, camp cancellations and closures will be notified through the YMCA website and social media channels.

Illness Prevention Measures

Our top priority is providing a safe environment for our campers and staff. Families, children, and staff will all need to work together to achieve this. If your child is unwell, please keep them home. If your child experiences symptoms of illness while at camp, you will be contacted and requested to pick up your camper.

We are committed to following all health and safety protocols identified by the Ministry of Health or our local Public Health in order to ensure your child's camp experience is as safe as possible. Children and staff may choose to wear masks at camp, though it is not required.

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 YMCA Staff. The YMCA supports its staff in their Duty to Report responsibility. The YMCA does not investigate these reports; we cooperate fully with Family & Children's Services (FACS) investigations.

Code of Conduct

The YMCA is committed to providing a respectful and inclusive environment where all individuals, including children, staff, volunteers, parents/guardians, 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.

YMCA of Niagara Camp Staff use a positive, values-based approach to encourage and reinforce positive behaviours, set boundaries and outline appropriate behaviours, offer acceptable choices, and provide guidance and support in response to inappropriate behaviours. Children are expected to follow YMCA Day Camp behaviour expectations and to interact appropriately with their fellow peers, staff, and volunteers. Children, staff, volunteers and parents are encouraged to demonstrate the YMCA values in their interactions with everyone in the camp community.

Our goal is for each child to have a positive and memorable experience. To achieve this, the safety of each child is of the utmost importance. Parents/guardians and children must recognize a personal responsibility to learn and follow safety and other guidelines established by the YMCA.

Behaviour Expectations

At YMCA Day Camp, campers will:

- Be responsible for their actions, choices and words;
- Be respectful to each other, the staff and volunteers, and their environment;
- Be honest and true to their word;
- Care for themselves and those around them;
- Make healthy and safe choices; and
- Value diversity and seek to include others

All children are expected to follow the YMCA behaviour guidelines, and to interact in a positive and appropriate manner with their fellow peers, staff, and other members of the YMCA Camp community. Behaviour (including but not limited to: violence, swearing, harassment; verbal threats; physical behaviour; running away; destructive behaviour etc.) that negatively impacts others physically or emotionally may result in dismissal or permanent removal from camp at the discretion of the YMCA of Niagara. Children may also be removed from camp as a result of behaviour that places themselves or others at risk.

Refunds will not be granted for dismissal prior to the end of the camp day or week.

Camp Parent/Guardian Support

There may be occasions when a camper's behaviour or circumstances are such that they cannot remain at camp. In any instance where a participant is being sent home from camp (for behaviour or health reasons), it is the sole responsibility of the parent/guardian to make arrangements for the participant to be picked up immediately.

As appropriate, the YMCA will work with the parent/guardian to develop a joint plan to address inappropriate behaviour. Parents/guardians will be required to play an active role in supporting the camp staff in implementing behaviour management strategies.

When you register your child for YMCA Day Camp you agree to follow, support and adhere to the YMCA of Niagara Code of Conduct and Behaviour Guidelines. Contradictory behaviour may result in your camper being removed from Day Camp at the sole discretion of the YMCA of Niagara.

In the event a camper's behaviour results in damages or harm to property, belongings, an individual, etc., the parent/guardian is responsible for covering any applicable financial expenses.

Communications

Cancellation Policy

- All refund requests must be made in writing by emailing the Day Camp Office at: ymcadaycamp@niagara.ymca.ca
- Full refunds will be issued if requested prior to December 4. Requests on or after December 4 will incur a $25 processing fee per camper.
- Camp fees are non-refundable within 10 days of the start of camp.
- Refunds will not be issued if a camper is absent, sent home as a result of their behaviour, if they are ill or if they are directed to isolate / stay home.
- In order to provide a quality camp program and experience, a session may be cancelled by the YMCA due to low registrations. Campers will be offered an alternative camp location or refund.

Issues and Concerns Resolution

The YMCA is committed to finding resolutions to issues and concerns that may arise for families while participating in YMCA Day Camp. We are committed to engaging with families and addressing their concerns in a timely manner (within 2 business days), and all efforts will be made to resolve concerns within YMCA Day Camp 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.

Family Involvement

Families are an essential part of our YMCA Day Camp program. The YMCA Day Camp team will communicate with you via email, phone calls, automated voice messages with reminders, by text and in person at camp.

If things are going well, we want to hear from you! If things are not working as they should, please be the first to let us know. Please contact the Day Camp Office at (905) 934-9755 x 280 or email ymcadaycamp@niagara.ymca.ca.

Survey

We invite parents/guardians to complete our online Family Survey which will be sent in an email at the end of Camp. We value and encourage your feedback and suggestions. We aim to make parent/guardian participation and communication as simple and effective as possible in our YMCA Day Camp program.

Follow Us Online

YMCA of Niagara's online community allows camp families to have access to the most up to date information about YMCA Day Camp operations. Parents/Guardians are invited to stay connected and follow YMCA of Niagara on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIN.

YMCA of Niagara Day Camps continuously meets industry safety standards and provides participants with quality camp and outdoor education centre experiences and are accredited by the Ontario Camps Association.

YMCA Privacy Statement - As a charitable, community-based organization, the YMCA of Niagara is committed to protecting your right to privacy. The personal information you share with the YMCA is used to support the work of the YMCA. If you have a question or concern regarding your privacy, email us at ymcaprivacy@niagara.ymca.ca.