Shine On YMCA Niagara



Child Care Parent Handbook

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YMCA Child Care Parent Handbook

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Welcome to YMCA Child Care

Welcome to YMCA Child Care. We provide safe, nurturing environments where children learn, and families thrive. The YMCA of Niagara operates 10 Early Learning and Child Care Centres and 51 School Age Centres across Niagara, providing care and support to children and families throughout the region. This handbook provides key program and policy information. For questions, contact your Centre Supervisor. We're excited to welcome your family and work together to provide quality care.

"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

Our programs use play-based learning to support children's social, physical, and emotional growth. Guided by our Core Values caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, inclusiveness, and health we foster curiosity and confidence through play. 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, serving all, providing transformational for individuals and their community.

Vision

Inspiring lifelong personal growth, wellbeing and community connection.

YMCA Core Values

Advocacy • Caring • Health • Honesty • Inclusiveness • Respect • Responsibility

YMCA Child Care welcomes all families and models our Core Values daily.

Full Program Statement can be found in Appendix A.

YMCA Curriculum

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

YMCA Playing to Learn™ builds early literacy, numeracy, and creativity through play-based activities. Educators are trained to support children as active, capable learners and prepare them for school.

YMCA A Place to Connect™ – School Age

Our Before and After School programs for children ages 5–12 follow the A Place to Connect™ curriculum, which promotes choice, leadership, and positive relationships. The program supports children's physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development. Children participate in interest-driven activities such as arts, science, outdoor play, and leadership opportunities, all while building friendships with support from YMCA educators."

> *"When children are engaged in purposeful play, they discover, create, and expand their learning." — Think, Feel, Act (2013)*

Our Educators

Our educators are qualified professionals who support children's development and partner with families to provide quality care. All educators complete a Vulnerable Sector Check and maintain current First Aid and CPR-C certification.

Educators participate in ongoing professional development, including YMCA curriculum training and other continuous learning opportunities.

Students and Volunteers

Students and volunteers participate in orientation and review all required policies before working in our Child Care centres. Volunteers and students over 18 are required to complete a Vulnerable Sector Check. Students and volunteers are always supervised by YMCA educators and are never alone with children.

Child Guidance

Our educators use a positive, value-based approach to support children's behavior and interactions.

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

Prohibited practices are actions that may put children at risk or affect their well-being. Educators, volunteers, and students must follow these requirements, and the following practices are not permitted in YMCA Child Care.

- 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.
- Sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, or prescribed sexual acts involving a child. The YMCA of Niagara prohibits any conduct of this nature. Any allegation, suspicion, disclosure, or observed incident will be addressed immediately in accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and YMCA Child & Youth Safety and Protection Policies and Procedures.

Duty to Report

Anyone who suspects a child may be at risk of harm must make a report immediately. Child care professionals, including Registered Early Childhood Educators, have a legal duty to report concerns. The YMCA supports educators in fulfilling this obligation and cooperates fully with Family and Children's Services during any investigation.

Our Families our Partners

Child Care Approach to Inclusion (Integrated with IRSM)

We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where children of all abilities can learn and grow together. Our educators support children with a wide range of needs and work closely with families, schools, and community partners to understand each child and plan appropriate strategies. This new model expands beyond supporting only children with identified special needs and strengthens how we work together to ensure *all* children experience high quality, inclusive learning environments.

How Support Works

During registration, families complete a Participant Profile with our Access team to help us understand a child's strengths, needs, and any additional support that may be helpful. This information guides our planning within licensed staff-to-child ratios.

The IRSM uses a team based, tiered approach to support inclusion:

- **Early Childhood Educators (ECEs):**
  Your child's educators support them daily and help identify when additional strategies or support may be helpful.
- **Inclusion Quality Coordinators (IQCs):**
  Provided through Bethesda and Niagara Children's Centre, IQCs model strategies in the classroom, help develop goals, provide resources, and collaborate with families.
- **Community Pedagogical Advisors (CPAs):**
  CPAs support educators and centres by offering resources, strengthening inclusive practices, and ensuring environments reflect Ontario's early learning pedagogy.

IRSM Tiers of Support

- **Tier 1 – Universal Support for All Children:**
  All classrooms receive ongoing support from IQCs and CPAs to create inclusive, welcoming environments. This includes adapting environments, embedding inclusive practices, and adding classroom resources.
- **Tier 2 – Individualized Support for Some Children:**
  If an educator identifies your child as needing additional support, the educator and IQC will collaborate with you to create strategies or goals. CPAs may also be involved, and wrap-around supports (such as Pathstone Mental Health behaviour consultants) may be included when needed.
- **Tier 3 – Intensive Support for Individual Children:**
  For children requiring more specialized support, the educator and IQC work with families to connect with community services such as speech/language, occupational therapy, or behaviour consultation.

Before any Tier 2 or Tier 3 services begin, families will be provided with clear information and asked to provide consent, ensuring you understand the purpose of supports, how information will be used, and how we will work together.

Prioritizing Safety

While we aim to include as many children as possible, some needs may not be fully met within licensed ratios. If a child's behaviour or emotional state creates a safety concern, families may be contacted for early pick-up to discuss next steps. If concerns continue or staffing ratios cannot be maintained, a temporary break in care may be required. During this time, we collaborate with families and community partners to assess whether a safe and successful return is possible.

Respectful Environment Agreement for YMCA Child Care Centres

At YMCA Child Care Centres, we aim to create an environment where everyone feels safe, respected, and supported. Our values of advocacy, caring, health, honesty, inclusiveness, respect, and responsibility guide how we interact with one another and how we work together each day.

We ask children, families, educators, and visitors to treat others with kindness, communicate respectfully, act safely, and work together to solve problems. Children are learning and developing, and their behaviour may reflect that; educators respond with patience, guidance, and age-appropriate expectations.

Everyone in our centres is expected to use technology responsibly and respect privacy and confidentiality. To protect all individuals, taking photos, videos, or audio recordings is not permitted. Photography is only allowed with prior approval from YMCA management and must follow YMCA photo release policies.

We are committed to resolving challenges through respectful conversation, support, and collaboration. When needed, we will involve additional resources to ensure the well-being of everyone in our programs.

Together, we create a positive and welcoming environment where children can learn and grow.

Serious Incidents and Program Safety

The YMCA is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all children, families, and staff. In rare situations, a child's behaviour may pose a risk to their own safety or the safety of others. When this occurs, the YMCA follows all regulatory requirements and best practices to maintain a safe program environment.

Behaviours that may affect health, safety, or well-being can include leaving program boundaries without permission, physical aggression, ongoing unsafe or disruptive behaviour, verbal aggression toward staff or peers, destruction of property, theft, or continued intimidating or harassing behaviour.

Depending on the frequency or severity of the behaviour, the YMCA may take steps such as reviewing existing supports, requesting early pick-up, introducing a temporary break in care, limiting program access, or removing the child from the program. Decisions are made carefully and on an individual basis, with consideration for the child's needs and the safety of all children and staff.

Families are expected to work with the YMCA to address safety concerns, including participating in planning and following recommended strategies. If early pick-up is required, families are to arrive within 30 minutes. If timely pick-up does not occur, further follow-up may be needed.

When ongoing safety concerns remain and reasonable strategies have been explored, the YMCA will collaborate with families and, when appropriate, community partners to determine next steps and whether an alternative program or support may better meet the child's needs while ensuring safety for all.

Staying Connected with Care: Digibot at the YMCA of Niagara

At the YMCA of Niagara, we use Digibot, a secure and user-friendly online platform that helps families stay connected with their child's care experience.

With Digibot, families can update important information about their child, receive real-time updates about routines such as meals, diapering, and rest time, and enjoy stories and photos that highlight their child's day. Digibot also allows families to manage registrations and view financial information in one place.

Digibot supports strong communication between families and educators by making information easy to access and keeping everyone connected.

Parent Participation & Communication

At the YMCA, we believe families and educators share the responsibility of supporting each child's experience in our programs. Because drop-off and pick-up times can be busy, we offer several ways to stay connected.

Educators provide daily updates and are available to discuss your child's needs in person, by email, or by phone. Families are invited to participate in special events, such as Stronger Together activities and family socials. Information about upcoming events is shared through notices, letters, and the YMCA website.

Parents are encouraged to complete our annual Parent Satisfaction Survey, and feedback is welcome at any time. If you would like a more formal discussion about your child's progress,

meetings can be arranged with the Centre Supervisor.

To ensure smooth communication and continuity of care, parents agree to work collaboratively with us; this includes completing required Digibot forms, responding to emails, and keeping information up to date.

Our goal is to make communication simple and meaningful so families feel informed and supported throughout their child's time in our programs.

Issues and Concerns Resolution

At the YMCA, we recognize that open communication helps children feel a greater sense of belonging, and it supports strong relationships with families. We are committed to addressing any issues or concerns in a timely and respectful manner while following YMCA Child Care policies. All information shared during this process will remain confidential.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to first share their concern with the Centre Supervisor or speak directly with the educators in their child's program. Educators will bring the concern to the Supervisor when needed. If the Supervisor receives a concern through a third party, they will contact the family within one business day.

The Centre Supervisor will gather information and determine whether the issue can be resolved within two business days. If more time is required, the family will be updated. If the Supervisor cannot resolve the issue, it will be shared with the Child Care Regional Director for guidance. The Regional Director will determine whether the matter should be reviewed by the Child Care General Manager or another member of the YMCA leadership team.

Follow-up with the family will occur within two business days after the information has been shared with a Regional Director. If the family feels the matter is not resolved, they may request that the concern be escalated to the next level of leadership. Staff will provide the appropriate contact information upon request.

Our goal is to work with families to resolve concerns respectfully and ensure children experience a positive and supportive environment in YMCA Child Care.

YMCA Child Care Programs

Licensed Child Care

The YMCA of Niagara's Child Care Centres are licensed by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA). Provincial standards, combined with YMCA policies and practices, ensure that all programs provide a safe, healthy, and engaging environment for children.

Hours of Operation

YMCA Early Learning and Care Centres for children aged 0–5 are open Monday to Friday from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, year-round, except on statutory holidays. When a statutory holiday falls on a weekend, it is observed on the following Monday.

YMCA School Age Centres follow the school schedule. Care is provided from 7:00 am until the start of school, and again from school dismissal until 6:00 pm. School Age programs are closed on statutory holidays, school closure days, and during school holiday breaks.

Our operating hours are designed to support families while ensuring consistent, high-quality care throughout the year.

PD Days & Easter Monday

PD/Easter Monday Day care is available at select locations, families who opt in for PD/Easter Day Care will be charged the PD/Easter Monday Day rate. For those that choose not to opt into PD/Easter Monday Day Care regular before and after rates will apply on all PD/Easter Monday.

YMCA Day Camp

When School Age programs are closed, the YMCA offers Day Camp programs for children in designated locations. These are available during Holiday Camp in December and January, March Break Camp, and Summer Day Camp in July and August. Day Camps provide engaging activities and a fun complement to our regular School Age programs.

Information about schedules and locations is available from your Centre Supervisor or on the YMCA of Niagara website.

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

The YMCA offers full-day licensed Holiday and Summer Care for children aged 4 to 5. This program provides a safe and enjoyable experience for children who are currently in Junior or Senior Kindergarten or preparing to enter school. Holiday and Summer Care is available at select YMCA Child Care locations. CWELCC funding applies to eligible age groups.

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 educator 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

We work closely with families to maintain a healthy environment for all children. Each day, educators complete a brief health check when children arrive. If a child is unwell or unable to participate comfortably in regular activities, they are considered too ill to attend.

Please keep your child home if they have any of the following:

- Fever of 38°C / 100.4°F or higher
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Undiagnosed rash or skin condition
- Symptoms of a communicable illness (as identified by Niagara Region Public Health)
- Infected discharge (eyes, ears, or nose)
- Lethargy or irritability that prevents participation
- Persistent pain
- Acute cold symptoms (new or worsening cough, congestion, or nasal discharge)

Common cold

Children may return once they have been fever-free for 24 hours (without medication) and symptoms are improving.

Diarrhea

Children may return 48 hours after symptoms improve. During gastrointestinal outbreaks, they must be symptom-free for 48 hours before returning.

Fever

Children may return after being fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.

Other illness or disease

For all additional illnesses or outbreaks, we follow guidance from Niagara Region Public Health.

Symptoms Are Noted at Arrival or During the Day

If educators observe any symptoms of illness when a child arrives or if a child becomes unwell during the day, we will ask that the child be picked up as soon as possible. The child will rest in a quiet area away from the group and remain supervised by an educator until a parent, guardian, or emergency contact arrives. If the child is over two years of age and can tolerate it, they may be asked to wear a mask while waiting.
If we are unable to reach a parent or guardian, we will contact individuals listed as emergency contacts. Children must be well enough to participate in all aspects of the program, including outdoor play, to return to care.

Medication

We ask families to keep us informed of any medications their child is taking so we can support their health and safety. Whenever possible, please give medication at home to avoid disrupting your child's day.

We can administer medication when:

- It is prescribed by a doctor, nurse practitioner, or licensed health professional

- It is in the original container with a clear prescription label or a doctor's note that includes:
    - Date written
    - When to administer or the specific symptom that requires administration
    - Expiry date (if applicable)
    - Child's full name
    - Medication name
    - Dosage

Families must complete the Medication Administration Authorization Form in Digibot before bringing medication to the centre.

Non-prescription (over the counter) medication

We do not administer fever reducers or pain relievers (e.g., Tylenol, Advil, Motrin) for general cold or flu symptoms. Children with these symptoms should remain at home to rest.

These medications *may* be administered only with a valid doctor's note when they are part of a care plan for:

- Chronic conditions (e.g., migraines, seizures)
- Teething discomfort

Doctor's notes must be updated annually or sooner if the child's age, weight, or medical condition changes.

Creams, lotions and holistic products

All topical products including diaper creams, sunscreens, and natural/holistic items must:

- Be in their original containers
- Have clear labels listing the product name and ingredients
- Include application instructions
- Be labeled with the child's name

Important reminders

- Children who are unwell are most comfortable at home; we may recommend home care if a medication schedule indicates they are not feeling well enough for the program.
- All required forms must be completed in Digibot before medication can be administered.

Medical Needs

Some children require additional support for medical conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, diabetes, anaphylaxis, or other health needs. To ensure we can care for your child safely, families must complete a Medical Needs Action Plan before the child begins child care. This plan outlines your child's condition, symptoms to watch for, prescribed medications, and the steps educators must take during daily routines or in an emergency.

Families are responsible for providing any medical equipment or supplies their child requires. This includes, but is not limited to, inhalers, EpiPens/Anaphylaxis medications, glucose monitoring tools, and any other items outlined in the Action Plan. All medication and equipment must be clearly labeled, in original containers when required, unexpired, and available on-site each day.

Educators carefully review each child's Action Plan and follow the instructions provided by families and health professionals. Plans are reviewed with families regularly and must be updated anytime a child's medical needs change.

To maintain a safe environment, children cannot attend the program without their required medications and supplies, as identified in their Medical Needs Action Plan. This includes EpiPens or other anaphylaxis medications, asthma inhalers, and any emergency-response items. If required medications are not brought to the program, care will be denied until the items are provided.

For families whose children attend programs at multiple YMCA locations (e.g., PA Days, Break Camps, Summer Camp), it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to transport the child's required medication and supplies between sites. Medications must accompany the child every day, at every location.

If your child shows symptoms that cause concern or fall outside what is expected for their condition, educators will contact you immediately. Having a clear plan and the required medications available helps us respond quickly, confidently, and safely, ensuring your child feels supported and comfortable while in our care.

Anaphylaxis

For children with life-threatening allergies, families must complete an Anaphylaxis Action Plan before the child begins care. This plan outlines the child's allergens, and the steps educators will follow in an emergency.

Families must provide the required emergency medication, clearly labeled and within its expiry date. If an over-the-counter product is included in the child's Action Plan, it must be in its original packaging with the child's name on it.

Educators review each child's plan and are trained to respond immediately if an allergic reaction occurs.

Accident/Incident Reports

Communication about your child's safety and wellbeing is important to us. If your child is involved in an accident or incident at the program, educators will document what happened and ensure you are informed.

A copy of the report will be available to you through the Digibot Parent Portal. Educators may also speak with you directly at pickup if immediate follow-up is needed.

Our goal is to keep families informed and ensure that any concerns are addressed promptly and clearly.

Serious Occurrences

YMCA Child Care Centres follow all Ministry of Education requirements for reporting serious occurrences. If a serious occurrence happens in your child's program, we will document it and post a Serious Occurrence Notification Form in the centre to keep families informed.

These situations are uncommon, and when they do occur, we respond quickly, follow all required steps, and ensure families receive the information they need in a respectful and supportive way.

Inclement Weather & Emergency Closures

Child care programs may close when schools close due to weather, power outages, water issues, or other emergencies. Families with children in both Early Learning and School Age programs should check for updates to confirm whether their specific centre is open.

Closure information is shared through local radio, school board announcements, and YMCA of Niagara social media and websites. Regular daily fees still apply during closures.

Our goal is always to keep children safe, and we appreciate families checking for updates when conditions change.

Emergency and Crisis Policy

YMCA Child Care programs have established emergency and crisis procedures to keep children safe in situations such as fire, lockdowns, evacuations, or other unexpected events. Educators follow these procedures calmly and confidently to ensure children are cared for throughout the emergency.

If an emergency occurs while your child is in our care, we will contact you using the phone numbers provided during registration. For this reason, it's important to keep your contact information up to date in Digibot.

Our priority is always the wellbeing of the children. We appreciate your cooperation during these rare situations and will share updates as soon as it is safe to do so.

Program Information

Food/Lunches from Home & Allergies

Many of our centres are peanut-free to protect children with severe allergies. Families are asked to follow the allergy restrictions posted at their centre. Any treats brought to share must include the manufacturer's ingredient list.

In School Age programs, children may bring their own lunches and snacks. Please label all containers with your child's name and include an ice pack in the lunch bag. If a child chooses to eat items from their lunch during before- or after-school care, educators will ensure they eat only non-perishable foods and do not share food with other children.

Following these guidelines helps us maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children.

Nutritious Meals & Snacks

YMCA Child Care provides a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack in our Early Learning programs. All meals follow Canada's Food Guide and offer a variety of healthy options. We encourage children to try different foods and listen to their hunger cues.

In School Age programs, a balanced morning and afternoon snack is provided each day. We also encourage children to bring a labeled reusable water bottle so they can stay hydrated throughout the day.

Our goal is to offer nutritious choices that support children's growth, energy, and wellbeing.

Sun Safety and Staying Cool

Children spend time outdoors each day, and we take steps to help keep them safe, comfortable, and well cared for in warm weather.

Please note that not all of our programs are air conditioned. During warmer months and identified heat warnings, the YMCA follows all direction provided by Niagara Region Public Health to reduce the risk of heat-related illness and support children's well-being.

How families can help:

- Send lightweight, breathable clothing appropriate for hot weather
- Label and send a refillable water bottle each day
- Provide a sun hat for outdoor play
- Ensure sunscreen consent is completed and kept up to date (Digibot)

What we do at the centre:

- Follow guidance from Niagara Region Public Health during heat warnings
- Ensure children have frequent access to drinking water and are encouraged to stay hydrated throughout the day
- Use shaded outdoor play areas and reduced or cancel outdoor activities during peak heat times
- Provide outdoor water play activities as a fun and effective way to help children cool down
- Use fans in classrooms to improve air circulation
- In locations without air conditioning, work with our rental partners to rotate children into alternate rooms with air conditioning, when available within the rental space
- Closely monitor children for signs of heat discomfort and respond promptly

Our educators model and encourage safe sun habits so children can enjoy both indoor and outdoor play comfortably and confidently.

Rest Period

Children in our Early Learning programs have a daily rest period. While not all children sleep, everyone is encouraged to relax quietly so their bodies can recharge. Families are asked to send a small blanket and, if helpful, a soft comfort item from home. All items should be labeled.

We aim to make rest time calm and comfortable so each child can settle in a way that works best for them.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of each day. Time outside gives children space to explore, move their bodies, and connect with the natural environment. Weather permitting, all children go outdoors daily.

Children may get messy as they play and discover, so we encourage families to send clothing that is comfortable and suitable for outdoor activities. This helps children enjoy their time outside fully and safely.

Your Child's Toys

Our centres provide a wide variety of toys and materials for children to enjoy and share with others. For this reason, we ask that personal toys be kept at home.

In our Early Learning programs, children may bring a special item on designated Show and Share days. These items should be labeled and will be used only during that activity.

This approach helps prevent lost or damaged belongings and supports a positive, inclusive play environment for all children.

Electronics

The use of personal electronics in School Age programs is decided by the Centre Supervisor based on the needs of the group. If allowed, use is limited and monitored to help maintain a safe and positive environment.

Because electronic devices can be easily damaged in a busy program setting, families should be aware that the YMCA is not responsible for lost or broken items.

Safe Arrival Policy and Absence Reporting

To keep children safe, families must let us know when their child will be away. Please report all absences through the Digibot Parent Portal. This helps us confirm who is expected each day.

If a child has not arrived and an absence has not been reported, the Safe Arrival process will begin. Educators receive a prompt through Digibot asking them to confirm whether the child is present. If the child has not been signed in, the situation is escalated to the Centre Supervisor or Regional

Director, who will attempt to contact parents, guardians, and emergency contacts until the child's safety is confirmed. In situations when contact is not made educators will connect with the police for a wellness check.

These procedures help ensure every child is accounted for. Timely reporting from families allows us to follow up quickly and avoid unnecessary concern.

Upon Arrival to Child Care

Parents/Guardians will engage in a transfer of care by connecting directly with their child's educator. The educator will record child's arrival time on the attendance record (DigibotGo). Parents/Guardians will communicate any relevant information regarding the child's end of day departure. Educators will document any changes in a child's departure in the Daily Written Record.

Safe Dismissal Policy

To ensure every child leaves safely, educators release children only to parents, guardians, or authorized contacts listed in the Digibot Parent Portal or on the child's emergency card. If an educator does not recognize the person picking up, they will verify their identity with another educator or request photo identification.

If someone not listed arrives for pickup, the child will only be released once the Centre Supervisor or designated staff member receives verbal authorization from a parent or guardian. An email notification will be sent to remind families to update their authorized contacts in Digibot.

Children cannot be released to anyone under the age of 16.

If a child has not been picked up by closing time, the YMCA will follow its late pickup procedures, including contacting all parents, guardians, and emergency contacts. If no one can be reached, next steps will be taken according to YMCA policy to ensure the child's safety.

In special circumstances, children may leave the program to attend school activities. In such cases, a School Activity Permission Form must be completed by the parent/guardian, and notice must be provided to educators prior to the event. Educators are responsible for recording this permission in the daily log.

Field Trips

Throughout the year, our Early Learning and School Age programs may participate in local field trips or special outings. Families will receive advance notice through Digibot, including the date, destination, and any related details. Some trips may require a small fee to cover transportation or entry costs.

We ensure all trips are planned with children's safety and enjoyment in mind. If a trip is scheduled, families will be informed of any special items their child may need for the day.

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.

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 educator based on the center's resources and needs. Please discuss this with our Director of Access prior to enrolling (refer to "Child Care's Approach to Inclusion" section).

Flexible Care Guidelines

Child care spaces are registered on a full-time, Monday to Friday basis only. Parents seeking flexible care must be registered in either the Before School or After School program, Monday to Friday. Requests for flexible care must be submitted directly to the Centre Supervisor no more than one week in advance of the care required. Approval is subject to space availability and is at the discretion of the Centre Supervisor.

Children may attend only on the dates that have been approved. Please note that flexible care is not guaranteed. Once flexible care is approved, fees will be charged for all approved dates, regardless of attendance. Approved flexible care dates cannot be cancelled or changed.

Families requesting flexible care are required to complete a Flexible Care Agreement acknowledging their understanding of this category of care. Flexible care is limited to a maximum of 10 approved requests per month.

Flexible care is not available in the Infant, Toddler, or Preschool programs.

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.

YMCA follows a first-come, first-served registration process based on the application date on the waitlist. Priority is given to transfers between YMCA of Niagara centers, siblings, and children of educators, depending on space availability. The YMCA will contact you when space becomes available.

When contacted for a space in your chosen YMCA Centre, you will receive a Digibot admission package and program information. All information in the package must be completed. It is important to provide a valid email address to receive relevant YMCA information, and to continue to review the information on the Digibot parent portal.

Payment for child care can be 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 by Families

To withdraw or request changes to your child's registration, please log into Digibot and request the change to be made. Please note that we require a minimum of two weeks notice. Accommodating change requests depends on the capacity of the center.

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. If a request is made after the August date you will be billed for the month of September as how your child is currently registered, in lieu of notice

Notice of Withdraw by YMCA

The YMCA reserves the right to withdraw child care services when operational, enrolment, transportation, licensing, or program requirements necessitate changes to child care placements. Where possible, families will be provided with a minimum of two (2) weeks written notice and information regarding alternative child care options.

Returning in September

The YMCA of Niagara offers an ongoing registration system, ensuring that children currently enrolled in care will automatically continue year after year until they withdraw or age out. This provides families with consistency and peace of mind.

Please note that Early Learning Child Care Centres and School Age Programs are separate services and do not transition automatically from one to the other. If a change in location is needed for September, families can submit a request for change in the parent Digibot Portal. Submitting the form does not guarantee availability; confirmation will be provided by the YMCA Administration team once finalized.

School Age Centres are closed during the summer months. For any change requests or withdrawal notices in July and August, please email the YMCA Administration Office at **ccregistration@niagara.ymca.ca**.

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 2026-2027 Daily Fees (Effective September 1, 2026)

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 2027-2028				
Early Learning and Care	Base Rate Pre-CWELCC (March 27, 2022)	Base Rate less 25% (effective April 1, 2022)	Base Rate (effective Jan 1, 2024)	Base Rate (effective Jan 1, 2025)
Infant	$59.40	$44.55	$28.07	$22.00
Toddler	$47.96	$35.97	$22.66	$22.00
Preschool	$41.10	$30.83	$19.42	$19.42
JK SK Child Care				
Before School	$8.32	$8.32	$8.32	$8.32
After School	$10.92	$10.92	$10.92	$10.92
Before and After School	$19.24	$14.43	$12.00	$12.00
P.A. Day	$38.76	$29.07	$18.31	$18.31
School Age Child Care – 6 years and older (not included in CWELCC) Fees effective January 1, 2027				
Before School		$10.45		
After School		$13.45		
P.A. Day		$46.25		

Fees and Attendance

Child Care daily fees can be conveniently paid monthly using Visa, Mastercard, or pre-authorized payment. The withdraw dates of the child care fees are set for the last day of the month. The fees are calculated based on your child's registration. If Opt-in days are selected such as Kinder Care, P A Days, and flexible schedules, these will be added to you next payment. In the event of payments returned by your bank, the YMCA will apply a $20 charge.

Refunds

When a family withdraws from the program and a refund is issued based on CWELCC funding, the refund will first be credited to their account and applied to any outstanding balances until the credit is fully utilized. The remaining credit will be refunded to the payer. For child care fees billed to a credit card, the refund will be billed

back to a credit card. For preauthorized payments, the remaining credit will be refunded via cheque. The YMCA will process all refunds within 60 days.

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
- Civic Holiday
- Good Friday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- Family Day
- Labour Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

Holiday Closures and Fees

All School Age Child Care programs are closed on Easter Monday. Early Learning and Child Care programs operating within elementary schools may also be closed on Easter Monday, depending on the school calendar.

Parent fees remain payable during statutory holidays and scheduled program closures. Fees are charged to reserve your child's space and continue program operations throughout the year, including days when the centre is closed due to a statutory holiday or the observance of a statutory holiday.

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. Late fees will be applied to the next payment date.

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, an educator 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

Child care invoices and tax receipts are available through your Digibot Parent Portal. Annual tax receipts, which families may use when filing income taxes, will be posted in the portal by the end of February each year.
For added support, step-by-step instructions on how to request and access your YMCA tax receipt will be available on our website starting in early January.

Stronger Together Annual Support Campaign

The YMCA believes strong communities are built when people have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Donations to the YMCA **Stronger Together Campaign** support programs that help children, youth, and adults live healthier, happier, and more connected lives—now and into the future. By contributing to the Stronger Together Campaign, you help ensure that families like yours continue to benefit from programs that foster growth and strengthen our community.

Please consider making a charitable gift to support this important work.

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

YMCA programs promote health, fitness, and community connection for people of all ages. Membership provides access to supportive staff, inclusive programs, and welcoming facilities designed to help you improve your well-being and feel more connected to your community.As a charitable organization, the YMCA is committed to ensuring everyone has opportunities to participate, regardless of age, race, creed, ability, or financial circumstance. Children, youth, and adults come to the YMCA to learn, grow, and thrive.

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 support the YMCA's Mission by helping individuals find, create, and maintain meaningful employment. These services promote personal growth and empower participants to reach their full potential as contributing members of the community. The YMCA of Niagara Employment Services has been helping people across the region find work since 1985. Our experienced Job Coaches are available to support you with your employment goals.We offer

services at three Employment locations, and both the St. Catharines and Niagara Falls sites also include a Newcomer Information Centre to assist individuals new to Canada.

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: ccregistration@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 educator 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 educator.***

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 educator.***

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 educator 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 educator community.

10. ***We support our educator 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.