



YMCA Children's Educational Services

School Age Parent Handbook

CHATHAM

December 2024





Welcome to the YMCA School Age & Kindergarten Program

Thank you for choosing the YMCA. The YMCA is one of the largest not-for-profit providers of licensed child care in Canada. We have been helping children to develop in spirit, mind, and body for more than 155 years. Our before and after school programs provide a positive, safe, and nurturing environment where children can develop to their full potential. We pride ourselves in values-based programming, which incorporates the YMCA Core Values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility and Inclusiveness.

We look forward to the year ahead! To help you and your child prepare for our programs, we have compiled this handbook to guide you and answer any questions you may have. If you need further assistance or wish to speak to a member of our YMCA team, please refer to the contact information located at the end of the handbook.

Did You Know 1 in 3 children in our Y programs are there because of the YMCA Community Starts Here Campaign?"





YMCA Program Statement

Welcome to YMCA licensed child care. Our program statement describes how our programs support and foster early learning. It will outline our view of the child, our philosophy and pedagogy as well as the goals and approaches used to ensure healthy child development. It will also outline how we evaluate our programs to maintain quality and how we support the professionals who work with the children.

The YMCA Program Statement is reviewed annually to ensure it is aligned with the Minister of Education's Policy Statement.

Our View of the Child

Every child is special in the eyes of their family and those who love them. The children are also special to us. As educators of young children, we know that each child is an individual of great human worth and potential. Every child is different in their looks, their growth patterns, their genetic make-up, their previous experience, the way they think and in every aspect of what makes them human beings. We appreciate each child's uniqueness and view the child's growth and development occurring in a holistic manner. At the YMCA we understand that children learn through play. Play by definition is enjoyable, spontaneous, active, and undertaken without external goals and sanctions. This means children are self-learners and do not require an adult to choose what or how they should learn. When the child's natural activity of play is supported by caring and responsive professionals in positive, developmentally appropriate learning environments, we believe, a child will flourish. The child's innate competence, capacity, curiosity and potential will be maximized. *"[YMCA Playing to Learn] is a wonderful, academically sound, and highly accessible document. At the heart is a view of children, teachers and families as capable and competent. This is one document that will be highly valued in the field, not just sitting on a shelf."*

Jean M. Clinton, BMus MD FRCP(C), Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University

PHILOSOPHY

Children's Educational Services

GOAL

An aim of desired result.

APPROACH

A means of attaining a goal.

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The philosophy or view of human development that recognizes the necessity to include all aspects or domains of development in order to understand the whole person.

SANCTION

For a recognized authority to give approval of something.

INNATE

Existing from birth (i.e. born with).

PHILOSOPHY

The study of the theoretical basis of a particular branch of knowledge.

PEDAGOGY

The method and practice of teaching.



YMCA Curriculum

The YMCA has a well-established, research-based approach to early learning. Our curriculum YMCA Playing to Learn has been successfully implemented in all programs for children 0-6 since 2011. All YMCAs across Canada have adopted this curriculum. YMCA Playing to Learn 2nd Edition was published in 2015.

This edition incorporates new research, best practices, knowledge and experience. There is more information on infants and toddlers and it has a greater focus on the social and emotional development of the young child. A Place to Connect curriculum for children 5-12 rolled-out nationally in 2016.

The YMCA has been involved in shaping the development of the provincial early learning framework by sharing YMCA Playing to Learn and our training materials to support educators in implementing a play-based approach.

The goals and approaches of the YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards, and recommendations with the provincial frameworks below. It is gratifying to see Ministry of Education embrace play and adopt a very similar approach.

- ✓ **Minister of Education's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy**

<https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/programCCEYA.pdf>

- ✓ **"How Does Learning Happen?" Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years**

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

- ✓ **Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)**

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/oelf/>

Children's Educational Services

CURRICULUM

The deliberately organized part of the child's experience and the experience that occurs through everyday aspects of life. Playing to Learn is a curriculum based on play development.

SOCIAL LEARNING

The process of acquiring knowledge about individuals and groups by observing, imitating and interacting with others.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The complex changes within the individual over time that involves the self and feelings and regulating behavior.



Our Statement on Play

Each child can reach his or her full human potential through play. Our intention is to provide the best possible environment that allows the best possible play for all children in our care. We endeavour to meet the play needs of all children and must do whatever possible to support the natural urge to play. Play helps the child to be both engaged with everyday realities and to be absorbed in an ecstatic self-forgetfulness. It ensures involvement, enjoyment, and various forms of success. Play can be powerful or profound, but it is always purposeful. Play is a vehicle that propels learning and development.

Play and development are intertwined; neither precedes the other. All domains of development are supported by play, and play has the additional benefit of being self-initiated and therefore a joy rather than a chore. Play makes discovery pleasurable, but it also propels the child into the vast realm of learning. Play provides a way for children to be healthy in body, mind and spirit.

Play fosters **skill** development. It offers opportunities for gaining new skills as well as refining existing ones. Play is directly linked to the child's learning. His or her **cognitive** development and academic success are enhanced by the play experience. Play is **physical** and increases activity levels, fitness, balance, gross motor skills and fine motor actions. A wide range of scientific, mathematical, perspective-taking and other cognitive processes in discovery and other types of play.

Play is **social** and aids in **language** learning while supporting social skills development. Self-concepts and emotions are better understood through play, as is the building of **emotional** intelligence. Important **self-regulatory** skills may be acquired and reinforced through play. Play builds **resilience** and can help children **manage stress**. There are often therapeutic benefits to play. Typically, children direct their play in ways that address their own socio-emotional issues.

BODY

The physical self.

MIND

The individual's place of thinking; human consciousness emanating from the brain.

SPIRIT

The part of the self that transcends the physical self or thought processes.

DEVELOPMENTAL DOMAINS

The categories that academics and practitioners use to manage the vast amount of information about human development.

SKILL

A learned behaviour.

COGNITIVE

Related to thinking or reasoning.

LEARNING

The process of changing existing understanding to accommodate new ideas; acquiring new knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions; discovering through play.



"The YMCA's Playing to Learn is a curriculum guide built on the importance and value of play for young children. The document makes, and backs up, arguments of why and how children's play is essential to the healthy social, physical and cognitive development of all children."

Martha Friendly, Executive Director of the Childcare Resources and Research Unit

YMCA Curriculum Goals & Approaches

1) Promoting health, safety, nutrition & well-being:

Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority at the YMCA and we understand that the well-being of their child is a parent's # 1 concern. Therefore, we have developed comprehensive, research-based procedures to support children.

Some of the procedures in place at the YMCA include:

- ✓ Safe supervision of children
- ✓ Child Protection procedures and training
- ✓ Sanitation and disinfection procedures
- ✓ Menu planning following the Canada's Food Guide
- ✓ Communicable disease prevention
- ✓ Emergency procedures
- ✓ Standard First Aid and CPR training

2) Supporting relationships:

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 build a foundation of trust with children by being available, sensitive, responsive, and caring.

YMCA educators create an inclusive and respectful environment to foster positive, equitable, and collaborative relationships. When children feel safe, secure, valued and a contributing member of their world they are able to explore, discover, try new things, grow, learn and develop. To support your child's care, growth and development YMCA educators interact and communicate with families on a daily basis sharing observations, documentations, and reflections.

Children's Educational Services

GROSS MOTOR SKILLS

Learned actions involving the large muscles of the body. (E.g. kicking a ball)

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Learned actions involving the small muscles of the body, including the hands, mouth and feet. (E.g. cutting with scissors)

SELF-REGULATION

The child's conscious or unconscious control of her body, relationships and other aspects of him or herself.

RESILIENCE

The ability to recover quickly from difficulties.

WELL BEING

The state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

RESPONSIVE CAREGIVING

The process of offering consistent, reliable care via careful observation of cues.



3) Encouraging children to interact, communicate, & self-regulate:

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. Generally self-regulation involves gaining a degree of control over one's bodily functions and impulses, managing one's emotions, changing one's behaviours and maintaining focus our attention on something or someone.

"The better a child can stay calmly focused and alert, the better he integrates the diverse information coming from his different senses, assimilates it and sequences his thoughts and actions." (Shanker 2012)

"Caring consistent relationships with adults, provide external supports that serve as the basis for developing self-regulation." (Gillespie & Seibel 2006)

Some of the approaches implemented by YMCA educators to set the stage for positive interactions among children include:

- ✓ Educators provide small group experiences that allow for more individualized adult attention
- ✓ Educators role model inclusive, respectful, and collaborative interactions with children and other adults
- ✓ Educators ensure the learning environment is flexible, so they can respond in the moment and build on or scaffold the children's interests
- ✓ Educators ensure toys, equipment, and materials are plentiful and available to children at all times
- ✓ Children are given freedom to make choices
- ✓ By engaging as a play partner with children, educators are able to demonstrate pro-social skills including promoting discussion, problem solving when conflict arises, and understanding how their actions affect others
- ✓ Educators attend trainings that address self-regulation and resilience

DISCOVER

To find something unexpectedly.

OBSERVATION

The informal or formal perception of an individual or group of people, or the perceptions gained from looking at an environment or object.

DOCUMENTATION

The process of observation, data collection, careful analysis and reflection resulting in displays that are an integral part of a play curriculum.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning.

STRATEGY

A plan or method of achieving a goal.



4) Fostering exploration, play & inquiry:

Children are born with a natural sense of curiosity and wonder. They play naturally.

As families and educators, we watch children explore their world through their senses, repetition of tasks, imitation, asking questions and pretending. But what are children really doing? Children are putting together all the pieces of how the world works through exploration, play and inquiry.

YMCA educators understand the importance of play. They foster, expand and scaffold this natural talent called play by being:

- ✓ Active participants
- ✓ Architects of the playscape
- ✓ Keen observers
- ✓ Planners
- ✓ Reporters
- ✓ Collaborators
- ✓ Reflective practitioners
- ✓ Co-learners

Observing a day-in-the-life of a YMCA child care program, you will note that the majority of activities are directed by the children. Children decide where, when, what and how they wish to play. Their decisions are based on their interests and curiosity. The educator responds by adapting the environment by adding new toys, materials and equipment, posing questions, and being a play partner. This sets the stage for further play, inquiry, discovery and learning. The educator's role is to support play so that learning and development flourishes.

ROLE-MODELLING

Demonstrating appropriate behaviour that can be seen by the children so that they can observe and internalize what they see; showing how a particular role is conducted.

SCAFFOLD

The role of the adult (or more mature child) in providing a mental bridge to support a child's learning.

PRO-SOCIAL SKILLS

Learned behaviour that demonstrates empathy, esteem, honour and consideration to another person.

CURIOSITY

Mental interest that leads to behaviours of discovery and learning.

INQUIRY

The act of asking questions in order to gather information.



5) Providing child-initiated & adult-supported experiences:

Children and families are warmly greeted upon arrival and after a brief check-in to share news from the evening before, the children get down to the serious business of playing.

The room is set up with a variety of activities that support the observed interests of the children and naturally invite them into play. The children might join some friends at the creative art table to work collaboratively on a collage, or they might work on a Lego structure they safely stored on the counter to complete the next day.

There are no expectations imposed by the educator or curriculum on where children play, or whom they play with, or how long they play at one activity. That is for the child to choose based on their interests.

You may overhear a small group of children in the dramatic play centre dressed in costumes acting out a scene of being "mama, papa, and baby at the doctor". The educator has been assigned the role of "doctor" by the children and takes this opportunity to ask the children questions that expand their understanding of what happens at a check-up.

Tomorrow the educator supports the children's interest by adding books about doctors and hospitals to the dramatic play centre hoping to build on the children's interest and spark more questions and play – resulting in more learning.

CHILD DIRECTED PLAY

Spontaneous activity initiated by the child that is allowed to take the course decided upon by the child; may involve careful adult planning.

PLAY PARTNER (SHIP)

One or more individuals playing together with a shared interest; in the case of adult-child play partnership, the adult allows the child to take the lead.

DRAMATIC PLAY

Sustained pretend play in which the child acts out a role using movement and props.

CHILD CENTERED EDUCATION

A philosophy of child care and education that emphasizes the importance of the child's need to direct his own activity, to make play choices spontaneously, and to learn at a self-determined level.



6) Planning learning environments to support every child's learning:

YMCA Child Care programs are located in a variety of facilities including neighbourhood schools, and in cooperation with community partners.

At the YMCA we understand that the parent is the child's first teacher, the YMCA educator is the second teacher and the learning environment is the child's third teacher.

The YMCA's unique approach to planning and creating learning environments supports children's play so that early learning and healthy development is maximized.

YMCA learning centres are designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the children.

We have and continue to strive to create home like environments that include calm colours, soft furnishings, items from nature like plants and pets, family photographs, and accessories that are intended to make children feel comfortable and safe.

YMCA educators understand that children learn holistically not in one area of development at a time. We understand that riding a tricycle involves gross motor and fine motor skills, but the play children engage in while riding a tricycle involves many more - communication skills, social skills, etc.

Therefore, you may find books, paper and crayons in the block area because children are using these items to figure out how to build a bridge from one shelf to another. Or you may find play dough in the dramatic play area where children are making pizza. And on a beautiful day you may see indoor furniture move outdoors to take advantage of the weather.

PLANNING

The act of preparing and designing experiences and activities (in this instance in accordance with YMCA curriculum.

ENVIRONMENT

Aspects of the immediate surroundings including the delineation of space, the presence or absence of objects, furniture, light, colour, toys and play things and the inclusion/exclusion of indoor and outdoor space.

LEARNING CENTRES

Specially prepared places where materials are provided to respond to children's interests or trigger new ones; spaces for learning in content specific areas; discovery or inquiry based spaces designed by educators for small groups of children.

PLAY MATERIALS

Any found items or purpose-made manufactured items that are used for props, for creative enterprises or construction.



7) Incorporating indoor, outdoor, active, rest & quiet activities:

YMCA educators design a daily schedule that meets the needs of the children and provides for a balance of activities throughout the day.

Consideration for the care requirements, age, developmental level, energy level, and interests of the children are included.

Generous blocks of time for children to explore, play, and inquire are included both indoors and outdoors.

The daily schedule is not rigid but operating in small groups is mandated. One small group of children may be observing bugs in the outdoor classroom, while the other small group may prefer to stay indoors and build a tall tower.

Periods of active and quiet play are interwoven throughout the day both indoors and outdoors. Children are supported to be competent, capable explorers in an enriched, unstructured play space.

At the YMCA we don't let the weather stop us from having fun in nature. The children love to bundle up in warm dry clothes and head out to jump in puddles or make snowballs. In very poor weather active play takes place indoors so that children get the physical activity their bodies require.

YMCA educators are trained to keep transitions from activity to activity to a minimum, so children get to play more.

However, young children thrive on regular schedules and feel secure when they can predict what will occur throughout the day therefore snacks and meal times are consistent as is the rest period in the afternoon for young children.

WHOLE CHILD

A concept of the child that sees all developmental domains as interacting, the child being more than the sum of domains.

TRANSITIONS

Aspects of the planned and unplanned day that create changes from one type of activity or event to another.

FAMILY

A number of people who decide to live together or who are bonded by birth-ties, who share a home and who share common values and similar life-styles; adults taking on a parental role, and one or more children living and functioning as a unit.

ENGAGEMENT

Time spent paying attention to something or someone.

COMMUNICATION

The two-way process of sending and receiving information to reach a shared understanding.



8) Fostering engagement & communication with families:

At the YMCA we understand that a parent is the most important person in a child's life. YMCA educators play a supporting role while families go to work and school.

YMCA educators and families communicate on a daily basis about children's activities and health. YMCA educators keep a journal of each infant, toddler, and preschool age child's learning and development which is accessible to families to read each day.

Getting to know family members is critical as an educator and including family members in program helps a child to feel a greater sense of belonging.

Other strategies to engage families and gain input include:

- ✓ Documentations that describe play and its connection to learning
- ✓ Parent/Educator interviews
- ✓ Celebrations & events
- ✓ Parent surveys
- ✓ Displays of children's artwork, sculptures, and creations
- ✓ Photographs of children at play
- ✓ Posting planning documents that include observations of children's interests and activities introduced by YMCA educators

9) Involving community partners:

While our range of community partners is broad, the largest and most important is the education system. Many of our centres are located in schools, so relationships with principals, faculty and educators are critical.

The YMCA works closely with local community agencies and partners in order to support the children and families in our programs. We view the community as a valuable resource and our educators plan learning opportunities to engage the community in our programs.

The YMCA actively seeks out opportunities to share our knowledge and to learn from others in the community through networking opportunities, community planning tables and conferences.

10) Supporting educators' continuous professional learning:

The YMCA is committed to the ongoing professional development of all our educators. After all, what the educator learns informs practice and the benefit is passed onto the children.

YMCA educators attend a series of YMCA curriculum training sessions throughout their career with the YMCA. Additionally, the YMCA provides opportunities for educators to attend external learning events and conferences and keep legislated training requirements like Standard First Aid & Infant and Child CPR up to date.



On a day-to-day basis the Director is responsible for the leadership, mentorship, coaching and development of educators. Based on the learning needs of the educators the supervisor may meet with educators to suggest strategies, conduct learning huddles to focus on a particular area of YMCA curriculum with the entire team, conduct regular educators meetings to reflect and plan, invite speakers from other YMCA departments or community agencies to attend the centre, or provide materials including links, articles, and various readings to supplement educator's professional learning.

11) Pedagogical Documentation:

YMCA educators participate in a continuous cycle of observation;

- ✓ Documenting play and its significance
- ✓ Determining the children's interests
- ✓ Planning activities that support the interests
- ✓ Discussion with team members
- ✓ Reflection that informs the planning of activities and the learning environment

Links are made between theory, research, YMCA curriculum, the YMCA Program Statement, government pedagogy, and children's interests to inform the planning decisions YMCA educators make. You will see this cycle reflected in the toys, materials, and equipment provided in the play areas, the furniture arrangement, the creative work of children, the activities children are engaging in, on the planning documents posted weekly for families to read and discuss with the educators, in individual children's journals, and in photographs and written descriptions of activities. This process of continuous program assessment is called reflective practice. Daily, educators are observing and engaging with children and evaluating the effectiveness of the learning environment to build on children's interests. Weekly, they are reviewing, planning and discussing with their classroom colleagues to ensure they are supporting children's learning and development and monthly, they are meeting as a team to reflect upon what did and didn't work and then plan for the future.

Program Statement Reviewed by:

Jo-elle Rinker
Vice President Children's Educational Services
Date Reviewed: December 2024

Program Statement designed as a living document January 2016



YMCA School Age/Kindergarten Program

YMCA Educators

YMCA before and after school programs follow the educator requirements outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. Each site is led by a Registered Early Childhood Educator or by an individual approved by a Director from the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. All educators have experience working in a children's program environment, have successfully completed a Criminal Reference Check and hold current certifications in both CPR and First Aid. The YMCA program operates at the following ratio: 1:15 for ages 6-12, and 1:13 for ages 4-5.

Changes to Family Information

It is very important that the program is able to contact you or your designated alternate in an emergency. Please notify us immediately of any changes in your home address, email address, employment address, or phone numbers. If for any reason you will not be at your regular place of employment, we ask that you ensure that we are able to contact you should the need arise. If necessary, please arrange for an alternate adult that we can call in case you are not available in an emergency.

Financial Information

Fee Information

Parents/guardians are required to complete and submit a registration package for each child attending the YMCA School Age & Kindergarten Program. Typical turn around for registration packages to be processed is two weeks. Once you have received confirmation that your package has been processed your start date will be confirmed. You will be notified if there are any processing fees that may be applicable to your registration. There is a one day/week minimum requirement for registration for each child in our programs.

All fees are due in advance of care, payable by pre-authorized payment plan. Parents/guardians have the option of fees being withdrawn from their bank account on the 1st of each month (monthly withdrawal) or the 1st and 15th of each month (bi-monthly withdrawal). Any payment which is declined from the bank (Non-sufficient Funds – NSF) is subject to a \$30 service charge. This fee is considered a non-base fee. Please note there are no refunds for missed days due to illness, vacation, school closures, or absenteeism. Fees are based on a daily rate calculated for the number of days in each month including statutory holidays.



CWELCC (Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care) Agreement

The YMCA of Southwestern Ontario has enrolled in the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system with the City of Chatham. We have been communicating (Y website, email and Weemarkable™) with all families since this announcement was made and will continue to provide information as it becomes available.

Rates are as follows:

Age	Pay Category	Base Rate
U6	BEFORE & AFTER FT	\$12.00
U6	BEFORE FT	\$12.00
U6	AFTER FT	\$12.00
U6	BEFORE & AFTER PT	\$12.00
U6	BEFORE PT	\$12.00
U6	AFTER PT	\$12.00
U6	CHATHAM PA Day	\$22.00
SA	BEFORE & AFTER FT	\$23.00
SA	BEFORE FT	\$13.75
SA	AFTER FT	\$13.75
SA	BEFORE & AFTER PT	\$23.65
SA	BEFORE PT	\$14.15
SA	AFTER PT	\$14.15
SA	CHATHAM PA Day	\$53.15

Rates are based on daily cost. All above fees are base fees. NSF fees are considered non-base fees. No other non-base fees apply at this time.

Fee Information (School-Age only)

Fees are based on a daily rate calculated for the number of instructional days in each month excluding statutory holidays.

FT = Full Time (attends same schedule everyday per week)

PT = Part Time (attends between 1 to 4 days per week)



Late Pick up of Children

If a parent/guardian arrives after the designated closing time they are considered late. The late pick up is recorded and a letter of reminder is sent to the family. At the discretion of the Director and Regional Manager, after three warning letters, the family may be given two weeks' notice of withdrawal. The Children's Educational Services department may assist the family in finding alternative care arrangements.

To be respectful of our educators, please ensure you pick up your child/ren before the centre closes. If a child is not picked up by the centre's closing time, you will be called. If there is no answer, we will call the emergency numbers you provided. If neither you nor the emergency contact can be reached within the first hour, the police and Children's Aid Society will be notified.

Withdrawal, Termination or Change in Schedule

We require 10 business days written notice of withdrawal or 10 business days' worth of fees in lieu of notice. Any changes to your child's schedule must also be made 10 business days in advance of care and in writing. The YMCA may terminate care if policies are not followed, fees are not paid, or we are unable to meet your needs. Your online contract is still valid if you change your child's schedule. If you withdraw your child from care and have overpaid, you will be refunded the difference.

Waiting List Policy

In partnership with the municipalities, families are asked to put their names on the Municipal ONEList or OneHSN (Windsor). Spaces are offered by the child care Director when vacancies arise and families are contacted based on the order of when they register their child on the ONEList or OneHSN (Windsor). Priority is given to full time care before part time care, YMCASWO staff and current families enrolled. University YMCA Child Care priority is to faculty, staff, and students at Western University. The ONEList or OneHSN (Windsor) always remains private and confidential at all times and parents/guardians can inquire where on the waitlist their child has been placed by contacting Child Care Administration or the Director of the child care program. There are no fees charged for the placement of a child on the ONEList or OneHSN (Windsor). The YMCA will only hold an offer for a space for a maximum of 3 business days. For more information about registering your child or putting your child on the waitlist, please contact our Child Care Administrator by phone at 519-907-5500 x 1072 or by email - Childcare@swo.ymca.ca. Once space is accepted care will begin within 2 weeks.

YMCA Membership Discount

All children registered in the program are eligible to receive a 25% discount off their YMCA membership. YMCA memberships can be used at any YMCA location and include free swimming lessons, and 2 dry land classes. Please contact your director for further information.



Income Tax Statements

All fees are tax deductible. Tax receipts will be available every February. Details will be sent via email.

Hours/Days of Operation

All of our programs operate Monday to Friday, during the school year, except for statutory/ civic holidays and an annual educator professional development day held on Easter Monday. The hours vary from location to location, so please inquire with the director.

Please see hours of operation at each site here: <https://www.ymcaswo.ca/locations>

The municipalities also hold one to two Professional Development days per year that all staff participate in. As much notice as possible will be provided on these closure days.

Days of Operation

The YMCA School Age & Kindergarten programs will operate on all school instructional days. Selected schools will also operate full day care on PA Days, March Break & Summer Holidays. Please visit www.ymcaswo.ca for selected locations and additional information.

For safety reasons please accompany your child into the program in the morning and sign them in on the daily sign in sheet. Similarly, you will be required to come into the program in the afternoon and sign them out on the daily sign out sheet.

It is important to inform your child's classroom teacher that they are enrolled in the YMCA School Age / Kindergarten Program. Providing your child's teacher with a schedule of when they are registered in program will help ensure a safe and seamless transition from class to program.

Children in JK/SK are escorted by a YMCA program educator to their classroom at the entry bell. Upon dismissal, all JK/SK children are collected from their classrooms and escorted by a YMCA program educator to their applicable after school program location. Children in grade one and older transition from their classroom to the program room where they are greeted by the YMCA program educator.

For the safety of your child, the YMCA educators cannot accept or release any children before they have been signed in/out by an approved individual who is at least 13 years in age. In a situation where a minor child (under the age of 16) is to pick up one of the children, written approval from the parent/guardian is required prior to releasing the child. Children 12 years of age or under are not permitted to sign in/out any of the children. Any deviation to this policy must be addressed and approved by the Regional Manager and Vice President of Children's Educational Services.



Only those listed on the registration form will be allowed to pick up your child. Photo identification is required upon pick up until the YMCA program educator can greet you by name. After this time, photo ID will be required in the event of a substitute YMCA program educator. It is a best practice to always have photo ID when picking up your child.

Please make sure you notify the YMCA in advance if your child will be participating in any other extra-curricular activities during program time, as additional paperwork may be required.

Some YMCA programs located within schools are equipped with controlled access. Buzzer access codes should be given only to those who pick up your child on a regular basis and can only be obtained by a director or designated staff member. If someone else is picking up your child, sites are equipped with a door bell or communication system to assist in pick up. Please meet with your YMCA director regarding access procedure for your specific location.

Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy

YMCA child care programs that offer care for infant, toddler and preschool aged children will only dismiss children into the care of their parent/guardian or another authorized individual. The program will not release any children from care without supervision.

A parent/guardian may request that a child who is 10 years old or older be released from child care without supervision. Parents/Guardians must provide written and signed authorization and instructions for the release of the child including the time of dismissal.

Where a parent/ guardian provides written instructions for the release of their child from care without supervision, the parent/guardian is aware that the child care is no longer responsible for that child upon their dismissal. Where a child does not arrive in care as expected or is not picked up as expected, staff must follow the safe arrival and dismissal procedures set out below.

Accepting a child into care:

1. When accepting a child into care at the time of drop-off, program staff in the room must:
 - greet the parent/guardian and child.
 - ask the parent/guardian how the child's evening/morning has been and if there are any changes to the child's pick-up procedure (i.e., someone other than the parent/guardian picking up). Where the parent/guardian has indicated that someone other than the child's parent/guardians will be picking up, the staff must confirm that the person is listed on the emergency contact list or the admission form or where the individual is not listed, ask the parent/guardian to provide authorization for pick-up in writing (e.g., note or email).
 - document the change in pick-up procedure in the daily written record.
 - parent/guardian or staff will sign the child in on the classroom attendance record.



Where a child has not arrived in care as expected:

1. Where a child does not arrive at the child care centre and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message or advised the closing staff at pick-up), the staff must:
 - contact the child's parent/guardian no later than 9:00am or when morning program closes, whichever is earlier (SA programs) and 9:30am (CC). Contact with parent/guardian will be attempted via phone call, text message, email or send a message via Weemarkable asking the family to call back and confirm absence. All information needs to be documented in the DWR.
 - YMCA School Age PM Program: If a child has not arrived within ten minutes of school dismissal time, and a note and/or message from the parent(s)/guardian on the program cell phone stating the child would not be attending the after-school program on this date has not been received, take the following steps:
 - a. Check your program cell phone messages again.
 - b. Contact the school secretary to determine if the child attended school.
 - c. Locate the child's teacher to determine if the child has been delayed.
 - d. Call the parent(s)/guardian if you still have not located the child. Leave a message with the program's cell phone number so the parent(s)/guardian can return your call.
 - e. If you cannot reach the parent(s)/guardian call the emergency contact person on the registration form. If you have still failed to locate the child, call the site Director.
2. Once the child's absence has been confirmed, staff shall document the child's absence on the attendance record and any additional information about the child's absence in the daily written record.

Releasing a child from care

1. The staff who is supervising the child at the time of pick-up shall only release the child to the child's parent/guardian or individual that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization that the child care may release the child to. Where the staff does not know the individual picking up the child (i.e., parent/guardian or authorized individual),
 - confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual.
 - where the above is not possible, ask the parent/guardian/authorized individual for photo identification and confirm the individual's information against the parent/guardian/ authorized individual's name on the child's file or written authorization.



- Should someone arrive at the centre to pick up a child and this person **is not** on the child's emergency/authorized pick-up list, the parent/guardian will be called to verify permission for the person to pick up the child. The parent/guardian must provide the staff with the first and last name of the individual, and photo ID **must** be presented to the staff if the person is unfamiliar. Should the staff not be able to contact the parent/guardian to obtain permission for the child to be released to the person, **the child will not be released.**

Where a child has not been picked up as expected (before centre closes):

- Where a parent/guardian has previously communicated with the staff a specific time or timeframe that their child is to be picked up from care and the child has not been picked up, begin calling each parent/guardian in child's file. Try to determine if parent/contact is on route.
- Where the individual picking up the child is an authorized individual and their contact information is available, the staff shall proceed with contacting the individual to confirm pick-up as per the parent/guardian's instructions or leave a voice message to contact the centre.
- Where the staff has not heard back from the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was to pick up the child the staff shall contact emergency contact, wait until program closes and then refer to procedures under "where a child has not been picked up and program is closed."

Where a child has not been picked up and the centre is closed

1. Where a parent/guardian or authorized individual who was supposed to pick up a child from care and has not arrived by closing time of the program, staff shall ensure that the child is given a snack and activity, while they await their pick-up.
2. One staff shall stay with the child, while a second staff proceeds with calling the parent/guardian to advise that the child is still in care and inquire their pick-up time. In the case where the person picking up the child is an authorized individual, the staff shall proceed to contact the authorized individual responsible for pick-up if unable to reach the parent/guardian.
3. If the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was responsible for picking up the child, the staff shall contact authorized individuals listed on the child's file.
4. Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file (e.g., the emergency contacts) within an hour of the program closing, the staff shall proceed with contacting the local Children's Aid Society (CAS). Staff shall follow the CAS's direction with respect to next steps. Staff shall contact the director/designate who will contact the Regional Manager (or Vice President if RM cannot be reached) if necessary (ie. if arrangements for pick-up of the child have not yet been made). The Director/designate will follow up with next steps including completing any documentation as required.



Dismissing a child from care without supervision procedures

For children who are between 0-10yrs, staff will only release children from care to the parent/guardian or other authorized person. Children (0-10yrs) will not be released from care to walk home alone. In a situation where a minor child (under the age of 16) is to pick up one of the children, written approval from the parent/guardian is required prior to releasing the child. Children 12 years of age or under are not permitted to sign out any of the children. Any deviation to this policy must be addressed and approved by the Regional Manager and Vice President of Children's Educational Services.

In our Before and After School programs, children 10 yrs. and over: Where a parent/guardian has provided written authorization for their child to be released from care without supervision, one staff in the program must be responsible for dismissing the child from care. Prior to dismissing the child from care, the staff shall review the written instructions for release provided by the parent/guardian and release the child at the time set out in the instructions. The staff shall document the time of departure from care and as well as their initials on the attendance record.

Absences

If your child will be absent from the program, please call the site cell phone and alert the YMCA program educators that your child will be away from the program that day. If your child does not report to the program and we are expecting them, we first check with the school office to determine if your child was at school that day. If so, we will contact you immediately.

Seasonal and Inclement Weather / Emergency Closures

School closures may result due to severe inclement weather conditions, power failure, school board/university/college closures or circumstances beyond our control. While we realize that closures at any time other than the normal closing time cause inconvenience, there could be times when such an action is necessary. In this event, each program will follow the direction of the CEO of the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario about the cancellation of services. Families are encouraged to stay informed through various social media platforms as well as checking our website www.ymcaswo.ca.

If the busses are cancelled, but the school is open, the program operates as usual. If, during program hours, your child(ren)'s program is unable to operate due to a power failure or similar circumstances, you will be contacted immediately.



Belonging: Cultivating Authentic Relationships and Connections

Child Guidance to Promote Self Regulation

It is the goal of our YMCA to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment for all participants. The YMCA teaches core values of caring, honesty, respect, responsibility and inclusiveness. To help us achieve this, we establish reasonable limits for behaviour which are consistently monitored by all YMCA educators. These limits are appropriate to the developmental level of the child and take into consideration the health, safety and the rights of all individuals.

A positive approach is used to guide the children, and each situation is considered individually. Methods include redirection, logical and natural consequences, limit setting, modeling, providing choices, anticipating situations, and recognizing appropriate behaviour. Suspension will result if these approaches fail to affect change in persistent inappropriate behaviour, or the behaviour in question diminishes the safety and daily experiences for children or educators in the program. If there are repeated suspensions the YMCA reserves the right to withdraw a child from the program.

Prohibited practices that infringe on the physical and emotional well-being of a child in our care include:

- The use of corporal punishment on a 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 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, or frighten the child or 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.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Open communication with families is an essential component for a cooperative approach to child guidance. We encourage you to discuss issues or concerns with the YMCA educators; however, if the issue is unresolved, contact the program Director. The YMCA School Age and Kindergarten Programs work collaboratively with families and experienced Resource Consultants to ensure that strategies are implemented to reduce or eliminate barriers and effectively support each child's unique needs.



Nurturing Healthy Development and Well Being

Nutrition

The YMCA recognizes the importance of healthy eating as a major contributor towards the growth and development of children and is committed to supporting the healthy food and drink choices of the children in our care. Morning and after school snacks are prepared by our Child Care Centre Dietary Planners where possible and served each day by YMCA program educators. The snack menu is posted on the parent board and reflects the Canada's Food Guide requirements. Our Dietary Planners and YMCA staff at each program are certified in Safe Food Handlers and our kitchens are regularly inspected by the health unit.

Due to allergies and public health restrictions, outside food is not permitted in the School Age & Kindergarten Programs and all food served is nut free.

Where food and/or drink are supplied by a parent/guardian, the container for the food or drink must be labelled with the child's name. Any child's individual water container/cup (ie water cups) that are stored must also be individually labelled with the child's name.

It is important to remember that children's appetites vary from meal to meal and may change over time. No child must ever be forced to eat. Parent/guardians should be advised to consult with their physician in circumstances where a child continually refuses to eat. Additionally, food must never be used to reward children and the removal/deprivation of food/drink is prohibited.

All snacks and beverages must meet the recommendations set out in the Health Canada documents "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide", "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide – First Nations, Inuit and Métis" or "Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants."

Proper hydration is important for children, particularly during hot summer months, and water suitable for drinking must be available at all times.

Snacks will be planned in accordance with Canada's Food Guide. The dietary planner, under supervision of the Director, will plan the menu and order the food. The role of the dietary planner is to ensure that the children in your facility receive nutritious meals, learn good eating habits, and develop healthy attitudes toward food.

We decide what food is offered, when and how it is offered for meals and snacks. A child decides whether to eat, and what and how much to eat. Remember that children's appetites change from day to day. If we regularly offer a variety of healthy foods in a pleasant, encouraging environment, chances are good that over time, a child will eat well.



Planning nutritious menus that provide variety can be challenging. Children can be particular about what they eat and when they eat. We are striving to provide as many meals as possible to the children that are process free i.e., muffins will be homemade and will not be made from a package etc. The YMCA of Southwestern Ontario strives to be free of as many processed foods as possible.

At all times, the current and following week menus must be posted in a centrally located place in the centre and labelled accordingly (i.e., "this week", "next week"). In addition, the "Menu Change Form" must always be posted by the menus. This form is used to log ANY & ALL deviations to the menu as it occurs. (i.e., change of vegetable due to spoilage or availability).

Allergies/Anaphylactic

Food allergies are a serious concern for some children. Our programs strive to be nut-free. Although we cannot change the entire environment of the program due to allergies, every effort possible will be made to minimize contact with the offending allergens. If a child has allergies, is on a special diet or is unable to eat certain foods due to cultural and/or religious practices, it is your responsibility to notify the director so special arrangements can be made for your child. Please, tell us about any special dietary concerns in your child's registration information package.

All programs will ensure there is an up-to-date Allergies, Medical Needs and Dietary Restrictions lists of all children enrolled who have allergies or food restrictions, and their respective allergens or restrictions. The Allergies, Medical Needs and Dietary Restrictions list must be posted in each cooking and serving area, in each play area or play room and is available and accessible in any other area in which children may be present.

Prior to enrolment and admission into any YMCA Program, or upon diagnosis, the parent/guardian of a child identified with an allergy or dietary restriction will complete the Allergy and Dietary Restriction form and provide all required documentation regarding the allergy or restriction.

Children with anaphylactic allergies or serious medical conditions will be required to complete an Emergency Protocol Plan prior to starting the program. This plan will then be updated if necessary and re-signed annually.



For any families who must bring food into the centre or premises for their child/ren, they must follow these guidelines:

- Ensure approval has been given by the director or designate prior to the food being on the premise
- Food containers must be labelled with the child's full name
- Food must be stored appropriately (ie. cupboard, refrigerated)
- Food must be peanut free
- All site-specific allergies must be considered
- All food provided must be healthy and nutritious choices to ensure that each child receives the nutrients they need for a fun active day. The Canada's Food Guide website is a great resource for suggestions of healthy snacks and lunches for children.
- Any child's individual water container/cup (ie water cups) that is stored at the program must also be individually labelled with the child's name.

Lunch Bag Policy

When school age programs offer care for a full day, the YMCA will provide a morning and afternoon snack (as noted on the School Age Menu) but it will be necessary for children to bring their own bagged lunch. Bagged lunches always need to reflect our nut free policy and take into consideration severe allergies that are present in the school.

Upon arrival to the full day program, educators will confirm with the Parent/guardian that there are no nuts or nut products in the lunch bag. Should there be a nut product in the lunch, staff will request that the Parent/guardian removes the item. Lunches will be labeled with each child's name and stored in the program refrigerator.

Should a lunch be forgotten or needs to be supplemented, the program will utilize a variety of additional snack items that may be in stock, or an educator will contact the Director to ask them to pick up an appropriate lunch substitute.

Bagged lunches are to contain healthy and nutritious choices to ensure that each child receives the nutrients they need for a fun active day. The Canada's Food Guide website is a great resource for suggestions on healthy grab-and-go foods that can help you prepare a quick, healthy lunch for your child.

- Whole grain wrap or pita pockets + chicken or hummus +veggies
- Layers of fruit + yogurt + whole grain cereal
- Vegetable soup + whole grain bun + milk
- Cheese cubes + whole grain crackers + veggie sticks
- Whole grain pasta and sauce + veggies + yogurt dip
- Cheese + whole grain english muffin + appleslices

Health Canada. (2011). *Eating well with Canada's food guide*. Retrieved from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php>



Illness

All programs shall ensure that a daily health observation is made of each child before the child begins to associate with other children in order to detect possible symptoms of ill health.

Staff will greet each child and parent/guardian daily and discuss any matter pertaining to the child's health. A receiving staff member, who notices any of the symptoms of ill health listed below when a child arrives, will gather details from the parents/guardians and discuss together if the child should stay at the program. Information gathered will be recorded on the "Child Care Attendance and Daily Health Check" form provided in each room.

Children with diagnosed communicable diseases will be excluded as required and directed by the health unit. Treat each case individually and according to the doctor's note.

If your child is not able to attend due to illness, please advise the director of the illness and expected return date. This information will help our educators identify symptoms in other children with whom your child has come in contact.

If a child appears to be ill, the child may be separated from the other children, and the educator will notify the director and parents and/or guardians immediately.

In accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act, you will be required to pick up your child as soon as possible to protect the interest of the sick child as well as the other children and educators in the program.

Parents and/or guardians are strongly encouraged to keep ill children at home to prevent the spread of illness. Children must be free from symptoms before returning to the centre.

Communicable Diseases

Children suspected of having a communicable disease, such as mumps or measles, should not be in the program. Parents/guardians of children who develop symptoms during program will be asked to pick up the child from the centre immediately. Children can return to the program only with confirmation that they are no longer contagious.



Medication Policy

Parents/guardians are encouraged to give their child medication at home, whenever possible. YMCA educators can only give prescription medications to your child with your written authorization. Non-prescription medication can only be administered with a doctor's note giving clear written authorization and instructions. If your child is on such medication, you will be asked to complete and sign an authorization form at the program and discuss with the educator the timing and amounts of the medicine to be given. Medications must be in the original container with the prescription label intact. You must also provide a measuring cup and/or spoon. Please note that the YMCA educators cannot administer expired medication (epi-pens only may be excluded for times when there are shortages issued by Health Canada).

Before any medication can be administered the following must be in place:

- Parents/guardians are required to complete and sign the "Medication Administration Form".
- Drugs or medications must be administered from their original containers or as supplied by a pharmacist. The container or package containing the drugs or medications is clearly labelled with the child's name, the name of the drug or medication, the dosage of the drug or medication, the date of purchase and expiration, if applicable, and instructions for storage and administration.
- Staff must check that the parent/guardian's written instructions match any instructions printed on the original container and that the medication is not expired. Confirming that the two sets of instructions match will prevent any confusion as to which instructions should be followed and so that the medication is administered correctly.
- Non-prescription medication will not be administered unless a doctor has given clear written authorization. The doctor's authorization note will be retained in the child's file.

Doctor's Note Requirements for Non-Prescription Medication:

- All doctor's notes are updated every 12 months.
- The doctor's note must contain the following information:
 - Name of Child
 - Name of Medication
 - Dosage amount
 - Time/Duration
 - Reason for medication

At no time, can a doctor or parent/guardian override a prescription label.



Blanket Notes For Over-The-Counter Products

Due to the frequency and their longer-term daily usage, sunscreen, diaper creams, moisturizing skin lotion, insect repellent, lip balms and hand sanitizers, a blanket authorization form must be completed by the Parents/guardians to approve administration if they are non-prescription, and/or they are not for acute (symptomatic) treatment, whether they have a drug administration number (DIN) or not.

Licensees must ensure that these over-the-counter products are labelled with the child's name, stored in accordance with the instructions for storage on the label, and administered in accordance with the instructions on the label and the Parents/guardians authorization. Over-the-counter products must be in the original container or package.

Discretion of the Director/Designate

At the discretion of the Director/designate, and in consultation with a Regional Manager, the Program may refuse to administer medications or procedures (e.g. insulin, injections, oxygen, suppositories) that the staff does not have the expertise or confidence to administer.

Child Abuse Protocol

The Child and Family Services Act requires that anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been abused or is at risk for abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, or neglect), shall immediately report the suspicion and the information on which it is based to the Children's Aid Society. Further action will then be determined by the Children's Aid Society.

The person who has the reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may need protection must make the report directly to a Children's Aid Society. The person must not rely on anyone else to report on their behalf. It is the staff's responsibility to report.



Accidents or Injuries

All programs are required to complete an accident report describing the circumstances of the injury and any first aid administered for any child who has sustained an accident or injury. A copy of the report must be provided to a parent/guardian of the child.

If your child(ren) is involved in a minor accident while in our care, our YMCA educators will immediately administer first aid and we will inform you when you come to pick them up. You will be asked to sign an accident report to acknowledge that the YMCA educators have informed you about the incident, which you will also receive a copy of. Depending on the extent of the injury, you may be asked to pick up your child to seek appropriate medical attention. If we cannot reach you or your designated emergency contact, we will assume the responsibility and seek medical assistance for your child. A child needing emergency care will be taken to the closest hospital and you will be notified at once. All emergency expenses (ie. ambulance fee) will be the responsibility of the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Other Emergencies

In the event of a fire, tornado, natural disaster and other related emergency situations, our YMCA educators will follow the school system or YMCA established plans. An outline of the emergency procedures including the location of the designated evacuation site is posted on the parent board. Please ensure you familiarize yourself with this information.

Staff are also required to read and understand all of the stated school emergency response procedures. Programs located in a school setting are also required to conduct a fire drill with the custodian once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Directors are to share all fire drill dates with the school principal.

Engagement: Creating Contexts for Learning through Exploration, Play and Inquiry

Curriculum

Curriculum is an essential component in creating a rich quality program. YMCA A Place to Connect delivers a comprehensive program that adopts a holistic approach demonstrated through planning, programming, and high-quality interactions.



Program activities include indoor and outdoor play, creative arts, sensory play, board games, building & construction toys, and opportunities for children to have fun while making friends in a relaxing, nurturing environment. Educators encourage and support children to explore and develop their interests through weekly programming which is posted on the parent board in the classroom. Please ensure your child(ren) is/are dressed appropriately for daily outdoor play.

We strive to allow the children to enjoy a minimum of 20 minutes of outdoor play in both the am and pm program. However, if there are severe weather conditions such as storms, low temperatures (minus 25°C with or without wind chill), or smog advisories, children may be kept indoors.

Outdoor Play and Safety

It is recognized that outdoor play is an integral part of a child's healthy development. Activities that promote the children's interests as well as gross motor development should be planned and followed through on. Educators will supervise the children and are to be actively involved in extending the children's learning during outdoor play.

Each program will develop an outdoor playscape supervision policy specific to their playscape location and equipment. The outdoor playscape supervision plans will include the YMCA staff members' role and responsibilities to ensure safety.

As described in How Does Learning Happen? (HDLH), research suggests that allowing children to actively explore and investigate what they are naturally curious about, to test their limits, take manageable risks appropriate for their age and abilities and engage in creative problem-solving is critical for children's physical and mental health and well-being.

DAILY INSPECTIONS:

During the PM program, prior to the children entering the outdoor playscape, a school age staff is required to conduct an inspection, checking the entire outdoor area for hazardous debris or litter, any damage caused by vandalism and to identify emerging problems. School age staff will follow arrangements as discussed with the custodian of the school.

Sun Safety

Staff at the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario will implement and adhere to the Sun Safety Policy to protect themselves and the children in their programs from the harmful rays of the sun.

Families will supply their own sunscreen for their children. All bottles must be labeled with the child's name and must be kept out of the reach of children. Bottles supplied by families are to be used for their child/children only. A blanket note for sunscreen is required.



The centre will purchase sunscreen and apply it to the children if they do not have their own sunscreen. A blanket note for sunscreen is required.

In high ultraviolet (UV) periods, we limit the amount of time children spend outdoors between 11:00AM and 3:00PM. It is our recommendation that a minimum protection factor of SPF 30 be used. While in the outdoors, children are encouraged to wear their own hat as additional protection from the sun.

Field Trips (Learning Trips & Spontaneous Excursions)

Our full day programs that take place over PD Days, March Break, or Summer Break occasionally participate in local field trips to enhance programming. In all instances, you have the final say on whether your child participates in a field trip. Field trips may include walks to libraries, community parks, splash pads etc. You will be notified in advance of any trips and will be asked to complete a separate consent form, allowing your child to participate in the excursion.

- **LEARNING TRIPS:** It is imperative that appropriate planning and preparation takes place when a learning trip will be taken. To assist with this, staff will utilize the "Learning Trip Pre-Planning/Preparation Checklist". Each item on the checklist must be completed as indicated.

When planning a Learning Trip, educators must determine:

- Why are we taking the trip? Is it stemming from an interest of the children, or are we trying to generate an interest?
- Is the location safe for the children? Can we guarantee that the environment is child-friendly and safe, and that we can provide appropriate supervision?
- What is the learning value of the trip? Do we feel that there are new concepts or ideas the children can learn from taking this trip?
- Will there be active learning involved? The YMCA Playing to Learn/PTC approach believes that children learn best by doing and being actively involved. It is very important that when we take Learning Trips the children have an opportunity to manipulate the materials and be actively involved in the new environment.

Learning trips are planned to enhance an interest of the children observed during play. For example, if the children displayed an interest in gardens, a trip may be planned to a local nursery for the children to see how plants grow, and to have the opportunity to plant seeds of their own. Learning trips are also planned to generate an interest in a topic. For example, a trip may be planned to a local farm to see where milk comes from.

With safety and liability issues being an ongoing issue, it is important to look at other ways to provide program enhancements. An example of this is to bring in special visitors.



Some of the benefits of bringing special visitors into the program are:

- Children learn best in an environment they feel safe in
 - Children and educators are in the building if children arrive late or are being picked earlier
 - Special visitors can be selected based on the interests of the children
- **SPONTANEOUS EXCURSION:** These short excursions can provide children with an opportunity to explore the community around them and to build on a variety of interests and skills. Spontaneous excursions or community walks, for which parent/guardians have already signed permission in their registration package, need to be close in proximity to the school. All groups must cross streets at lights or within a marked crosswalk. At all times, there must be at least two staff present on the walks. The purpose, as well as the experiences should be documented on the daily plan.

Inclusion of Children and Outside Community Agencies

The YMCA welcomes families and children from all backgrounds, beliefs, and abilities. We welcome families and children with special circumstances. The YMCA promotes an inclusion philosophy in all our programs. Children will be welcomed into the program and will be supported to participate in all activities. Each YMCA program has partnerships with outside agencies, who will help us support children. We request you schedule an individual meeting with your director to develop the best support plan for your child. We will then determine together what accommodations your child may need to be successful in our program.

The YMCA of Southwestern Ontario will provide inclusive programs, striving to find ways to include all children and remove barriers that prevent children from actively participating.

Planned activities and experiences are open ended (i.e. each child participates at their level, with educators observing, interacting and enhancing each experience for every child).

All programs will ensure that an up-to-date individualized support plan is in place for each child with special needs. The plan must include a description of how the program will support the child to function and participate in a meaningful and purposeful manner while in the program. It must also have a description of any supports or aids, or adaptations or other modifications to the physical, social and learning environment that are necessary and includes instructions relating to the child's use of the supports or aids.

The individualized support plan must be developed in consultation with a parent/guardian of the child, the child (if appropriate for the child's age) and any regulated health professional or other person who works with the child in a capacity that would allow the person to help inform the plan.



Licensees are required to maintain the confidentiality of a child's medical history including diagnosis. Sensitive or confidential medical information and detailed reports from medical professionals should not be included in the plan unless consent, in writing, has been given by the parent/guardian.

Custody

Times of separation and divorce are difficult for both parents and children. Understanding the legal custody arrangements is beneficial to all those involved with the family (custodial and noncustodial parent).

In the unfortunate event of a difficult or dangerous custody situation where a court order is in place, please ensure you contact the Director to set up guidelines regarding the release of your child. We must have a copy of any current court documents regarding the restriction of release of children in our care.

1. Custodial Parent:

In the case where a parent has indicated there is a custody dispute, a copy of the legal document must be onsite, and all staff need to be aware and understand the document. The procedure listed below will help determine the course of action taken.

2. Non-Custodial Parent

If the non-custodial parent arrives to pick up their child, the procedure listed below would occur:

Custodial Parent:

1. The custodial parent will be informed at the time of registration that the program/centre must have a copy of the legal documentation as well as a picture of the non-custodial parent in the child's file.
2. Staff must be informed, read, and sign off on the custody document provided. Staff should follow the requirements of the document, asking for assistance from co-workers or their Director if an issue should arise.
3. Inform other key personnel for their support (i.e., HFA branch staff, custodians of schools).

Non-Custodial Parent

1. The parent would be asked for identification and the staff person would seek direction and support from the Director on site.
2. Communicate to the non-custodial parent that we have documentation on file that they are not approved for pick-up. If the situation is heightened staff should seek assistance from the Director, dietary planner, or other staff and remove child from the room if necessary.



3. A staff person or the Director would ask the parent to leave escorting them to the exit and returning the parent's identification at the door.
4. If the parent insists on taking the child and tries to do so, inform them that you are calling the police.
5. Should the parent depart with the child, the staff member needs to get a license plate number and the make of car that the parent left in.

The custodial parent needs to be contacted immediately after the other parent's departure (with or without the child). In addition, if the Director is not on site, they need to be informed and if not reachable the Regional Manager should be contacted immediately.

Driving Under the Influence

Our educators care about the children's safety. For this reason, our educators are to follow specific procedures should a parent/guardian or authorized person for pick up, arrive at the program who is under the influence of alcohol and/or an illegal substance and is planning on driving home. The educator will help call a cab or contact a friend to come get the parent/guardian and the child. If the parent/guardian denies any of the help offered and drives off with the child, the police will be called to assist the educator.

Insurance for Assistive Devices

Programs cannot be held responsible for lost or broken assistive devices, such as hearing aids, contact lenses, or glasses along with accessibility equipment. We ask that you have adequate replacement insurance for these items should they become misplaced or broken.

Partnership with Community Colleges/High Schools

Our Centres provide field placement opportunities for college students who are pursuing their Early Childhood Education diploma and/or their Resource Educator/Special Needs certificates. These students contribute significantly to our programs and to the education of your child. The students are supervised and mentored by our educators and gain practical experience while bringing new ideas to the Centre. Students and/or volunteers are never left alone with the children.

Emergency Management – Communication to Families

The YMCA has emergency management policies and procedures. Clear policies and procedures will support all individuals to manage responses and responsibilities during an emergency, resulting in the safest outcomes possible. Staff will follow their detailed emergency response procedures as required. Staff will ensure that children are kept safe, are accounted for and are supervised at all times during an emergency situation and follow site specific procedures.



- 1) As soon as possible, the director or the VP of Children's Educational Services must notify parents/guardians of the emergency and that the all-clear has been given.
- 2) Where disasters have occurred that did not require evacuation of the program, the VP, Children's Educational Services must provide notice of the incident to parents/guardians immediately.
- 3) If normal operations do not resume the same day that an emergency has taken place, VP of Children's Educational Services must provide parents/guardians with information as to when and how normal operations will resume as soon as this is determined.

Addressing Parent Issues and Concerns

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in our programs and regularly discuss what their child(ren) are experiencing in our program. As supported by our program statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, child care providers and staff, and foster the engagement of, and ongoing communication with parents/guardians about the program and their children. Our staff are available to engage parents/guardians in conversations and support a positive experience during every interaction. All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously by the YMCA and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties as quickly as possible.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. If the concern is directly related to a program, families should speak directly with program staff. If the concern is regarding a staff member, families should address this with the director. If the concern is regarding the director, families should address this with the Regional Manager or Vice President of Children's Educational Services. Responses and outcomes will be provided by staff and/or director to families verbally, or in writing upon request within 2 business days. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved. The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process. Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial, and respectful to parties involved.

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially, and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff, students and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

Our programs maintain high standards for positive interaction, communication, and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any



party. If at any point a parent/guardian, staff, student, or volunteer feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the director and/or licensee. Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the Parent/guardian will be advised to contact the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) directly.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to CAS as per the "Duty to Report" requirement under the Child and Family Services Act.

For more information, visit

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaid/reportingabuse/index.aspx>

Escalation of Issues or Concerns: Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may escalate the issue or concern verbally or in writing to the VP of Children's Educational Services.

Issues/concerns related to compliance with requirements set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and Ontario Regulation 137/15 should be reported to the Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch.

Issues/concerns may also be reported to other relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. local public health department, police department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labour, Fire Department, College of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario College of Teachers, College of Social Workers etc.) where appropriate.

YMCASWO link to complaint policy and electronic submission:

<https://www.ymcaswo.ca/contact-us>

Contact Us!

Please check out our website www.ymcaswo.ca or follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/YMCACES> and on Twitter @YMCAofSWO.

You can contact us via email at childcare@ymcaswo.ca or call 519-907-5500 X1072.