



Greater  
Toronto

Child  
Care



**Ages  
4 - 12**

**YMCA BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL**

# **PARENT HANDBOOK**

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# Welcome to YMCA Before and After School Programs

Each year thousands of families trust the YMCA to be a place where their children are safe and supported while they grow and develop into their full potential. The YMCA Mission, Vision, and Core Values are the driving principles that guide us to create environments that are welcoming, respectful, and provide positive experiences for children and their families.

The Parent Handbook outlines important information that will provide you with what you need to know while your child is in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your child and to embarking on a partnership that supports you to be informed, consulted, and involved in your child's YMCA Before and After School Program.

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# Our History

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charitable organization that has been providing high quality licensed child care and education for children 0-12 years of age for over 40 years. Today the YMCA operates programs in more than 290 locations, 96 of which are full day child care centres.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto has its own well-established, research based approach to early learning. Our curriculum *YMCA Playing to Learn™* has been successfully implemented in our child care programs for children 0-6 years old since 2000. In 2006, *YMCA Playing to Learn™* was adopted by the YMCA of Canada as a national curriculum and is now implemented in over 300 child care programs across Canada.

*YMCA Playing to Learn™ 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* was published in 2015. This expanded edition builds on the original curriculum and includes the most current research on the social and emotional development of young children, and additional learnings for YMCA Early Childhood Educators to increase their knowledge for caring for infants and toddlers.

In 2009, *YMCA A Place to Connect™* curriculum for 5-12 year olds was launched and fully implemented in the YMCA GTA early learning and before and after school programs.

The goals and approaches of both YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards and recommendations from the Ontario Ministry of Education framework including; Minister of Education's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy, "How Does learning Happen?" Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years and Early Learning for Every Child Today. For more information about the YMCA Child Care goals and approaches to supporting children and their families please visit our [website](#) or request a copy of the YMCA Child Care Program Statement from your YMCA program supervisor.

# Our Program Statement

Our program statement describes how our programs 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. It also outlines how we evaluate our programs to maintain quality and how we support the professionals who work with the children.

## Our View of the Child

Every child is special in the eyes of their parents 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, capacity, curiosity and potential will be maximized. 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 parents 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.

## YMCA Curriculum

The YMCA of Greater Toronto 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 2000. In 2006, all YMCAs across Canada 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. The YMCA of Greater Toronto launched our school age curriculum, A Place to Connect for children 5-12 in 2009. The national roll-out of this curriculum will begin in January 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.

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>

### **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 socioemotional issues.

“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

### **Promoting health, safety, nutrition & well-being:**

Keeping children healthy and safe is a priority at the YMCA and we understand that the wellbeing of their child is a parent’s number one concern. Therefore, we have developed comprehensive, research-based procedures to support children.

### **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 each child's care, growth and development YMCA educators interact and communicate with parents on a daily basis sharing observations, documentations, and reflections.

### **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 or 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 prosocial 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

### **Fostering exploration, play & inquiry:**

Children are born with a natural sense of curiosity and wonder. They play naturally. As parents and educators, we watch children explore their world through their senses, repetition of tasks, imitation, asking questions, 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 play scape
- keen observers
- planners
- reporters
- collaborators
- reflective practitioners

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.

### **Providing child-initiated & adult-supported experiences:**

Children and parents are warmly greeted upon arrival. 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. 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 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

### **Planning learning environments to support every child's learning:**

YMCA Child Care programs are located in a variety of facilities including schools, community centres, and YMCA owned buildings. 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 created 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.

### **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 on a walk in the community, while the other small group may prefer to stay indoors and bake cookies. Periods of active and quiet play are interwoven throughout the day both indoors and outdoors. 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.

### **Fostering engagement & communication with parents:**

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 parents go to work and school. YMCA educators and parents communicate on a daily basis about children's activities and health. YMCA educators keep a record of each infant, toddler, and preschool aged child's learning and development in their Continuum of Development booklet available to parents 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 parents 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

### **Involving community partner:**

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 staff 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 staff 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.

### **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 child care supervisor is responsible for the leadership, mentorship, coaching and development of educators. Based on the learning needs of the educators the supervisor may meet with staff to suggest strategies, conduct learning huddles to focus on a particular area of YMCA curriculum with the entire team, conduct regular staff 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.

## 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 parents to read and discuss with the educators, in individual children's Continuum of Development booklets, 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 team and supervisor to ensure they are supporting children's learning and development and monthly they are meeting as a team to look back on what did and didn't work and then plan for the future.

# Our Staff

YMCA Early Childhood Educators come with a wide background of education and experience. Our staff must go through a rigorous screening process that includes demonstrating their values and skills, providing a police reference check that is renewed every 3 years, and holding a valid Standard First Aid and Infant and Child CPR certification. Once selected, new YMCA staff participate in orientation and training on YMCA policies and procedures, Ministry of Education regulations, and YMCA curriculum.

Our Early Childhood Educators are trained to:

- Communicate regularly to families about their child's progress
- Plan classroom activities based on their knowledge of early childhood development
- Practice the YMCA's high standards of child safety and protection

At the YMCA we recognize the importance of continued professional learning and have developed an extensive series of learning modules that support YMCA Early Childhood Educators to gain a deeper understanding of child development, play, play partnership, program planning, extension of play and scaffolding of learning, effective communication, and providing positive learning environments.

## College of Early Childhood Educators

The College of Early Childhood Educators is the professional self-regulatory body for registered early childhood educators (RECE) in Ontario. The College's role is to protect the public interest by setting requirements for registration to practice as a RECE, setting ethical and professional standards and holding RECEs accountable for their practice. RECEs are trained in child development and the planning and delivery of play-based learning in child care programs. YMCA staff with an early childhood education diploma or equivalent qualifications degree must be current members of the College in good standing. RECEs must renew their membership with the College on an annual basis.

## Our Volunteers and Students on Placement

YMCA child care programs are enhanced by the involvement of volunteers and placement students. Volunteers and placement students are always under the supervision of a YMCA staff member and never left alone with children. All volunteers and placement students

must provide a police reference check before interacting with children and are required to adhere to all YMCA policies and procedures and Ministry of Education regulations.

## **Self-regulation and Positive Behaviour**

The YMCA believes that it is the role of the adult in a child's life to support them to learn how to interact successfully with the world around them including other children, adults and the environment. Self-regulation is a skill children develop over time and involves learning how to respond efficiently and effectively to one's bodily functions, impulses, emotions, and to maintain focus or attention so they can learn. Calm, caring, and consistent YMCA Early Childhood Educators and a child's family provide external supports that serve as the basis for a child developing self-regulation.

YMCA Early Childhood Educators set the stage for positive behaviour by implementing the following approaches:

- Building dependable, positive and nurturing relationships with children and their families
- Fostering healthy social connections with other children
- Responding to each child's individual developmental needs through observation and reaction to cues
- Providing small group experiences which allow for more individualized adult attention
- Role modelling inclusive, respectful and collaborative interactions with children and other adults
- Ensuring the learning environment is flexible and materials are plentiful and available to children at all times
- Providing children with the freedom to make choices
- Engaging as a play partner with children, to demonstrate pro-social skills including promoting discussion, problem solving when conflict arises and understanding how our actions affect others
- Attending trainings that address developing self-regulation and resilience in children

## Prohibited Practices

A prohibited practice is any behaviour that puts children at risk or inhibits their growth, self-esteem and healthy development. The following practices are unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment of a YMCA educator:

- Corporal punishment
- Physical restraint of a child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purpose of discipline in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting themselves or others. Is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Any form of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect)
- Depriving a 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.
- Leaving children unsupervised.
- Deliberately using harsh or degrading measures or threats, 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.
- Locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining a child or confining a 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.
- Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child when separating them from other children.
- Interacting or relating to children or vulnerable person outside of a YMCA program activity. (E.g. Weekend home visits, baby-sitting, on line chatting etc.)

# Our Families our Partner

At the YMCA we understand that the most important people in a child's life are their family. YMCA Early Childhood Educators play a supporting role while parents go to work or school. Involving, consulting with, and informing family members about the YMCA program helps a child feel a greater sense of belonging.

## Diversity and Social Inclusion

The YMCA is committed to creating and sustaining an environment that celebrates diversity and appreciates the dignity and worth of all members of the community. We are committed to pursuing equality and to creating an environment free from discrimination, harassment and barriers to equal opportunity. YMCA programs are designed to develop children in spirit, mind and body. We believe every child is a unique individual and adds value to our programs. YMCA staff strive to ensure the environment and programs are adapted to meet the needs of all children and will seek our community partners to enhance our ability to support children.

## Resolving Concerns and Issues

The YMCA understands that a child's family are the most important people in their life. YMCA educators and supervisors play a supporting role while families are at work or school. YMCA staff are committed to connecting, partnering and engaging parents to provide the best possible care for each child. Daily conversations benefit the child, family, and the staff. They help provide consistency for the child, support staff to understand the child and therefore plan for their success, and give families the opportunity to be part of their child's day. The following procedure guides families, staff, supervisors and YMCA Management when issues and concerns occur.

In situations where issues and concerns arise, YMCA staff educators and supervisors together with the family and YMCA Management will work as a team to reach a resolution in a timely, confidential, fair and consistent manner.

The YMCA is guided by values that influence our actions and the decisions we make. The YMCA values are: Caring, Health, Honesty, Inclusiveness, Respect and Responsibility. The YMCA is a shared experience for everyone to enjoy. When conflict arises it is expected that the conflict will be resolved in a respectful manner in keeping with the YMCA Values.

Type of issue/ concern:	Family shall:	YMCA staff receiving issue/concern shall:
<p><b>Daily program issues/concerns</b></p> <p>(E.g. health care including medical needs/medication or allergies, special instructions for feeding, sleeping, or activities, toilet training, child’s adjustment to program, other children including bullying, etc.)</p>	<p>Families are encouraged to speak directly with their child’s educator about any questions, issues or concerns either in person, by phone or by email.</p>	<p>Staff will listen and seek to understand the family member’s issue/concern, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. If follow-up is required or if the staff is involved in supervising children the staff will record the contact information including name, phone number, and email address (if any) and inform the family member of the best time for a follow-up discussion (e.g. set up a phone call or meeting).</p> <p>If the staff receiving the issue/concern thinks they are not the appropriate person to address the issue/concern they will refer the family member to the correct person; typically the supervisor, and provide contact information.</p> <p>Staff will record all issues/concerns and the resolution in the Daily Written Record/Log Book.</p> <p><b><i>If issue/concern is unresolved:</i></b> Families are encouraged to speak directly with the supervisor if the educator is unable to resolve their issue/concern.</p>
<p><b>Centre-wide issues/concerns</b></p> <p>(E.g. cleanliness, hours of operation, fees/payment, menu variety, other parents, busing to school/transition, etc.)</p>	<p>Families are encouraged to speak directly with the supervisor about any questions, issues or concerns either in person, by phone or by email.</p>	<p>Supervisor will listen and seek to understand the family member’s issue/concern, and may attempt to resolve it immediately. If follow-up is required or if the supervisor is involved in supervising children the supervisor will record the contact information including name, phone number, and email address (if any) and inform the family member of the best time for a follow-up discussion (e.g. set up a phone call or meeting).</p> <p>Supervisors will record all issues/concerns and the resolution in the Daily Written Record/Log Book.</p> <p><b><i>If issue/concern is unresolved:</i></b> In most cases, talking with the supervisor will resolve all issues/concerns. If for some reason a resolution cannot be reached, the supervisor will provide contact information for the YMCA Manager responsible for the region.</p>



Type of issue/ concern:	Family shall:	YMCA staff receiving issue/concern shall:
<p><b>Conduct of staff/student/volunteer or supervisor</b></p>	<p>Family members are encouraged to speak directly with the supervisor about any questions, issues or concerns either in person, by phone or by email.</p> <p>If the family member is concerned about the conduct of the supervisor they are encouraged to speak directly to YMCA Management.</p>	<p>If there is an allegation/suspicion of child abuse, the supervisor will inform the family member of his/her duty to report suspected child abuse to a child protection agency and will provide the contact information.</p> <p>Supervisors will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a report to the same child protection agency.</li> <li>• Record all suspicions of abuse using the YMCA Child Abuse Reporting Kit.</li> <li>• File a Serious Occurrence Report to the Ministry of Education within 24 hours of receiving the report from the family member.</li> </ul> <p>Supervisors will share the outcome (founded/unfounded) of any investigation by a child protection agency when completed with the family member.</p> <p>Disciplinary information will not be shared.</p>

## Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children share a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm. See Duty to Report<sup>1</sup>

The YMCA recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices to protect children and vulnerable persons from abuse.

YMCA child care staff are:

- Legally responsible to immediately make a report to a child protection agency if they suspect abuse.
- Responsible to make the decision to report suspected abuse without consulting their supervisor or colleagues\*

<sup>1</sup> **Duty to Report** is defined under section 72(1) of the Ontario Child and Family Services Act and sets out what must be reported to a child protection agency (e.g. Children’s Aid Society - CAS).

- Accountable to ensure the report remains confidential and sealed. Details of the report are not to be shared with anyone, this includes the supervisor, other staff, or parent unless authorized by the child protection agency.

*\*No staff/student/volunteer or parent shall advise someone not to report suspicions of abuse, nor try to stop the person from reporting or consulting with a child protection agency\**

### Escalation process for unresolved issues or concerns:

If a family member has been unable to resolve their issue/concern through the informal process described above, a formal complaint may be made in writing (by mail or email) to:

**Mailing Address:**      **YMCA of Greater Toronto Contact Centre**  
2200 Yonge St., Unit 300  
Toronto, Ontario M4S 2C6  
**Email Address:** [memberservices@ymcagta.org](mailto:memberservices@ymcagta.org)

Please provide contact information, as the YMCA will not respond to anonymous complaints. If you are unable to submit a formal complaint in this manner due to a disability, you may contact the YMCA to request accommodation, which will be provided in keeping with the YMCA's Accessibility and Customer Services Policy available on our [website](#).

### Formal Complaint Process

The YMCA is committed to a fair process when dealing with complaints. Families will be treated with respect and kept informed of the status of their complaint. The YMCA will respond within 3 business days to confirm that your complaint has been received. The YMCA aims to resolve all complaints within 30 days of receipt. If this timeline cannot be met, the family will be informed of the reasons and given a revised timeframe. Upon completion of a review, the family will be provided with reasons for the decision relating to the complaint, which will complete the formal complaint process.

## Confidentiality/No Retaliation

Any YMCA staff that receives a complaint or concern shall maintain confidentiality by not discussing allegations with other individuals, except on a 'need to know' basis. For example, in some programs that receive funding from partner agencies, complaints may need to be shared with those agencies. No person who in good faith and under this policy submits a concern or complaint shall suffer retaliation.

## Records

A summary of all formal complaints, including number and type, will be provided to the Board/Board Committee on an annual basis.

## Child Protection

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children share a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm.<sup>2</sup> The YMCA recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices to protect children and vulnerable persons. YMCA educators are trained to recognize the indicators of neglect and abuse and are legally required to report any suspicions that a child may require protection. The role of the child protection agency is to investigate and determine if there is any proof of abuse or neglect and implement supports for the child and their family. It is important that YMCA educators ensure all reports are kept confidential, including only discussing with the family that a report has been made if the child protection agency authorizes them to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> **Duty to Report** is defined under section 72(1) of the Ontario Child and Family Services Act and sets out what must be reported to a child protection agency (e.g. Children's Aid Society - CAS).

# YMCA Before and After School Programs

## Hours of Operation

At the YMCA our standard hours of operation are 7:30 a.m. until the school bell rings and after school until 6:00 p.m. Some locations are open for extended hours to accommodate the needs of families who commute a long distance to work or school. Programs operate September to June. Visit our website for the hours of operation of the centres closest to you. School Break programs are available at selected locations during the months of December, January, March, July and August.

## Communication with Families

At the YMCA we know how important it is to you as a parent to have all the details of your child's day at the YMCA. YMCA Early Childhood Educators keep parents/guardians informed through:

- Daily face to face communication with families upon arrival and departure times.
- Kindergarten Programs -weekly program documentation highlighting learning that occurred during a play experience.
- School Age Program – program newsletters

## Kindergarten (4-6 years old) – Ratio 1:13

The program includes opportunities to continue learning as an extension of kindergarten topics, exploring the indoors and outdoors, creating with the arts (visual, dramatic and music), discovering science, engaging in mathematics and literacy activities, developing social skills, gross and fine motor skills and problem solving.

## School Age (6-12 years old) or Ratio 1:15 (6-9 year olds)

The program provides a club like atmosphere that includes opportunities for creating performances, works of art, science projects, and tournaments. A key component of the program involves spending 45 minutes outdoors or inside participating in physical activity.

# YMCA Program Procedures

## Nutrition

YMCA Before and After School Programs offer a variety of nutritious morning and afternoon snacks prepared by a caterer or on-site cook. Our snack menus follow the Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. The current and following week's menus are posted for your information. Due to children with allergies and food restrictions the YMCA discourages sending any food from home.

## Bagged Lunches

Children who attend the YMCA program on PA Days, School Breaks or Summer Club Programs are required to bring a peanut/nut free, nutritious lunch following the guidelines listed below:

- Lunch and snacks are nutritious and follows Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide
- The lunch bag and containers are labelled with your child's full name and an ice pack is provided
- Foods provided do not contain any of the known allergens posted on the notice in the main entrance way and do not contain or have possibly come into contact with nuts
- A refillable plastic bottle labeled with your child's full name is provided

## Life-Threatening Allergies (Anaphylaxis)

The YMCA strives to protect the children in our care who have life-threatening allergies by reducing as much as possible exposure to their known allergens. A list of allergens to be avoided in the program is included in your registration package and a notice is posted for all families near the entrance to the program. Families are advised to check frequently as the notice is updated monthly.

Any parent/guardian of a child with a life-threatening injury is responsible for providing the YMCA with detailed information about their child's known allergens, signs and symptoms of an allergic response and the steps to take in an emergency prior to their child starting care. Children enrolled in school are permitted to carry their own emergency medications (e.g. epi pen, puffers). It is also very important that parent's/guardian's inform YMCA staff anytime there is a change to a child's allergies.

## Health and Illness

Young children do not have a fully developed immune system, therefore your child experiencing some illness while in child care should be expected. The local Public Health unit sets out and monitors a comprehensive cleaning and sanitation routine and

personal health care practices including frequent hand washing for YMCA staff to follow. These routine practices are designed to minimize the spread of illness. You can help the YMCA prevent the spread of illness by keeping your child home from the program anytime they have the following signs and symptoms of communicable illness until symptoms have stopped for at least 24 hours or a doctor has determined your child is or is not experiencing a communicable illness.

- A temperature above 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Difficult or rapid breathing or a severe cough
- Vomiting more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Unexplained (i.e. not due to diet, or medication) diarrhea more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Sore throat especially if accompanied by a fever
- Undiagnosed skin rash
- Persistent scratching of body or head
- Eyes are red or yellow, bowel movement is gray or white, or urine is dark or tea coloured

If your child experiences any of the signs and symptoms of communicable illness listed above while at the child care program, the YMCA staff will contact you or one of your authorized pick-up people to take your child home. While your child waits for you or your designate to arrive, they will be separated from the other children until it is determined they do not have a communicable illness.

## Medication

Whenever possible, parents/guardians should administer drugs and medication to their children at home, if this can be done without affecting the treatment schedule. When a child is ill, it is in their best interest to remain at home where they are comfortable and able to rest and get better.

The YMCA is required to administer only drugs and medications either prescribed by a doctor, nurse practitioner or other licensed health provider with a prescription label on the original container on the medication or accompanied by a doctor's note that outlines the following:

- Date note was written.

- Time to be administered or detailed reason for administering including signs and symptoms (e.g. fever above 38°C, wheezing or coughing, itchy and watery eyes, sneezing, etc.).
- Expiry date of the note (i.e. is it for a specific time period? or on going until further notice?)
- Child's legal first and last name.
- Name of drug or medication.
- Dosage to be administered.

Anytime you bring drugs or medications to be administered to your child at the child care centre YMCA staff will provide you with a Medication Administration Authorization form to complete that details the dosage, times of administration and permission for the YMCA to give your child the drug or medication.

### **Advil, Tylenol, Motrin (Pain Relievers, Fever Reducers, Anti-inflammatory Medications)**

It is not the YMCA's practice to administer medications such as Advil, Tylenol, or Motrin to control cold or flu symptoms. It is in the best interest of the child experiencing these symptoms to remain home, to rest, and get better. If the child has a chronic illness (e.g. headache, migraine, seizures) or is teething the YMCA may administer medications like Advil or Tylenol with a doctor's note. The doctor's note must be updated annually or as the child's age, weight, or medical condition changes.

### **Incident/Accident Reporting**

Children are active and curious. It is not uncommon for young children to experience cuts, scrapes, and bruises while running, jumping, and playing. All YMCA staff hold valid certification in Standard First Aid and Infant and Child CPR and have been trained in emergency procedures.

Anytime your child has an accident, YMCA staff will record the details on the YMCA Incident Notification for Parent form and provide you with a copy.

In the event a more serious incident involving your child occurs, YMCA staff have been trained to respond based on the severity of the injury. YMCA staff will either call emergency support services (911), parent/guardian or your designated emergency contacts to take your child for medical evaluation.

Serious Occurrence incidents are reportable by the YMCA to the Ministry of Education Child Care Quality, Assurance and Licensing Unit within 24 hours of the supervisor becoming aware of the incident. Details regarding the serious occurrence will be posted near the entrance of the program for 10 days. A serious occurrence incident is defined as; a life-threatening injury or illness of a child, an allegation of abuse by a staff, student, or placement volunteer, a missing or unsupervised child, a disaster on premises, or the death of a child.

## **Emergency Response**

The YMCA is committed to being prepared and keeping all staff, volunteers and families safe and the Association functioning in the event of an emergency or natural disaster. We understand that YMCA families, staff, volunteers and students on placements rely on our ability to deliver uninterrupted programs and services in safe environments. The YMCA trains all staff, volunteers, and students on placement before interacting with children and annually on emergency procedures including how to respond to personal injuries and medical emergencies, building emergencies (power failure, flood), fire drills and evacuation, inclement weather, threats from criminal activity (lockdown) and natural disasters.

In the event your child is involved in an emergency you will be contacted directly by the YMCA. If the YMCA is unable to reach you directly they will call the emergency contacts you have identified in your child's registration package. The YMCA will also endeavor to post information on our website, and or Twitter and Facebook accounts. Depending on the nature of the emergency, the YMCA staff and children may have to re-locate to an evacuation site until you can pick up your child. The YMCA evacuation site address is posted in the entrance way of the program.

## **Safe Schools Act**

The Safe Schools Act, 2000 requires all schools in Ontario provide a safe and welcoming school, develop a code of conduct and consequences for infractions, and implement a program of bullying and harassment prevention.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a partner with school boards and is required to report to the school principal any student involved in an incident of bullying, harassment, violence, suspected child abuse or neglect or infraction of the code of conduct.



In the event that your child receives a 'mandatory' suspension or expulsion from school then your child cannot attend the YMCA Before and After School Program for the duration. If your child is receiving a 'discretionary' suspension, then the principal will determine if your child can continue to attend the YMCA during the period of the suspension.

## Smoke Free

YMCA Child Care programs are required to be smoke free environments under the Smoke Free Ontario Act 2005. Smoking or handling a cigarette or tobacco on the premises where a YMCA child care program is located, including all in-door and outdoor areas is prohibited. This includes playgrounds, school property and surrounding areas. Failure to comply could result in a penalty of up to \$5,000.00.

## Outdoor Play

All children in before and after school programs are required to play outdoors for a minimum of 30 minutes each day, weather permitting. During inclement weather, alternate active play must be provided indoors. Weather can change quickly. A rainy cool morning can rapidly become a humid, sunny afternoon. We ask that you always prepare your child for any type of weather so that your child can participate comfortably outdoors.

## Field Trips and Community Walks

Field trips and community walks provide valuable experiences for children and allow staff the opportunity to extend program activities outside of the classroom. When these opportunities arise, parents/guardians will be required to complete a permission form giving consent for their child to participate in the activity. Community walks may be part of the regular program and as such do not require a permission form.

## Extreme Weather

During extreme weather conditions, advisories or alerts, (heat, smog or wind chill) the YMCA follows the guidelines of the local health department. Our first priority is to keep children safe from serious adverse health effects such as frostbite and sunburn. YMCA Educators will adjust the amount of time spent outdoors or provide an alternative indoor plan.

# Program Information

## Part Time Programs

Part time programs are available at limited locations that are not full to capacity. Families can choose from 2 day (Tuesday & Thursday) or 3 day (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) options. You will be asked to sign a part time program agreement form. In the event that a program location reaches its maximum capacity, families will be offered the opportunity to change from part-time to full-time or be given two weeks' withdrawal notice.

## Arrival and Departure

The safety and well-being of all children participating in YMCA child care programs is of utmost importance to us. Parents/guardians or their designate are required to personally escort their child into the program and to pick up their child at the end of the day. Please ensure the YMCA staff is aware you have arrived or that you are departing with your child. Arrival and Departure times are recorded by a YMCA Educator prior to parents/guardians leaving the centre.

## Authorized Drop off/Pick up and Emergency Contacts

At the time of enrollment, you will be asked to provide the names and contact information including telephone numbers and addresses of any adults 16 years of age or older that you authorize to drop off/pick up your child or come to the centre in the event that you cannot be contacted when your child is ill or has been involved in an emergency. The YMCA does not permit children 15 years of age or younger to escort younger children home. If you require an alternate person to pick up your child who is not on the list, please provide this information in writing (email) to the YMCA staff. Any new visitors to the YMCA who come to pick up a child will be asked to provide photo identification.

## Late Pick up

YMCA Early Childhood Educators are counting on you to be on time to pick up your child at the end of the day so that they can meet their personal and family obligations. We do understand that that weather and traffic accidents happen, however we appreciate you calling the program to let us know you will be late or making arrangements for an alternate adult to pick up your child. Child care arrangements may be withdrawn by the YMCA for parents/guardians who frequently pick up their child late.

## Space Limitations

The YMCA has the right to manage enrolment which may result in the YMCA not being able to accommodate your child care needs for the next school year. Priority will be given to children currently registered and attending their home school where the child care program is located with consideration also being given to younger children. In situations where capacity is limited and expansion of space is unavailable, the YMCA will provide families with written notice.

## Program Closures

YMCA Child Care Programs are closed on all statutory holidays during the year. Please note when a statutory holiday falls on a weekend the YMCA will recognize this closure date on the following business day. Fee payment is required for all statutory holidays.

New Year's Day

Family Day

Good Friday

Victoria Day

Canada Day

Civic Holiday

Labour Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

Boxing Day

Easter Monday – all YMCA Before and After School Programs will be closed for Staff Professional Development Day

## Inclement Weather Program Closures

Severe weather conditions can result in school boards closing schools. In this case all YMCA child care programs will also be closed. Please listen to local radio/television stations or check local school board websites for information. The YMCA will make every effort to inform families of centre closures due to inclement weather through our [website](http://ymcagta.org) ymcagta.org, YGTA Twitter and Facebook accounts. Refunds will not be offered for these closures.

## Program Cancellations

The YMCA will endeavor to keep programs operating which meet the needs of the community. The YMCA reserves the right to limit program components and/or locations based on enrolment.

## Registration Information

### Child Care Payments

Child care payments are processed on a monthly basis by pre-authorized payment/debit authorization or by credit card. Families have the option to choose from one of the three monthly draw dates for their child care fees to be processed on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. If families require payment arrangements outside of our current terms and conditions please email the Child and Family Development Administration Office at [csac@ymcagta.org](mailto:csac@ymcagta.org).

### Waitlist

The YMCA strives to accommodate all registration requests, however there may be times when space is unavailable in our programs and you may be offered to place your child on a waitlist. To address this, issue the YMCA has created a waiting list procedure. Please note there is no fee to place your child on a waiting list. It is important for you to keep your contact information up to date with us.

Children are placed numerically on the waiting list based on the date and time that the waiting list application is received by the YMCA. Determining where your child(ren) is on a waiting list/or admissions to the program is subject to a number of considerations including, but not limited to;

- when the children currently enrolled move to the next age group
- the ages of the children on the waiting list
- the length of time each child will be in an age group before having to transition to the next age group

Exceptions that could affect the order in which admissions are offered are:

- A child protection/welfare agency requests placement for a child;
- Children requiring full time care (5 days per week);
- Siblings of children currently registered in a YMCA Child Care program
- Children transferring from other YMCA Child Care programs;

- Children of YMCA of Greater Toronto employees;
- Children living within the school boundaries and attending their home school.

YMCA Child Care Program waitlists are managed by each YMCA location. To find out your child(ren)'s status on the waiting list, simply contact the Supervisor of the program where you originally completed the waiting list form. The Supervisor will disclose the child(ren)'s position on the waiting list to the parent subject to the YMCA privacy statement <https://ymcagta.org/privacy>.

Find a YMCA location by visiting <https://ymcagta.org/find-a-y-website> address or call 1-866-317-6251.

### **Absence from Care**

Refunds for child care fees will not be processed for the following; missed days, vacation, sick days or inclement weather closures as operating costs are based on the number of children enrolled.

### **Registration Changes**

If you require changes to your current program registration these requests can be made on line using the [Registration Change Request Form](#).

Changes could consist of; family/child contact information, emergency contact information, and changes to program type (part time to full time). Registration changes and updates can take up to 10 days to be completed.

### **Payment Changes**

Any changes to pre-authorized billing can be submitted on line using the [Registration Change Request Form](#). If a new pre-authorized payment form is required to make the change requested this form can be obtained from your program supervisor. Payment changes can take up to 10 business days for the changes to take effect.

### **Withdrawal Notification**

Should you choose to withdraw your child from a YMCA Child Care program you will be required to submit one month notice on-line using the [Registration Change Request Form](#). Payments will be adjusted upon receipt of the withdrawal notification. Withdrawal notifications received with less than one-month notice, will be charged for the one-month period.

\*Please note for families receiving municipal child care subsidy 10-day notice of withdrawal is required.

## Government Child Care Subsidy

YMCA licensed child care programs hold a purchase of service agreement with regional municipal offices. Families can apply for child care fee subsidy by contacting your local municipal office or visiting their website by clicking below:

[City of Toronto](#)

[Region of Peel](#)

[Region of York](#)

[Region of Halton](#)

[Region of Durham](#)

[County of Simcoe](#)

[County of Dufferin](#)

## YMCA Financial Assistance

As a charity that serves all segments of our community, the YMCA of Greater Toronto provides financial assistance in times of need. This is a short term support made possible due to the generosity of our donors, members, volunteers, staff, corporate and community partners. For more information on how to apply please speak to the program supervisor.



The YMCA Kids Challenge, is a weeklong event held every spring that aims to teach our children about philanthropy and living an active and healthy life. Funds raised will support vital programs and services or provide financial assistance so more children and families can access our health and fitness centres, child care and camps. Be a healthy role model and support the YMCA Kids Challenge. [Donate Today](#). We count on the generous donations of the community, members, staff and volunteers. A charitable receipt suitable for tax purposes will be provided for all donations of \$10.00 or more.

## Withdrawal of YMCA Services

The YMCA strives to meet the individual needs of all children and families enrolled in our YMCA child care programs. However, situations do arise from time to time where it may be necessary for the YMCA of Greater Toronto to withdraw child care services for a child and/or their family.

The YMCA does not take these decisions lightly and takes reasonable care to ensure a thorough assessment of the child's needs, community supports available, and the YMCA programs ability to support the child have been undertaken before withdrawing services.

Examples leading to withdrawal of services may include:

- Non-payment of program fees
- Frequent late pick up
- Parents/guardians or children who exhibit violent or harassing behaviours towards staff, volunteers, students on placement, other children or families
- Community resources for children with special needs are unavailable or have been exhausted
- Refusal by parent/guardian to meet with YMCA staff and/or consent to the use of support services for children.

## Privacy of Information

All YMCA staff, volunteers and placement students understand the importance of keeping all personal information in the strictest of confidence. The YMCA will not share any personal information with outside agencies including school boards, and resource consultants for children with special needs without written parental consent. For a full version of the YMCA Privacy Policy please click [here](#).



## **Mission**

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charity offering opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and leadership.

## **Vision**

Our communities will be home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults.

## **Values**

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is guided by values that influence our actions and the decisions we make: Caring, Health, Honesty, Inclusiveness, Respect and Responsibility