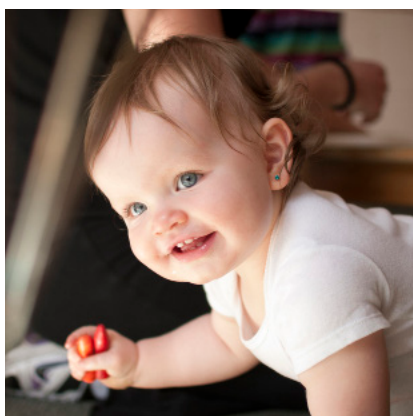


Child Care Parent Handbook



Welcome to YMCA Child Care



Welcome to the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka. YMCA Child Care programs put the best interests of your child as it's top priority and values parents as the expert of their children. We look forward to embarking on a partnership with you to ensure your child reaches his/her full potential. This book will provide you with the information you may need to know while your child is in our care.

Table of Contents

YMCA Staff	3
YMCA Curriculum	5
Registration Information	8
Program Information	11
Mission, Vision and Values	15
Program Statement Appendix A	16

Our Program Statement

To obtain a full copy of our Program Statement please see Appendix A at the end of this document, ask your supervisor, or visit our website for an electronic version: <http://ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca/childcare/about-ymca-child-care>

YMCA Staff

All YMCA staff must adhere to a number of policies and practices including the YMCA Program Statement as well as Ministry, Fire and Health Regulations. Annual review of these policies and procedures ensure our staff are knowledgeable and prepared to handle situations. The following practices are not permitted.

- Any practice based on a negative control technique
- Leaving a child unsupervised
- Interacting or relating to children or vulnerable persons outside of a YMCA program activity (e.g. home visits, baby sitting, on line chatting etc.)

Inclusion

In keeping with our mission and vision, the YMCA believes in the development of healthy, confident children. We're committed to treating children with respect and dignity and helping them grow and develop to their full potential in a safe, nurturing and learning environment.

Central to our work at the YMCA is diversity and social inclusion. We believe that all children and families should have an inclusive and respectful experience in our program.

- YMCA programs are designed to develop children in spirit, mind and body
- Every child is a unique individual and adds value to our program
- Parents and families are involved, consulted and informed partners with YMCA staff and volunteers (where appropriate)
- YMCA staff and volunteers (where appropriate) strive to ensure the environment and programs are adapted to meet the needs of all children
- YMCA staff and volunteers (where appropriate) seek out community partners to enhance our ability to support children with special needs through training and consultation

Emergency Management

Each YMCA child care centre has emergency management policies and procedures that our staff review annually and are prepared to follow in the event of an emergency. Should an emergency occur parents will be notified by telephone, an alert through Weemarkable, centre posting or verbally upon pick up of their child.



Prohibited Practices

In accordance with the Child Care And Early Years Act, the following practices are prohibited in all licensed YMCA Programs.

- Corporal punishment of the child
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent
- Locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame 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; or
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will

Minor Accident Reporting

Minor accidents and illnesses are common occurrences with children. YMCA Child Care staff have the responsibility to report minor incidents and share the YMCA Incident Report with families.

Serious Occurrence Reporting

In light of best practices serious occurrences can sometimes take place. Within 24 hours of an incident being deemed serious in accordance with the Ministry of Education, a Serious Occurrence Report will be filed on the Ontario Child Care Licensing System. A Serious Occurrence Notification Form will be posted in the child care centre or school age program in a visible area for 10 days.



Volunteers and Placement Students

Volunteers are an integral part of our programs and services. All Placement Students and Volunteers must adhere to a number of policies and procedures as well as Ministry, Fire and Health Regulations.

The roles and responsibilities of the licensee, supervising employees, the volunteers and students are reviewed with the volunteer/student as part of the orientation process.

All Placement Students and Volunteers will be supervised by YMCA Staff at all times and will not be left alone with children or have unsupervised access to children in our child care centres.

College of Early Childhood Educators

The College of Early Childhood Educators is the professional self-regulatory body for Early Childhood Educators in Ontario. The College mandate is to protect the public interest and ensure quality standards of practice of early childhood education. YMCA staff with an Early Childhood Education Diploma or Degree must hold a current, clear membership with the College. Memberships must be renewed annually.

Duty to Report

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka has a legal obligation to report any suspicions of child abuse to the local Children's Aid Society.

Standard First Aid and CPR

All Child Care Staff hold current certification in Standard First Aid and Infant Child CPR.

Sleep Supervision and Position Requirements

Staff will ensure that children under 12 months old are placed for sleep in a manner consistent with the recommendations set out in the Joint Statement of Safe Sleep from the Public Health Agency of Canada, unless a child's physician recommends otherwise in writing.

Staff will periodically perform direct visual checks of sleeping children. Children are only permitted to sleep on an individual cot or crib that has been assigned to them. Parents will be consulted respecting their child's sleeping arrangements at the time the child is enrolled and at any other appropriate time, such as at transitions between programs or rooms or upon a parent's request. The observance of any significant changes in a child's sleeping patterns or behaviours during sleep will be communicated to parents and will result in adjustments to the manner in which the child is supervised during sleep.

YMCA Curriculum

YMCA Playing to Learn

Our YMCA Playing to Learn curriculum focuses on small group, play based, inquiry programming provided by qualified educators who engage in play with your child. Throughout the preschool years your child will be learning through developmentally appropriate play experiences that will prepare him/her for school. YMCA Playing to Learn exemplifies the Principles of the Ontario Framework for Early Learning; Early Learning for Every Child Today.

Infant (0 to 18 mths)

- Ratio is 1:3
- Infants individual schedule is followed (input from family required)
- Infant daily record is documented (sleep times, eating, diapering)
- A significant play experience is written daily in each child's Continuum of Development Profile
- Parent/educator conferences available upon request
- Staff write weekly documentations highlighting learning that occurred during a play experience
- Includes opportunities for exploring indoors and outdoors, songs and stories, discovering creative and sensory materials, imitation play, and lots of time for hugs and cuddles



Toddler (18 mths to 30 mths)

- Ratio is 1:5
- Toddlers follow a flexible group schedule
- Daily record is documented (sleep times, eating)
- A significant play experience is written daily in each child's Continuum of Development Profile
- Parent/educator conferences available upon request
- Staff write weekly documentations highlighting learning that occurred during a play experience
- Program includes opportunities for exploring indoors and outdoors, music and movement, discovering creative and sensory materials, puzzles, stories, blocks, dramatic play and learning to play with others

Preschool (30 mths to 5 yrs)

- Ratio is 1:8
- Preschool children follow a flexible group schedule
- A significant play experience is written daily in each child's Continuum of Development Profile
- Parent/educator conferences available upon request
- Staff write weekly documentations highlighting learning that occurred during a play experience
- Program includes opportunities for exploring 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.

YMCA Curriculum

Weemarkable App

We're making it easier for our YMCA Preschool Child Care families to connect to the small moments and big milestones of their child's day, through our YMCA app - Weemarkable™. Weemarkable is the window into your little one's day - from wherever you are. It's the app you love to get notifications from - as you receive messages and photos sharing in their excitement and fun. It keeps your mind at ease with the ability to access important child care notices, photos, milestones, educator observations, menu information and direct to educator messaging with just a tap. And most importantly, even when you can't be with them, it's Weemarkable how connected you'll be. Please speak to your supervisor and enrol in Weemarkable today.

It's the app you love to hear from...

- Follow all your children registered in YMCA Preschool Child Care on one feed
- Direct messaging to and from your child's educators
- Review your child's weekly menu
- Daily educator observations about their play, nap and meals
- Integrated with YMCA Playing to Learn Curriculum
- Important notifications, such as centre closures due to weather, sent directly to your mobile device
- Photos of your child engaged in learning
- Add additional followers, such as grand parents, to your child's profile and customize the content they can view
- Completely safe and secure

YMCA Child Care families can access it free for Apple and Android devices.



What to Bring?

Please ensure all of your child's belongings are clearly labeled with their name. You will need to supply:

Infant/Toddler

- Complete change of clothing
- Seasonal outdoor clothing
- Lightweight, and breathable blanket for rest time
- Diapers and wipes
- Bottles/sippy cups
- Formula or expressed milk if your child has not transitioned to 2% milk

Preschool

- Complete change of clothing
- Seasonal outdoor clothing
- Blanket for rest time



YMCA Curriculum

YMCA A Place To Connect

Our YMCA A Place to Connect curriculum focuses on children engaging in fun activities that the children help to plan and direct with a qualified educator. A major component of this program is creating a positive social environment where children engage in physical activity for a minimum of 45 min. per day.

School Age Program (3.8 to 12 years)

- Ratio is: 1:15
- If 25% or more of the group are kindergarten age then the ratio reduces to 1:13
- Children enrolled in the school age program have the option of attending before and/or after regular school hours and on non-instructional days
- Program includes opportunities for physical activities indoors and outdoors, dramatic performances, works of art, nutritious snacks, clubs and tournaments, developing leadership skills, problem solving and developing moral understanding



Registration Information

Admission

Child care request forms are available to families to complete wishing to register their child in a YMCA Program. To secure a child care space a complete registration package, billing information form, pre-authorized payment form and up to date immunization record is required to be submitted to the supervisor.

Part-Time Attendance

In order to staff appropriately, we must know the exact days your child will be attending. Full time participants are given priority. Should there be an insufficient number of full time participants then part time care will be offered to fill the available spaces. The minimum commitment of part time families is one day per week. Part time families will be offered the first right of refusal should another participant wish the available full time space.

Waiting List

If the program is operating at capacity, the child care request form will be added to the centre's waiting list. There is no fee for a family to be placed on our waiting list. Available child care spaces are to be filled by families on the waiting list according to the ordinance of sequential dates as indicated on the child care request forms. Priority will be given to families wishing to register their child in a full time space. Families transferring from other YMCA Child Care Centres, YMCA Staff or siblings who are already registered will have priority for the next available waiting list space.



When a space becomes available the first person on the waiting list is contacted and asked if they are interested in the space or if they would prefer to remain on the waiting list. If they cannot be reached on the first attempt, contact will be attempted again on the next business day. If they cannot be reached, or do not return our call within 24 hours after the second call, the next person on the list will be contacted. A family has 24 hours after initial contact has been made to confirm their acceptance of the child care space. Families on the waitlist can contact the supervisor at any time to determine their standing on the waiting list.



Drop Off and Pick Up Procedure

The safety and well-being of all children participating in YMCA Programs is of utmost importance, therefore, we expect all parents to drop off and pick up their children from their child's classroom teacher daily and to sign the attendance sheet.

Hours of Operation

At the YMCA, our standard hours of operation are 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. There are some exceptions, so be sure to check the hours of the program you have chosen.

When Someone Else Picks Up Your Child

For the protection of all children, if someone other than the usual parent or guardian will be picking up your child, they must be 18 years of age or older. Please notify the Centre Supervisor in writing of the person's name. Staff will ask for identification and cooperation from the pick-up.

Registration Information



Fees

Child Care Fees are paid through Preauthorized Payment on the first of the month with the option of splitting your monthly amount between the 1st and the 15th. Child Care payments that are returned or declined will be re-sent to your bank after 48 hours of the original withdrawal date in an attempt to collect your fees as per your Child Care agreement. You will be able to view your upcoming payments through your online account 7 days prior to the 1st of the month. This amount is based on the number of days your child(ren) is registered to attend YMCA Child Care. Any addition to your registered days will be added to your future monthly invoice. Fees are subject to change. The YMCA will provide a minimum of 30 day's notice before an increase in fees is made.

Holidays

YMCA Child Care Programs are closed on statutory holidays, Family Day and Civic Holiday during the year. Fee payment is required for all statutory holidays, Family Day and Civic Holiday if they fall on your regularly scheduled days. If scheduled to be in program but away due to family holidays, illness etc. full payment is still required.

School Holidays and PA Days

Care may be provided on non-instructional days such as winter vacation, March Break, and

PA days at some locations. Providing service is based upon enrollment. Please discuss arrangements with your supervisor to determine which locations offer this service.

Interruption of Services

Any interruption in Child Care Services due to inclement weather, loss of facility utilities, or labour disruption, is not subject to a refund. Please listen to local radio/television stations or check their websites.

Financial Assistance

The YMCA has a purchase of service agreement with the City of Kawartha Lakes, County of Grey, County of Simcoe, District of Muskoka and District of Parry Sound. If you require assistance with child care fees, please see your supervisor for information about municipal and YMCA financial assistance.



Late Pick-Up Policy

There is a late fee charge of five dollars for every ten minutes, or part thereof, after your centre's closing time. Late fees will be added to your future invoice. If there is an emergency and you are going to be late, please call your centre. Program registration may be terminated or suspended at the discretion of YMCA Management due to consistent late pick-up.

Tax Receipts

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka strives to be environmentally responsible. You will be able to access your Child Care tax receipt electronically from our website on or before February 28 of each year for the prior year's fees.

Registration Information

Privacy Policy

The YMCA strives to ensure that volunteers and staff conduct their relationships with each other, participants and all other Association contacts with integrity, good judgement and fairness. The YMCA respects the right of individuals to the protection of their personal information. The YMCA is committed to maintaining the confidentiality, privacy, and accuracy of personal information it collects, uses and discloses about its participants, members, donors, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers.



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.

Withdrawal of Service

Child Care Services may be cancelled at any time upon receipt of proper written notice. Written notice must be received 14 days prior to but not including the next preauthorized payment date. Failure to provide proper written notification will result in your payment being processed as agreed. No refund will be provided. Please note we are unable to accept cancellation by phone. Admission and discharge of children is at the discretion of the YMCA.

In each situation where it may be necessary to withdraw services, the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka makes these considerations:

- Reasonable care has been given in assessing the child's needs, including the program's ability to support those needs
- Special needs resources and other outside agency supports are unavailable or have been exhausted
- Two-week written notice of withdrawal will be given and documentation of meetings and discussions with special needs support staff (if applicable) will be shared with parents. In extreme circumstances, termination of care may be immediate.

The following additional situations may be considered cause for terminating care:

- Non-payment of program fees
- Chronic late pick-up
- Situations that require specialized services that the YMCA is unable to provide
- Parents or children who exhibit abusive behavior towards staff, volunteers, other children and families
- Children who are unable to manage in group care settings
- Refusal by parent/guardian to meet with the YMCA staff and/or consent to the use of support services for children

The YMCA is an inclusive organization that strives to meet the needs of children and families. In situations where the program is having difficulty meeting the child's need, it may be deemed, in the interest of the family and/or YMCA, to end care.



Program Information

Anaphylaxis Policy

We strive to minimize the risk of exposure to known allergens to the children in our care. In the case where a child has an Anaphylaxis Allergen it will be the responsibility of the parent to provide a detailed individual emergency plan for their child and to train the supervisor and as appropriate all centre staff and volunteers on their child's emergency plan prior to the first day of care. It is the Parent/Guardian's responsibility to inform centre staff of a child's allergy at the time of registration and provide an annual update of any allergy changes. An Anaphylaxis Alert Poster will be placed at the entrance of the building requesting that families avoid bringing items containing the known Anaphylaxis Allergen(s).

Expectations of Behaviour

At all times, staff will role model, encourage and assist children to be courteous to others, use appropriate language to express themselves, respect the ideas, property and personal well-being of others and use "peace-making" as the preferred method of conflict resolution. The safety of all the children is our primary concern. The provision of our service is conditional on both you and your child's demonstration of these expectations. Staff will work with children and parents to provide consistency in self-regulation techniques. Behaviour which poses a safety hazard for the other children and the staff, will not be accepted, and could result in immediate withdrawal of services.

Health and Illness

Illness in group settings is often unavoidable. If your child shows symptoms of ill health such as fever, vomiting or diarrhea, your child will not be admitted to care. In the case of discharge from eyes or ears and rashes deemed suspicious by staff, a physician's note may be required stating the nature of the illness. If your child develops symptoms of ill health while in our care, you will be contacted to pick-up your child. In order for children to attend care they must be well



enough to go outside and participate in all aspects of the program. Exclusion periods vary per illness. Please speak to the supervisor to refer to the local health unit guidelines for length of exclusion to determine when your child can return to care. A copy of the YMCA's Exclusion from Child Care Policy is available upon request.

Infectious and Communicable Diseases

The YMCA follows the Ontario regulations under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. Working with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit staff and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, the YMCA has developed guidelines for proper disinfection and follows their direction regarding reporting of Communicable Diseases and exclusion periods from program.

Medication

Only medication prescribed by a licensed physician or accompanied by a doctor's note will be administered. Parents are required to complete and sign a Medication Authorization form outlining dosage and times to be given. Over the counter medication will only be given if accompanied by a note from a licensed physician and a pharmacy label. All prescription or non-prescription medication must be in the original container, labeled with the child's name, date of purchase, name of drug, dosage and storage instructions.

Program Information

Head Lice

Throughout the year, spot checks will be conducted on children and staff. If a child has either nits or lice, contact will be made to immediately have the child picked up. The child must then be treated and all nits must be removed prior to admittance to the program. Your support and co-operation is greatly appreciated in this matter.



Nutrition

Our full day child care programs offer a variety of nutritious morning snacks, lunches and afternoon snacks prepared by a caterer or on-site cook. School age programs receive a morning and afternoon snack. To ensure your child receives a well-balanced meal, our menus follow Canada's Food Guide and are planned in consultation with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and the Ministry of Education. Our weekly menus are posted for your information. Infants are fed according to their individual needs. Due to children with allergies and food restrictions the YMCA discourages food from home in our programs.

Bag Lunches

School aged children in attendance during PA Days, School Breaks or Summer Camp Programs are required to bring a peanut/nut free, nutritious lunch following the guidelines listed below.

- The bagged lunch and snacks are nutritious and follows Canada's Food Guide
 - Lunch is provided in a labeled lunch bag with an ice pack
 - Foods that contain or may have come into contact with nuts are not in the child's lunch or snack
 - A refillable plastic bottle labeled that they can use to drink water throughout the day
- Below, please find a variety of different suggestions to create interesting, healthy and delicious peanut/nut free snacks and lunches for your child(ren).

- Breads, Bagels, bagel crisps, bread sticks, whole wheat bread, buns, melba toast, pita pockets, whole grain crackers
- Fruit, Dried fruit, apple, banana, blueberries, pears, oranges, frozen grapes, frozen bananas, fruit salad
- Vegetables, Broccoli, carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, vegetable juice, radishes, cucumber, celery sticks
- Milk and Dairy, Cheese slices, cottage cheese, dips, milk, yogurt, fruit smoothies, pudding
- Meats, Cold cooked chicken, hard boiled egg, tuna, turkey, roast beef, hummus, falafel
- Extras, Dried cereal, muffins, nachos and salsa, pizza, granola mix, pretzels

You can also access a copy of Canada's Food Guide at
<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en>

Program Information

Peanuts and Tree Nuts

We are a peanut/nut reduced environment. If providing food for your children please ensure that all food does not contain nor may contain nut or nut products.

Safe Schools Act

The Safe Schools Act, 2000 puts into law various ways to increase safety, respect and responsibility in Ontario schools. Mandatory Suspension or expulsion includes all school-related activities, including the YMCA Program. If a Discretionary Suspension is given to the student, the principal will determine if the student is fully suspended from all school and school-related activities.

Smoke Free Policy

YMCA Child Care Programs is a Smoke Free environment. Smoking or handling a cigarette or tobacco on YMCA premises including all indoor and outdoor areas is prohibited under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2005. Failure to comply could result in a penalty of up to \$5,000.00.

Sun Safety

Each full day program will supply sunscreen with SPF of 30 or higher that offers UVA and UVB protection for all children over one year of age. This will be applied both morning and afternoon during the summer months. If personal sunscreen is provided from home, it must be nut free.



Off Premises Activities

Off-site trips can provide valuable experiences for children and allow staff the opportunity to extend program activities outside of the regular program location. When these opportunities arise, parents 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.

Outdoor Play

The Child Care and Early Years Act requires that children who are enrolled in full day care need to have two hours of outdoor play, weather permitting. Before and after school programs need to have 30 minutes of outdoor play. The YMCA strives to make outdoor play safe, adventurous and fun for all children. Please ensure that adequate clothing is available so that your child can participate comfortably in these daily outdoor activities.

Program Information

Extreme Weather

During extreme weather alerts, including, heat, smog, wind chill advisories children will not participate in the outdoor program and an alternative indoor plan will be implemented.

Parent Partnership

Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate in the program whenever possible. Parental involvement is a key element to the success of your child's experience in YMCA Child Care. Participation can include verbal or written feedback, sharing information about your child's development, attending meetings or events.



Parent Issues and Concerns

At the YMCA we understand that a parent is the most important person in a child's life. To support your child's care, growth and development we encourage parents to communicate daily with YMCA educators sharing feedback, questions or comments. In the event that the parent feels the educator has not fully addressed the issues and or concerns, the parent can then contact the program supervisor. Upon receiving a concern, YMCA staff will work towards resolving the concern. If unable to resolve the concern, staff will contact families within 1 business day

to confirm receipt of the concern and provide an initial response to the parent. Any parent issues or concerns that the supervisor is unable to resolve can then be forwarded by the parent to the centre manager.

Personal Belongings

Any items that are brought into a program from home must be labeled with the child's name. Please be advised that the YMCA is not responsible for any lost or stolen items. Our child care staff are committed to providing quality play experiences for your child. Toys from home are not permitted in the child care centre.

Water Safety Guidelines

Sensory exploration is an integral part of the YMCA Playing to Learn curriculum. A part of sensory exploration is the use of water play tables, splash pads, sprinklers and hoses. When these items are used, a staff member must be positioned directly in the area of play. If no other outdoor play activities are taking place at the same time, all staff members are expected to supervise the water play activities. Portable wading pools are not to be used for water based activities.

The YMCA Supervisor must ensure that the following is in place when visiting a regulated public pool; a qualified lifeguard is on duty at all times, rules and regulations of the public pool are followed, children are directly supervised by an adult (18 years or older) at all times, reduced ratios are in place, parents are advised and have signed off permission for their child to participate in the field trip.

West Nile Protocol

Human illness from West Nile virus is rare, even in areas where the virus has been reported. In accordance with the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, the YMCA is taking this health situation seriously. From May 1st until September 31st, a YMCA staff may apply insect repellent that you have provided upon written consent.



The YMCA Mission

The YMCA is dedicated to the growth of all persons in spirit, mind and body, and to their sense of belonging to each other and the global community.

The YMCA Vision

The Y inspires people to reach their full potential

The YMCA Values

Caring • Honesty
Inclusiveness • Respect
Responsibility

The YMCA of Simcoe/ Muskoka also offers the following programs:

YMCA Day Camps

YMCA Geveva Park Conference
Centre and Family Camping

YMCA Camp Kitchikewana

YMCA Immigrant Settlement
Services

Youth Employment and
Outreach Programs

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka also offers a variety of programs that support the whole family.

Health and Fitness centres are located throughout Simcoe/Muskoka in Barrie, Collingwood, Gravenhurst, Innisfil, Midland, Orillia, Parry Sound and Wasaga Beach.

YMCA Employment Centres in Huntsville, Midland and Parry Sound provide opportunities to assist in career development.

YMCA Community Literacy Services are offered in Huntsville and Parry Sound providing learning through one-on-one tutoring or as part of a small group.

For more information on these programs and services visit our website at YMCAofSimcoeMuskoka.ca

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 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, 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 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

Philosophy

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

Pedagogy

The method and practice of teaching.

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).

YMCA Program Statement

YMCA Curriculum

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka 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 2004. 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.

Our school age curriculum YMCA A Place to Connect has been successfully implemented in all programs for children 5-12 since September 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/>



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.

YMCA Program Statement

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.

Learning

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

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.

YMCA Program Statement

"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 number one 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 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 parents on a daily basis sharing observations, documentations, and reflections.

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 stressors.

Well Being

The state of being comfortable, healthy or happy.

Responsive Caregiving

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

YMCA Program Statement

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.

In simplest terms, self-regulation refers to how efficiently and effectively a child deals with a stressor and then recovers (Porges, 2011; Lillas & Turnbull, 2009; McEwen, 2002).

"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 effect 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 of object.

Documentation

The process of observation, data collection, careful analysis and reflection resulting in display that is 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.

YMCA Program Statement

4. 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.

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.

YMCA Program Statement

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

Children and parents 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. 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 Centred 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.



YMCA Program Statement

6. Planning learning environments to support every child's learning, which is inclusive of all children, including children with individualized plans:

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, including children with individualized plans.

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.

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.

YMCA Program Statement

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 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.

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. (i.e. getting ready to go outside)

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.

YMCA Program Statement

8. 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 need to be away from home. You can trust that your child is safe and in the hands of a team that cares as much as you do.

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 age 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

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 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.



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.

YMCA Program Statement

On a day-to-day basis the child care centre 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.



11. 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.



You can also access a digital copy of the YMCA Program Statement at:
<http://ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca/childcare/about-ymca-child-care>