YMCA Parent Handbook
School Age Care

It starts here.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The YMCA School Age Child Care's philosophy is to develop the whole child by promoting social acceptance, emotional health, intellectual ability and physical health. These needs are met through an active, fun and innovative program, which provides children with opportunities regarding individual choice, group participation, skill development and recreational activities all within a safe, fun and social environment. In an atmosphere surrounded by knowledgeable and caring staff, children are involved in the planning of activities based on their own interests and needs that are developmentally appropriate. We believe that each child is unique and brings to the centre unique learning experiences, learning styles, capabilities and needs. Adults in this environment recognize and respect individual differences, and are respectful of children's right for privacy and for making choices. Adults provide and monitor a safe, secure environment and are readily available for guidance, support and encouragement. Children from all backgrounds and cultures are welcomed and valued. Parental involvement is encouraged and welcomed. We believe parental involvement strengthens the relationship between parent-staff-child, and we strive to ensure all necessary supports are available for children and their families. We partner with families and communities collaborating with, and supporting one another, thereby helping to build stronger communities, and creating valuable resources that will assist in providing positive learning environments and quality care for all children.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To assist each child to develop a sense a dignity and self-worth:

- By providing a wide variety of social activities and learning experiences that encourage the development of self-confidence and the ability to get along with others.
- By building warm relationships of trust between staff and children

To assist each child to improve his/her cognitive skills:

- By providing a variety of age-appropriate educational and life experiences
- By providing stimulating space, equipment and resources.
- By encouraging creative activities that develop verbal skills, self-discipline, decision-making and problem solving.

To assist each child to maintain good health and develop his/her physical skills:

- By providing an environment free from health and safety hazards.
- By providing health, nutrition and parenting information to families.
- By providing a daily period of physical activity.

To enhance family life:

- By providing opportunities for family involvement

PROGRAM AND POLICY MANUAL FOR PARENTS

YMCA CURRICULUM

YMCA - A Place to Connect
The 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 60 minutes per day.

The Child Care facility includes a planned learning environment which encourages children to manipulate, explore, use acquired skills and knowledge to meet new experiences with curiosity and confidence. Our programs provide children with opportunities for choice and leadership with a focus on strengths and the development of skills and relationships. Educators plan a developmentally appropriate curriculum based on children's needs, interests, and their developmental levels. Learning opportunities are available that support children's development in all areas; physical, cognitive, emotional and social. Staff observe, document and provide opportunities for scaffolding; planning activities that build on children's present knowledge and taking the child into a new level of understanding, helping them to discover new ideas and information on any topic being explored.

ACTIVITY AREAS

The following activities are available to children in the school age program:

- Art and other creative activities
- Reading, writing, Listening
- Dramatic Play
- Sensory Play
- Music and Movement
- Science Activities and Exploration
- Math Games
- Block Play and other Manipulatives
- Gross Motor Activities

The space is divided into Zones as follows:

► **Creative Zone** where children have opportunities to express their feelings through the use of art materials, be creative as they experience various ways of using materials, develop skills needed for hand writing, and develop an understanding of the written language.

► **Active Zone –** providing enough space for children's active play that would include gross motor play, dramatic play, music, dance, and group games through a variety of movement activities.

► **Exploration/Manipulation Zone --** where children have opportunities to work alone or in small groups. Children are provided with opportunities to explore and discover the logical, scientific and mathematical properties of sensory materials. Some materials available in this zone are; various sizes and shapes of blocks, lego materials, board games, puzzles, mechanical tools, magnifying glasses, collections for sorting, water/sand tables. Children become confident in their abilities to solve problems and puzzles and they learn to work cooperatively with others.

► **Quiet Zone**—a place to relax away from the stimulation of the room, and a space to be alone when needed. This area is reserved for quieter activities such as reading, writing, playing quietly with one or two friends, and/or doing homework. Some materials included in this area are a wide variety of age-appropriate books, comfortable seating, writing materials, and a computer.

►**Common Zone** – a space were children are able to store their belongings, where notices and information are placed for children and parents to read and where children and parents are generally greeted and welcomed to the program. This is also the Sign In Area.

DAILY PROGRAM

A child's day is organized to meet the needs and interests of the child and to provide a logical flow to the day. The consistency in the program, the staff, the group, and the homeroom provides a basic security for the children while still allowing for flexibility within their day. Children are provided with multiple choices that reflect individual and group interests and needs.

Small Group Activities can happen anytime throughout the daily program. The activities may be planned or may happen as a result of children's choices and interests. Small groups are key in ensuring children's needs are being met. Children and educators are in small groups throughout the program time , allowing relationships to be built and activities to be implemented safely. Small groups give you more opportunity to really be a part of the activity and extend children's interests and learning -spontaneously and through conversation.

ROOM STAFF – CHILD RATIO

►In mixed age grouping (57 months – 155 months) there can be no more than twelve children between the ages of 57 months – 84 months accommodated, and the ration is 1 – 15

PROGRAM INFORMATION

HOURS OF OPERATION

Our hours of operation are 7:30AM -6:00PM. There are some exceptions, so be sure to check with your location. Children enrolled in the school age program have the option of registering for before regular school hours and for school closure days (eg Professional Days, Storm Days etc) at an additional cost. The YMCA Afterschool Program operates Monday through Friday, during school closures daily from January to December.

PARENT INFORMATION CENTRE

Our parent information centre is located near the entrance of the centre as well as in your child's homeroom. Please refer to it periodically as important news will be posted there. Also, each child will be assigned a mail slot with their name attached. Please check daily for memos, newsletters, reminders and receipts.

ENROLMENT

Children's acceptance into the YMCA Child Care Programs is on a first come first served basis. We strive to include all children into our programs. If your child has a special need in any area, please indicate on your registration forms, and follow up by scheduling a time to meet with the operator of the centre. This is necessary in order that we may work together to ensure a smooth transition for your child. Children who are currently enrolled will continue on until the required one month written notification is received. Parents are required to complete all Registration Forms included in the Registration Package prior to the child's admission into the program. Please Note: Parents are required to report any change in the address, phone number, or place of employment to the operator of the centre.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

In the case of **severe storms and/or other emergencies,** the centre will be closed. Radio announcements will be made. There will be no fee deductions for these closures.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

►Children who attend the School Age Program are either walked or bussed from their schools while being supervised by the Child Care Staff. Each child is signed in by the staff at this program and parents/guardians are required to sign their child(ren) out when they are picked up at the end of the day. When dropping your child(ren) off at the centre, we request that parents/guardians bring your child into the centre, locate his/her locker and assist your child to undress and then greet an educator with your child. The centre's responsibility for your child does not begin until your child is in the care of the centre's staff. (Permission forms are included in your child's registration forms for Staff Supervised Walking Transportation and Bus Transportation).

►It is necessary that all parents sign their child in on the attendance sheet. In the event of an emergency such as a fire, the attendance sheet allows us to do an immediate check of the children present.

►We will not release a child to anyone not listed on your completed "Individual's Permitted To Pick Up Your Child" portion on your registration form unless you have notified the centre in advance that a different person will be picking up your child.

In the event of an emergency:

Woodland Primary School or the YMCA Afterschool Program located in the gym at Woodland Primary are the safe areas designated for Kindercare and Connections Centres.
Kindercare Centre is the safe area designated for YMCA Afterschool Program at Woodland Primary in the event of an emergency. In the event of evacuation, you will be notified to pick up your child at the applicable site. Never take your child from the safe area without notification to one of the lead staff.

SNACKS & LUNCHES

Children are required to bring their own snack and lunches from home. It is important that snacks and lunches be of nutritious value. Chips, bars, candy, and soft drinks are not permitted. Staff will provide a list of appropriate snacks and lunches to choose from.

TOYS FROM HOME

We prefer that children do not bring toys from home. Toys can get broken and cause unnecessary upset. If your child has a special toy that will help during the initial adjustment to the centre, we will certainly make allowances. There will be toy days throughout the year when children can bring in something special from home.

SICK CHILDREN

It is recommended that if a child has a cold or other sickness (such as diarrhea, vomiting or a temperature) he/she be kept home for the duration of the illness. A communicable disease can spread very quickly throughout the centre. A high temperature in a young child can elevate very quickly and we do not want to take related emergency measures in your absence.

MEDICATION

We cannot administer non-prescription drugs to any child without written consent from a doctor. Prescription medication will be administered upon parent's written instruction and signed permission for the child care staff to do so. Prescription drugs must be in the original container before a staff member can administer it to a child. Fever reducing medication may be administered in the event of an emergency after speaking with the supervisor of the centre.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

We are required to report any cases of communicable diseases to the Public Health. Please inform the staff if your child develops any such diseases or comes in contact with anyone who has.

ALLERGIES

All center guidelines relating to children's allergies are to be strictly adhered to. Allergy information will be included in your registration Package (if applicable) and you will be kept informed of any changes that may arise in this area.

CLOTHING

We advise that children dress in comfortable, wash and wear clothing, as we do lots of messy activities. Each child is required to have a change of clothing with their name attached to be left in the child's bag and replenished whenever necessary. **Please dress your child appropriately for the weather each day**. Outdoor play is a part of our program. Proper outdoor clothing for each season is essential.

HOLIDAYS

The YMCA Child Care Programs observe the following holidays. In observation of those days the centres will be closed.

- ► NEW YEARS DAY
- ► GOOD FRIDAY
- ►VICTORIA DAY
- ► LABOUR DAY
- ► REMEMBRANCE DAY
- ► CHRISTMAS: DECEMBER 25TH AND 26TH
- ► THANKSGIVING
- ► MUNICIPAL HOLIDAY

THERE WILL BE NO FEE DEDUCTION FOR THE ABOVE HOLIDAYS

PAYMENT OF FEES

All fees are paid through pre-authorized payment (chequing account). A Payment Registration Form is included in your Registration Package. Payment of fees include statutory holidays, any noted days, as well as any day the child does not attend due to illness or vacation periods. A $25.00 registration fee is due before your child's start date. This deposit is not-refundable and is not credited towards any program cost. All Registration Forms are to be completed and returned prior to your child's attendance.

LATE FEES

A fee of $5.00 per quarter hour will be charged for a child picked up after centre closing time.

WITHDRAWALS

The centre requires a one month written notice when withdrawing your child from the program. Cancellation forms are available from the supervisor of your child's program.

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POLICY ON DISCHARGE OF CHILDREN

An area that may lead to the discharge of a child is in the event of a child whose behavior cannot be managed in the centre. Observation and documentation will be complied by the staff, and a parent conference will be set up to discuss these concerns. We will work together planning strategies to help the child in being able to interact in his/her environment in an acceptable manner. Parents will be made aware of what supports and professional services are available and how to access them. If parents express that they would like to access any extra supports, a consent to release information form is signed and dated by the parents before any sharing of information with other professionals can take place. Working together as a team (parents, staff and invited professionals) we can decide what supports are needed in order to ensure that the environment and staff are prepared and any necessary supports are in place to meet the needs of the child. All information being shared is done within the parameters of the family's informed consent. When every technique that can be devised has been exhausted, then we may have to look at removing the child from the centre. This would be a last resort and would prove to be a very difficult and serious decision to make. You need to look at what impact this action will have on the child, and what messages are we sending to the child. This would be a very last resort. In the case where there are ongoing challenging working with a parent, all parties (supervisor, parent and staff that may be involved) will come together and work to come up with the best solution for all involved, trying to ensure that needs are being met to the best of our ability. When all avenues have been exhausted, and it is obvious that issues are continuing and cannot be resolved, then a decision to ask that family to leave may actually be the best decision for everyone involved. If is important that all parties involved (parent, child, staff and supervisor) maintain respect and a genuine understanding of each other's needs and issues during this process.

GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR

The YMCA Child Care programs have in place a policy which is consistent with the following principles and strategies:

►Our ultimate aim is to help the children achieve self-discipline and a sense of responsibility. Therefore, limits for behavior are set up, and are consistently implemented by the staff. These limits are appropriate to the developmental level of each child, and deal with health and safety, care of equipment and the rights of the individuals.

►A positive approach is used to guide children and each situation and child is dealt with individually. Methods used include; redirection, limit setting, modeling, providing choices and anticipating situations. Emphasis is put on a warm and positive child care atmosphere which promotes positive behavior.

►Children are encouraged to verbalize their feelings rather than strike out at others. If necessary, the child may be removed from the group for a short period of time. During this time the child will sit in another learning area with an educator and will be given time and comfort to work through his/her feelings.

►All children who participate in YMCA programs and services are made to feel special. Children have the right to be understood, loved and respected within the framework of a caring family and community

WELCOME TO YMCA CHILD CARE

The YMCA of Exploits Valley welcomes your family to our Child Care Programs. YMCA Child Care Programs put the best interests of your child as its top priority and values parents as the expert of their children.

This book will provide you with program information and policies regarding Child Care Services. If you require further information, please feel free to contact your Centre Supervisor.

Thank You for becoming part of our YMCA family!

YMCA BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

"A PLACE TO CONNECT CURRICULUM"

The YMCA A Place to Connect" curriculum continues to provide a strong foundation for future learning by helping children meet key developmental milestones. Our approach is based on a flexible framework where learning is a natural process occurring through self-directed experiences and optimized by supportive and safe environments.

Our goal is to make YMCA Before and After School Care programs the most enriching places for school age children. Research shows that children flourish in programs that are structured to let them shape the program, by providing opportunities for choice and leadership with a focus on strengths and the development of skills and relationships.

What your child can expect in YMCA Before and After School Care?

- A nurturing relationship with YMCA staff who will encourage their individual development and attend to their emotional needs.
- Lots of physical activities, games and outdoor play.
- Spending time and having fun with other children, including those they may have spent time with during the school day.
- Planned activities driven by their interests to allow them to explore arts and crafts, science, math reading and more
- Opportunities to take on leadership roles in the program.