



Early Learning and Care Program

Parent Handbook

Updated August 2010

1. Welcome to the YMCA-YWCA

For over one hundred years, the YMCA-YWCA has been a leading charitable organization across Canada. It has created a welcoming, supportive and challenging environment for people to develop in spirit, mind and body. From camping to fitness and recreation activities, from working with youth in outdoor education and leadership training, to providing quality care for children; the YMCA-YWCA reaches thousands of people in our community.

This information package has been prepared to introduce you to our program, to answer some of your questions, as well as to inform you of some of our policies and procedures and how we operate.

The YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria is a charitable, community based association of volunteers and staff whose mission is to work together to enhance individual and community potential through participation, learning and leadership.

Our values of Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility guide our every day decisions and actions.

2. YMCA-YWCA Child Care

YMCA-YWCA Child Care is a resource that parents can rely on to provide an environment outside of the home that is safe, caring and developmentally supportive for their child. We understand that it is in the childhood years that attitudes begin to set, relationships with peers are fostered, self-esteem is developed and habits are formed. By providing programs that will support, guide and challenge children, we know that the benefits gained from quality child care experiences will last a lifetime.

The YMCA-YWCA, through its mission and core values, assists and supports families in their role as parents and caregivers. We value the strength of each family and respect the various cultural backgrounds that enrich our programs.

The YMCA-YWCA as a provider of child care recognizes and values the role that self-reliant children and strong families play in building a healthy community for us all. The development of spirit, mind and body begins when we are children.

YMCA-YWCA child care programs:

- Recognize each child is an individual.
- Recognize each family has different needs, interests and expectations.
- Provide environments that are caring, supportive and secure.
- Involve children in learning through active hands-on play, exploration and discovery.
- Offer activities to help children develop self-esteem, self-confidence and self-reliance.
- Promote the values of caring, respect, honesty and responsibility.
- Develop social and emotional competence.
- Involve children in philanthropic activities, such as our annual Strong Kids campaign.

YMCA-YWCA Child Care Quality Statement

- Our values-based programs recognize that each child is an individual and that each family has different needs, interests and expectations.

- Our staff are dedicated professionals. They demonstrate the YMCA-YWCA core values of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, and strive to meet the highest standards of the child care profession.
- Our child care centres are healthy environments that are emotionally and physically safe for children.

YMCA-YWCA Commitment to Families and Children

The YMCA-YWCA supports families with information and programs to assist them in their role as their children's most important teacher. We provide families with opportunities to be a resource to one another and to gain access to the services needed to sustain a healthy family lifestyle.

The YMCA-YWCA builds partnerships with families and other neighbourhood members to create a community environment that fosters the developmental assets needed by all children. We work together to provide programs and services that help children grow up to be healthy, caring competent adults.

3. Hours of Operation

Open Monday to Friday 7:30am to 5:15pm

Closed for Statutory holidays and Christmas week

Unscheduled Closures

In the event of extreme weather conditions, such as a heavy snowfall, our child care program will be closed if public transportation cannot operate.

In the event of a power outage, our program may be unable to open or may be required to close. When possible, parents will be notified of a potential closure or called if we must close earlier than the scheduled 5:15pm closing time. Should a program closure occur, parents will be required to pick-up their children.

4. Program Staff, Students and Volunteers

Our main program staff are certified Early Childhood Educators and meet all licensing requirements. Our program staff must provide a clear criminal record check complete first aid training, and provide three professional references, and a doctor's certification of good health prior to their employment. Program staff must also provide a record of their work history, copies of diplomas or certificates detailing the person's education, training and skills and provide evidence that they are Licensed to Practice in BC. They are also required to attend training and relevant re-certification events in order to provide a high level of quality care for your children.

On occasion our child care programs may accept work experience students from local high schools, Early Childhood Education practicum students or other volunteers to assist in our programs. We value the contribution that these individuals make to our program. All volunteers must provide a clear criminal record check, proof of first aid training, three character references, a doctor's certification of good health, and have attended an orientation to our program. All students and volunteers are supervised by a primary educator at all times. At no point are volunteers left alone with a child in our care.

We follow a ratio of 1:8 caregivers to children at all times.

Please note that staff and volunteers are not permitted to offer outside child care to families in our Early Child Care program.

5. Fees

Full-time Early Child Care Program fees are due on the 1st day of the month. Payment must be in the form of a Pre-Authorized Payment either through a bank account withdrawal or a credit card charge. A Pre-Authorized Payment Form must be completed at the time of registration. If payment is not received on the due date, a warning will be issued; after two weeks you will receive a letter of notice; after three weeks you will receive final notice which may result in the immediate cancellation of child care services.

In order to keep our fees at a reasonable level, we schedule staff and purchase snack quantities based on information provided by you in advance. It is for these reasons we are unable to reimburse fees for holidays, sick days or any other days of absenteeism.

For families receiving Ministry subsidy, child care payments are due on the 15th of the month after subsidy payments have been received from the Ministry. Parents are responsible for keeping their subsidy authorization current and are responsible for the full monthly child care fee if their subsidy expires.

A non-refundable deposit of \$100 is required to secure a child care space for each child. Deposit will be issued at time of withdrawal from program if all fees are paid to date.

6. Withdrawal from Program

One calendar month's written notice is required if your child is withdrawn from the program. Notice is to be received on the last day of the month prior to last day of care. In lieu of notice, one month's fees must be paid. There will be no refund of fees should you withdraw your child from the program without one calendar month's notice.

7. Pick-up and Drop-off of Children

Drop-off Procedure

- Program begins at 7:30am. Children may be dropped off at the start of the program at 7:30am.
- Children must be signed in by the parent on arrival and departure from the program using the daily sign-in sheets.
- Please relay any pertinent information such as updates on your child's health or if someone else will be picking up your child in writing to the staff.
- Parents may drop off and pick up their child throughout the day as needed. If at all possible, please let staff know in advance of appointments that may alter your child's regular hours of attendance. This will allow staff to notify parents if the program is scheduled to be in a different space at the intended drop-off time (i.e. gymnasium).

Pick-up Procedure

- Your child must be picked up by closing time at 5:15pm.
- Please sign your child out and check for any messages.
- Always ensure that a staff member is aware that you are taking your child home.

8. Release of a Child

Child care staff will only release your child to:

- An authorized person – parent and/or guardian or a person named on the registration form as being authorized to pick-up the child.
- Parent or guardian who is recorded on a legal document, i.e. custody agreement.
- A person who is not listed on the registration form or the emergency card that arrives to pick-up the child **ONLY IF** a staff member has received written consent from the parent/guardian confirming that the person is permitted to take the child. Staff will check photo identification.

Your child will not be released from care if the authorized person appears incapable of providing safe care (i.e. intoxication /drug use) to your child.

9. Late Pick-up

If a parent is late picking up their child, the first occasion will be noted on our Late Pick-up Form. The parent will be required to initial the Late Pick-up Form. On the second and subsequent occasions, a fee of \$5.00 will be levied for each 5-minute period after the scheduled program closing time.

10. Failure to Pick-up

If a child is not picked up five minutes after closing time and there has been no contact with the parent/guardian, the staff will follow these procedures:

- Staff will call parents home and work numbers.
- If parents cannot be reached after 15 minutes, staff will call the emergency contacts.
- If after 30 minutes staff are still unable to contact either parent or the designated emergency contact, they will call the Ministry for Children and Family Development Emergency Services.
- A Ministry for Children and Family Development Social Worker will sign your child out and will place your child in care until you can be located.

11. Emergency Information

Registration forms must be fully completed a minimum of 2 days before your child begins care. Parents/guardians must advise the program staff of any changes to residence, place of employment or phone numbers. This also includes alternate/emergency contact information. As per Licensing regulations, we cannot provide care to a child unless we have first ensured that the child's parents/guardians or emergency contacts can be readily contacted while the child is in our care.

12. Health

The Vancouver Island Health Authority requires that your child's immunization records are current before your child enters the program.

Sick Child

A child needs be free of the following symptoms before attending child care:

- **Acute cold:** Contagious with obvious discharge of infected green or reddish brown mucus – child can return when discharge has subsided.

- **Cough:** 3 – 5 times per hour, and especially if choking and/or vomiting accompanies the cough. Child may return when coughing has subsided.
- **Fever:** 38°C (100.4F) or over – may return when fever has remained at 37°C (98.6F) for 24 hours without the aid of medication.
- **Vomiting:** Child can return after 24 hours of the last bout of sickness.
- **Diarrhea:** Must be symptom free for 24 hours and have had one solid bowel movement.
- **Antibiotic:** Can return 24 hours after the antibiotic is first taken as long as criteria above are also met (i.e. coughing is minimal).
- **Infected skin or eyes:** A doctor must examine undiagnosed skin irritations, and provide written medical clearance prior to a child's return to program. Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is very contagious and must be treated and the eyes clear before the child may return.
- **Ear Aches and Infections:** Because VIHA says untreated ear infections can lead to hearing loss and are potentially infectious, we require children to see a Doctor for direction and that children stay home for a minimum of 24 hours with or without antibiotic medication. This allows for the children to be monitored and assessed. Children may return when symptoms such as fever and ear tugging have subsided.
- **Lice:** Child may return once they have been treated with an effective lice treatment and **all lice and nits** have been combed or picked out of hair. Follow up shampooing must be administered to complete treatment.
- **Communicable Diseases:** Communicable diseases such as chicken pox and measles must be reported to the Early Child Care Educators as soon as they are diagnosed. The duration of the child's treatment and exclusion from child care will depend on the VIHA's Communicable Disease recommendations which staff will be able to provide.

If a child comes to the program ill, parents will be asked to find alternate care for that day. If your child becomes sick during the day, you will be called to take your child home. If we cannot contact you, we will call your emergency contacts to pick up your child.

It is important for parents to inform the staff of illness or communicable disease. When necessary, the Child Care Coordinator will advise parents and the Vancouver Island Health Authority of illness present within the centre.

Please keep your child at home if you feel that your child is too sick to participate in the program including outdoor activities. A child who is too sick to play outside is too sick to attend the program. Please call and let staff know if your child will be absent.

Medication

- Only medications prescribed by a doctor can be administered in program.
- Medication must be in **original container** with the prescription stating child's name, dosage and time to be given.
- Parents must complete the "Consent to Administer Medication Form".

Food/Allergies

- Please inform staff of any food allergies or restrictions.
- Water is available for children at all times in program.
- Children eat their meals and snacks while sitting down and supervised by staff.
- Ensure that you pack your child a healthy lunch and snacks each day. Lunches may be stored in the refrigerator if needed and a microwave is available for staff to heat children's lunch items.

- The Early Child Care Centre is a **nut-free** area. We host care for children who have anaphylactic reactions to nuts.

Sun Safety

- To help children become “sun smart”, please make sure your child has a hat and sunscreen at the centre with his/her name on both items. We recommend a broad-brimmed hat that shades the ears and back of the neck.

Nap/Rest Time

- This is an important routine as children need quiet time to rest and relax. It provides a balance to the day’s active program.
- To help children rest, we request each child bring a blanket from home. Please take this blanket home each Friday for cleaning.
- Children are not required to sleep and after a short quiet time will be directed to quiet activities.

Physical Care

- We require that children in our care be toilet trained.
- We encourage individual responsibility for dressing and toileting.
- We assist and support children to develop these self-help skills.
- We encourage children to clean themselves after a bowel movement but will help those children who require assistance.

13. Clothing

Your child should wear weather-appropriate play clothes each day that are comfortable and easy for him/her to handle. Since part of every day is spent outdoors, regardless of the weather, your child needs to have the appropriate clothing for the weather. Please ensure that your child has the following items:

- } small blanket for rest time
- } one extra change of clothes
- } muddy buddies or puddle pants and coat
- } boots
- } hat, gloves (winter)
- } sun screen, summer hat (summer)
- } indoor shoes

PLEASE ensure your child’s clothes and belongings are all **LABELED**.

14. Personal Items

Please keep personal toys at home. Children who bring toys from home will be asked to keep them in their cubbies until they are picked up at the end of the day. Personal toys seem to prompt arguments and promote exclusive play. **The YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria is not responsible for lost, broken or missing items.**

Note: On Show and Share days – children may bring in a toy from home that they can talk about and show to their peers during *Show and Share*. Toys will be put away in cubbies at the end of Show and Share.

15. Emergencies

It is essential that parents keep us informed of current phone numbers so we can contact you in case of an emergency or if your child requires medical attention.

Parents are required to provide 3 current photos of your child upon entry into our program. These will photos will be kept in the child's secure file and attached to your child's emergency card.

The staff and children practice fire and earthquake evacuations monthly.

Fire and/or Site Evacuation

- In the event that we need to evacuate the building, you will be notified where to pick up your child.

Earthquakes

- In the case of an earthquake, if possible, we will remain on site. If the centre is badly damaged, emergency crews will relocate us to the nearest emergency centre.
- **Earthquake comfort kits** are required on-site for each child in program. The program provides an emergency foil blanket and a small bottle of water. Parents are responsible for providing a large 'zip-lock' type bag with your child's name labeled clearly on the bag. The will include:
 - Current family photo and a letter from the family
 - Small game, toy or book
 - Long sleeve shirt and long pants, underwear and pair of socks
 - Nut-free snack
 - Name and contact number of an alternate pick-up person
 - (optional) 12-hour light stick and whistle

16. Custody

A copy of your custody or court order must be on file. Staff will act in accordance with this legal document.

If issues around custody exist **and there are no legal documents**, the enrolling parent must provide information on access. Staff will follow information provided.

The parent with whom the child resides will be deemed to be the custodial parent and staff will only follow instructions of this parent unless otherwise instructed by a court order.

17. Program and Excursions

Program Curriculum

The YMCA-YWCA introduced the YMCA Playing to Learn curriculum in May 2007. YMCA Playing to Learn is based on the principle that children's play is the basis for healthy child development and future school success. In your child's centre you'll notice children and their educators playing in small groups. For example, in one area you might see two children excitedly "reading" a story to a group of dolls, and then on the carpet nearby, you may see children driving cars and trucks around some carefully built block

structures, chatting happily to each other. These children are playing very differently but they have one very important thing in common, they are learning through play.

The children “reading” to the dolls are learning important language, reading, and social leadership skills. The “construction workers” are building their own foundation for mathematics and science, and architecture as they discover how to build their block structures. All the children are learning about how to work with others, communicate their ideas and solve problems and conflicts together.

Acting as “play partners”, educators will support and extend the children’s learning through play. The children will learn the alphabet and number concepts while engaged in play and by following where their interests lead them they will develop their skill base. You may see the educators taking notes during the play. The educators will use these notes to plan other learning activities and to document for parents how the play is supporting the children’s development. When you read these posted documentations each week, they will tell the learning story of the children’s play – what your child is learning and how they are learning it.

Children are active learners. They learn best in environments that are child-centred and age appropriate. Our programs are safe, healthy, creative places where children can work in small or large groups with a variety of materials. Opportunities are provided where children develop values, self-confidence and friendship skills.

Field Trips

We often take the children for walks in the neighbourhood (i.e. library visits) so that they get to know their community. If the children will be using public transportation, you will be notified about the excursion in advance.

18. Gradual Entry

The gradual entry process is required for each new child. Even though your child may have other group experiences, this will be a new group with unfamiliar faces. This orientation process allows time for your child to feel comfortable, to start developing new friendships and to become familiar with staff. If this process is difficult for you to arrange, you can have a friend or family member substitute for you.

ORIENTATION PROCEDURE (flexible to meet child and parent needs)

Day 1	Child attends for two (2) hours. Parent remains with child	9:00am-11:00am
Day 2	Child stays for lunch. Parent stays as long as child needs them but should leave for about one hour.	9:00am-12:30pm
Day 3	Child stays for naptime. Parent stays for a short time until their child is comfortable.	9:00am-3:00pm
Day 4 & 5	Child stays all day. If possible, child stays a shorter day.	

19. Guidance and Discipline

Principles

As a charitable association dedicated to the development of people, the YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria has a role in helping children become self disciplined and to develop socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours. Our programs provide the necessary environments where children are treated with respect, adults are caring and activities are planned based on children's needs.

YMCA-YWCA Child Guidance Policy and Procedures have been developed to provide a framework:

- To assist children in developing self control, self confidence and self discipline
- To assist children to develop socially acceptable and appropriate behaviour
- To recognize that each child is an individual whose age, experience, environment, developmental level and culture influences his/her behaviour
- To use positive and proactive strategies for guiding children's behaviour

Regulation

The YMCA-YWCA complies with the Vancouver Island Health Authority's Licensing Regulations regarding guiding young children, Section 31, Regulation #217.

Please note the YMCA-YWCA Child Guidance Policy is posted on the parent board.

20. Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse

We are required, by law, under the Child, Family and Community Service Act, to report suspected or disclosed abuse. Our responsibility is to report suspicions/disclosures, not determine if abuse has occurred.

Investigations are the responsibility of the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) and/or the Police. They are responsible for contacting the parent/guardian.

21. Parent Involvement

Our staff is more than happy to answer any questions you have about the program. Parents are welcome to drop-in and visit their child at anytime during the day. Join your child for snack, or stay and play when your schedule allows.

22. Termination of Services

When a conflict arises, YMCA-YWCA staff will make every attempt to work with the family to resolve the issue to their mutual satisfaction, provided the arrangement does not:

- Compromise the Mission and Values of the YMCA-YWCA,
- Put staff, the child or other participants at risk;
- Diminish the value of the YMCA-YWCA experience for other participants.

All situations are dealt with on an individual basis taking into account the specific needs and circumstances of the family. After working with the family and making every attempt to resolve the situation, the Child Care Coordinator, in consultation with a supervisor, may come to the decision that it is not appropriate for a child to continue involvement in the child care program. The following are some situations where this would be the case:

- **Behavioural Concerns.** The YMCA-YWCA is not equipped to deal effectively and appropriately with a child whose behaviour requires ongoing significant intervention. The Child Care Coordinator in consultation with a supervisor will make every attempt to link the family and child to the appropriate support services.
- **Unresolved Custody Issues.** If a family's custody issues result in conflicts at the centre and places the child, staff and other children at risk, then the family will be asked to make alternate child care arrangements.
- **Philosophical Differences.** Occasionally, the needs and opinions of a family do not fit with the principles, policies and procedures of the YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria. The Child Care Coordinator in consultation with a supervisor will try to promote discussion to come to some agreeable terms with the family. The YMCA-YWCA reserves the right to ask the family to find a more suitable child care arrangement.
- **Inappropriate Conduct.** Services will be immediately terminated if a family member behaves inappropriately towards a staff person, child or other family involved in the child care program.
- **Late Pick-up Issues.** If the program is unable to satisfactorily resolve problems of ongoing late pick-up with a family, services may be terminated.
- **Non-payment of Fees.** The Child Care Coordinator in consultation with the Finance Department will work with families to develop alternate payment plans when a child care payment is returned due to insufficient funds when appropriate. After three weeks of non-payment, parents will receive notice of cancellation of child care services

23. Communication

Please discuss any questions or concerns you may have with the program staff. The Child Care Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that YMCA-YWCA and child care standards are followed and that parent issues and concerns are addressed.

24. Code of Conduct

The YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria is committed to practicing, demonstrating and upholding the Y character values of caring, respect, honesty and responsibility. YMCA-YWCA members, volunteers, guests and staff all pledge to treat one another with respect and dignity.

25. More About the YMCA-YWCA

Volunteer Opportunities

Whatever your special talents, interests or schedule may be, there is a way for you to become a YMCA-YWCA volunteer and help change someone's life. If you share our commitment to the well being of our community, please consider becoming a YMCA-YWCA volunteer. For more information, please see our website for current volunteer opportunities or contact the Child Care Coordinator.

YMCA-YWCA Philanthropy



www.ymcastrongkids.ca

As an independent charity, the YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria relies on the generosity of our community. Your support ensures that many underprivileged young people receive a chance to participate in and access programs and services they otherwise couldn't afford. In these difficult economic times, the number of families needing this extra help has grown substantially. The YMCA-YWCA's Strong Kids Annual Campaign raises much-needed funds to provide financial assistance to those in our community who otherwise couldn't afford a YMCA-YWCA experience.

For more information about ways to support your YMCA-YWCA, please contact the Fund Development Office at 250-418-1836 or email fwilson@victoriay.com.

YMCA-YWCA Financial Support

The YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria strives to support all segments of the communities we serve. Within our available resources, we will make every effort to accommodate all who wish to become a member. No one is denied access to a YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria membership solely on inability to pay the full fee; assistance is available to those individuals and families who are unable—not unwilling—to pay the full fee.

26. Commitment to Privacy

The YMCA-YWCA of Greater Victoria respects the right of individuals to the protection of their personal information.

We collect, use and disclose personal data in order to better meet your service needs, to ensure the safety of children in our care, for statistical purposes, to inform you about the YMCA-YWCA program in which you are registered, and to satisfy government and regulatory obligations. You will hear from us periodically about other YMCA-YWCA programs, services and opportunities that may interest and benefit you.

For more information on the YMCA-YWCA's commitment to privacy or opt-out process, please visit our web site at www.victoriay.com

Thank you for taking the time to read our Parent Handbook. Please use it as a reference during your child's stay at our program.

Welcome to YMCA-YWCA Child Care.