



Building healthy  
communities

# YMCA Early Years Child Care Family Handbook

March 2024



# Welcome to YMCA Early Years Child Care

Welcome to YMCA BC! At our YMCA Early Years Child Care and Preschool programs the best interests of your child are our top priority. We value parents as the experts of their children and look forward to partnering with you to ensure your child reaches their full potential.

This Early Years Child Care Parent Handbook will provide you with the information you need to know while your child is in our care.

For more than 136 years, the YMCA has been part of the Greater Vancouver community, helping children realize their potential and develop the confidence, relationships and leadership skills needed to lead our community in the future. Our approach to early learning is based on our national Playing to Learn curriculum that fosters the physical, mental and social development of your child. We ensure your children are kept safe and happy while connecting with others in a nurturing environment. Here you'll find caring and dedicated staff who love to make each day special for your child.



## Our Statement on Play

The YMCA's Playing to Learn curriculum focuses on the importance and value of play for young children.

Our intention is to provide the best possible environment that allows play for all children in our care. Play ensures the involvement, enjoyment, and various forms of success. Play can be powerful and profound, and is always purposeful. It is a vehicle that propels learning and development.

Play and development are intertwined; neither precedes the other. All aspects of a child's development are supported by play. This approach to early learning has the benefit of being self-initiated and is therefore a joy rather than a chore. Play propels a child into the vast realm of learning, and research has shown that play is linked to a child's learning. A child's cognitive development and academic success are enhanced by the play experience.

Through our approach to early learning, children can reach their full potential through play.

**DISCLAIMER: YMCA BC reserves the right to make amendments to the terms and conditions stated in this handbook and will provide notifications when changes occur.**

# Roles and Responsibilities

## Staff

YMCA Early Childhood Educators come with a wide background of education and experience. Our staff must go through a rigorous screening process that includes demonstrating their values and skills and providing a police reference check that is renewed every three years. All educators must also hold a valid First Aid and Infant and Child CPR certification. New YMCA staff participate in orientation and training on YMCA policies and procedures, child care licensing regulation and YMCA Playing to Learn curriculum.

Our Early Childhood Educators are trained to:

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

At the YMCA, we recognize the importance of continued professional learning and have developed an extensive series of learning modules that support YMCA Early Childhood Educators to gain a deeper understanding of:

- Child development.
- Play.
- Play partnership.
- Program planning.
- Extension of play and scaffolding of learning.
- Effective communication Providing positive learning environments.

YMCA staff are not permitted to provide services to families that are beyond their roles and responsibilities as a YMCA Child Care staff member, such as babysitting or house-sitting. Furthermore, staff cannot engage in any social media activity/interaction with child care families and/or children at any time. Should you have any concerns, please contact us at [gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca).

## Volunteers/Students

YMCA child care programs are enhanced by the involvement of volunteers and placement students. Volunteers and placement students are always under the supervision of a YMCA staff member and never left alone with children. All volunteers and placement students must provide a police reference check before interacting with children and are required to adhere to all YMCA policies and procedures and Child Care Licensing regulation.



# Roles and Responsibilities

## Families

Parents and 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, workshops, fundraising events; or volunteering on field trips or in the centre. Whatever your special talent, interests or schedule may be, there are plenty of ways to get involved. Please speak with a program staff for more information.

## Duty to Report

We are required by law under the Child, Family, and Community Service Act to report any suspected cases or disclosures of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities for investigation. Our responsibility is to report suspicions or disclosures, not determine if abuse has occurred. Investigations are the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development and/or the police, and they are responsible for contacting the parent/guardian.



# YMCA Commitment to Families and Children

## Child Guidance

The YMCA is committed to helping children grow to their fullest potential in a safe, caring and nurturing environment, however it is necessary at times to set limits and standards of appropriate behavior. YMCA staff are guided by the YMCA Child Guidance Policy which they are required to adhere to at all times when interacting with children in a YMCA program. Staff are required to review this policy on an annual basis.

### Prohibited practices:

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

- Corporal punishment.
- Any form of abuse-physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing, bedding or participation in activities.
- Leaving children unsupervised.
- Deliberately using harsh or degrading measures on a child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect.
- Locking exits of a child care centre for the purposes of confining a child.

- Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child when separating them from other children.
- Interacting or relating to children or vulnerable persons outside of a YMCA program activity (e.g. weekend home visits, babysitting, online chatting, etc.)

## Inclusion

YMCA BC, in keeping with our mission and vision, 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.

# YMCA Curriculum & Environment

## Playing to Learn

YMCA Playing to Learn is a research-based curriculum rooted in the philosophy that young children learn best through play. Throughout the preschool years your child will explore and discover their natural surroundings through small group and individual play experiences that will prepare them for school. YMCA educators are engaged in children's learning through observing, planning and seeking opportunities to become a play partner and extend the play experiences.

The goals and approaches of YMCA Playing to Learn align in philosophy, standards and recommendations with the Province of BC's Early Learning Framework.

## Program Details

### Infant (age 6 weeks – 18 months)

- Educator/Child ratio is 1:4.
- 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 journal.
- Educators write weekly documentations highlighting learning that occurred during a play experience.
- Program includes opportunities for exploring indoors and outdoors, songs and stories, discovering creative and sensory materials and imitation play.

### 3 to 5

- Educator/Child ratio is 1:8.
- Preschool children follow a flexible group schedule.
- A significant play experience is written daily in each child's journal.
- Educators 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.

### Toddler (age 18 months to 36 months)

- Educator/Child ratio is 1:4.
- Toddlers follow a flexible group schedule.
- Toddler daily record is documented (sleep times, eating, diapering).
- A significant play experience is written daily in each child's journal.
- Educators 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 material, puzzles, stories, blocks, dramatic play and learning to play with others.



# Program Information

## What Your Child Will Need

By packing a few essential items for your child and providing any specific details about your child's health, rest, feeding, and activity, you help our YMCA educators provide individualized care for your child. Please ensure all of your child's belongings are clearly labeled with their first and last name.

- Complete change of clothing.
- Seasonal outdoor clothing (muddy buddy, boots, sun hats, etc.).
- Blanket for rest time and/or a sleep toy.
- Diapers, wipes and any creams or lotions.
- Bottles/sip cups.
- Formula or expressed milk if your child has not transitioned to Homo/2% milk.
- Training underwear and extra clothing (for children toilet training).
- Water bottle.

## Field Trips

Field trips can be an important part of our child care program. We often take children for neighbourhood walks or to visit local parks, which allow them to get to know their community and have valuable outdoor time. This is considered a part of our regular routine and is often done spontaneously. For major field trips, parents will be notified ahead of time including if the children will be using public transportation.

## Hours of Operation

Our hours vary by program type and location. For specific information, please contact our admin team at [gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca).

## Inclement Weather

Severe weather conditions often result in hazardous traveling and road conditions. In these cases, all YMCA child care programs will be closed. The YMCA will communicate these closures to families through ePACT, and will make every effort to inform them as early in the morning as possible.

If schools are closed due to weather, all child care programs operating within those school districts will also be closed.

**\*Refunds will not be offered for closures due to inclement weather.**

## Professional Development

Providing our educators with professional development to keep them up-to-date on the latest research on early childhood development and best practices is a critical component of a quality early learning environment. It is also mandatory for our educators to attend professional development training in order for them to maintain their Early Childhood Educator (ECE) credentials.

**As such, all YMCA Child Care programs will be closed on Friday, October 20, 2023 for a professional development day for our educators.**

**Starting in 2024, all YMCA Early Learning Child Care Centres will be closed the last week of August, prior to the Labour Day statutory holiday, for an annual week of training and professional development for our Early Childhood Educators. Notice of all closure dates will be provided to families each year in the fall.**



# Program Information

## Drop-Off & Pick-Up

The safety and well-being of all children in our care is our top priority; therefore, we expect parents/guardians to follow our procedures. Parents/guardians must sign children in and ensure that a staff member is aware that you are dropping off your child. Parents/guardians must sign children out upon pick up and ensure that a staff member is aware that you are taking your child home.

## Authorized Pick-Up List

You are required to notify centre staff if someone other than those listed on the authorized pick up list will be picking up your child. If this person is unknown to the staff, they will be required to show photo identification.

## Custody

If a custody agreement or court order is in place for your child, a copy 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 parent who registered the child will be deemed the custodial parent and staff will only follow instructions from this parent unless otherwise instructed by a court order.

## Late Pick-Up

We expect that all children are picked up on time, respecting our staff's work schedules and personal commitments. Late pick-ups may result in additional charges and/or withdrawal of services.

## Failure to Pick-Up

If a child is not picked up by closing time, staff will contact parents/guardians and/or emergency contacts. If after 30 minutes staff are unable to contact parents/guardians or emergency contacts, staff will call the Ministry of Children and Family Development, who will take your child into care until you can be located.

## Personal Effects

The YMCA is not responsible for any personal items/articles that are brought, used or left at any programs or facilities.

## Medication

Staff may administer medication if your child is on a strict medication schedule. Prescription medication must be in the original container stating the child's name, dosage and time to be given, and a consent form must be completed. Non-prescription medications require a consent form signed by a doctor.

## Nutrition

### Snacks:

YMCA Early Learning Centres offer a variety of nutritious snacks prepared on-site. To ensure your child receives a well-balanced diet, our menus follow Canada's Food Guide. Snack plans are posted weekly for your information.

When packing food from home we kindly request that they are sent pre-cut and ready to serve in a manner that is developmentally appropriate for your child. How to cut food for your child changes as they progress through the stages of learning to eat. We are happy to reheat any meals that need to be served warm.

### Lunch:

Some of our programs provide a lunch program prepared by an on-site cook. This is a fee-for service only available at locations that have an approved commercial kitchen. In programs that do not have a lunch program we require children to bring a lunch (including a drink). We encourage families to pack healthy foods, and your help in sending nutritious foods is much appreciated.

# Program Information

## Program Closures

The YMCA will make every attempt to keep programs open however, there may be times where your YMCA program will need to close or operate on reduced hours. These include situations such as but not limited to staff shortages, outbreaks, public health orders, power outages, water main breaks etc. The YMCA will make every effort to provide notice regarding closures and reduced hours in a timely manner. All families will receive a notification via ePACT. Refunds will not be issued for these closures. YMCA Preschool programs are also closed on school Professional Development Days and during Winter, Spring and Summer Break.

## Christmas Closure

All of our Early Learning Child Care Centres will be closed between Christmas and New Years Day. Notice of actual closure dates will be provided each year in the fall so that families have plenty of time to organize their schedules.

## Statutory Holidays

**YMCA child care programs are closed on statutory holidays during the year:**

- New Year's Day
- Family Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day
- Labour Day
- National Day for Truth and Reconciliation
- Thanksgiving Day
- Remembrance Day
- Christmas Day
- Boxing Day

**\*YMCA child care programs will be closed for all federal, provincial and municipal statutory holidays.**



## Moving to the Next Age Group

The following explains how a child moves from the infant/toddler program to the group 3 to 5 program:

- We will do our best to accommodate all the children enrolled in the program; however, we cannot guarantee transfer from one program to the next. There is the possibility that when a child is ready to transfer to the next program space may not be available.
- Decisions about transfers to the next age group, will be made in consultation with the families, however the final decision will be made by the YMCA.
- If there are two or more children that are the same age, in the same program, who require a space in the next age group, the enrolment date will be the deciding factor for who will be given the space.
- In the event that there is no space for a child in the next age group, we will try to accommodate the family at another YMCA Child Care location, if space is available.
- If a situation arises where we have exhausted all options to accommodate the child will be withdrawn from the program, and placed back on the wait list and given priority for the next available space.

# Program Information

## Food and Allergies

The YMCA cannot guarantee that our Early Learning Child Care programs will be free from allergens (e.g. nuts, gluten, dairy). To protect the health and safety of children and staff with allergies, some food items may be prohibited. If this is the case, parents will be informed upon registration. If your child has an anaphylaxis allergy, you will be required to provide the program with an epi-Pen. In accordance with directives from the medical health officer YMCA employees will administer an epinephrine auto injector where anaphylaxis is suspected. Non-prescription anti-histamines will only be used for non-anaphylactic reactions and require a "Consent to administer non-prescription drugs" form.

## Child Membership

Any child, registered full-time at a YMCA Child Care program will receive a complimentary child membership that can be used at any of our five health and fitness facilities: Langara Family YMCA, Robert Lee YMCA, Tong Louie YMCA, Bob Chan Kent Family YMCA, and Bettie Allard YMCA.

## Illness

It is important to prevent the spread of infectious diseases to other children and staff; therefore, when your child is vomiting, has diarrhea or a fever of 38 degrees Celsius or higher (100 degrees Fahrenheit), we require your child to stay home. If your child develops the above symptoms while at the program, staff will contact you to request your child be picked up. Your child must be symptom free for a period of 24 hours prior to returning to the child care program. It is advisable to seek medical consultation to ensure your child is fit to return to group care.

## Clothing and Outdoor Play

Regardless of the weather, we spend time outdoors every day. Please ensure your child has appropriate clothing for the relevant season (i.e. rain gear or winter coat). During warmer weather, please ensure your child has a hat and sunscreen at the centre.

## Emergencies

In the case of an emergency or natural disaster, we will attempt to contact families as soon as possible. If a child needs medical attention, we will attempt to notify parents/guardians prior to taking the child to the nearest hospital/clinic.

## Repayment Agreement

Should it become necessary to close your YMCA child care program for longer than five business days due to situations beyond our control such as natural disasters, unsafe weather conditions, unsafe building hazards, or any other unforeseen situation, the YMCA will make every effort to provide an alternate location. When it is not possible to secure an alternate location, the YMCA will refund your prepaid child care fees in a timely manner. Refunds will not be issued for unforeseen closure of less than five business days.



# Registration Information

## Fees

A \$200 non-refundable registration fee will be charged upon registration of your child in a YMCA Early Learning program. Fees are due and payable on the first of each month and may be paid by pre-authorized payment through Visa, MasterCard or electronic funds transfer. Failure to pay fees can result in termination of care.

YMCA Child Care fees are pro rated for the number of days of care in the year, this provides families with a consistent monthly fee.

## Declined Fees

If funds are unavailable we will attempt to withdraw fees a second time (up to 30 days from original payment date). An additional fee of \$15 may be applied if funds are unavailable at the time of withdrawal.

The YMCA will not be responsible for any costs charged by your bank/financial institution.

## YMCA Financial Assistance

We want to make sure that all children have an opportunity to benefit from a YMCA Early Learning experience, so we offer financial assistance to assist families in affording care.

For more information, please email [gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca).



## Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB)

The government's ACCB program is available to families based on provincial eligibility requirements. Parents who receive the provincial child care subsidy are responsible for the difference between the subsidy and YMCA fees. Parents are responsible for keeping their subsidy current and for the full child care fee if their subsidy expires. For more information, contact 1-888-338-6622 or visit [gov.bc.ca/childcare](http://gov.bc.ca/childcare).

## Registration Changes

Changes to your current registration must be made in writing 45 days in advance and received by the 15th of the month prior to the month you wish to make the change. Please email [gv.childcare@gv.ymca.ca](mailto:gv.childcare@gv.ymca.ca) for assistance.

## Absence from Care

Refunds for child care fees will not be processed for the following: missed days; vacation; sick days; public health closures; or inclement weather closures.



# Registration Information

## Medical/Emergency Information (ePACT)\*

ePACT is a secure emergency network that YMCA BC uses to collect medical and emergency contact information electronically. ePACT maintains the same levels of security as online banking, and limits access only to the administrators we assign for enhanced privacy. ePACT replaces paper forms to make it easier for families to share emergency information. Families will receive an email invitation to share information with us via ePACT. Follow the instructions to create or log in to your account, and enter the required information. You can update your information at any time, and we will automatically be notified.

**Please note, your child can't attend your child care program until ePACT is complete.**



## Priority Spaces for Young Parents at Little Scholars YMCA Child Care

**\*Please note that this specific YMCA child care centre located in Coquitlam prioritizes spaces for children of young parents.**

To parents/caregivers registered at Little Scholars YMCA Child Care:

If the program requires the YMCA to accommodate space for a young parent's child, you may be given 45-days-notice from the date that your space must be vacated.

This will happen on a "seniority" basis so the last family in would be the first family to be asked to make the space available for a young parent.



**As a charity, the YMCA relies on the generosity of people in our community and works hard to ensure no one is turned away because of their inability to pay. Our YMCA annual CommUNITY Campaign focuses on raising much-needed funds to support proven YMCA programs that help others reach their potential. One hundred per cent of donations to the YMCA annual fundraising campaign CommUNITY live healthier lives.**

### Tax Receipts

We will provide payers with an official Child Care Income Tax receipt on or before February 28 of each year for the prior year's fees.

# Withdrawal of Service

**A minimum of 45-day's notice is required for withdrawal from your child care program. All withdrawals take effect on the 1st of the month. Notice must be received in writing to [gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca](mailto:gv.childcare@bc.ymca.ca) 45 days advance of withdrawal, by the 15th of the current month. For example, for an October 1st withdrawal, notice must be received by August 15th. Upon receiving written notice, our administrative team will deactivate the child's account and cancel any pre-authorized payments that were set up.**

In some situations, it may be necessary for the YMCA to withdraw services; however, we will make every attempt to work with the family to resolve the issue to the mutual satisfaction of all parties, provided that the arrangement does not compromise the mission and values of the YMCA, put staff, the child or other participants at risk, or diminish the value of the YMCA experience for other participants. Situations are dealt with on an individual basis, taking into account the specific needs and circumstances of the family.

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

- Inappropriate conduct, including harassment, threatening behaviour, violent acts toward staff, children or other families involved in the program.
- Behavioural concerns (the YMCA does not have the resources to deal effectively with a child whose behaviour requires ongoing significant intervention, such as persistent unprovoked physical violence, including biting, hitting, and scratching; persistent bullying; verbal harassment; or unauthorized departure from the centre.
- Unresolved custody issues (if a family's custody issues result in ongoing conflicts at the centre or with staff).
- Late pick-up issues.
- Non-payment of fees.
- When a family's requests cannot be accommodated, as they conflict with the principles, policies and procedures of the YMCA.

## Privacy of Information

YMCA BC 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. YMCA staff and volunteers who have access to personal information follow fair information principles, in keeping with privacy laws. We collect, use and disclose personal data in order to better meet your needs, ensure the safety of children in our care, collect statistical data, satisfy government and regulatory obligations, and inform you about the program in which you are registered. We may contact you periodically to inform you about other YMCA programs, services and opportunities that may be of interest and benefit you.

To view our Privacy Policy, please visit our website at [gv.ymca.ca](http://gv.ymca.ca).



## YMCA BC

**YMCA BC also offers a variety of other programs that help children and families thrive, including:**

- Summer, spring and winter day camps
- Overnight camps and outdoor education programs at YMCA Camp Elphinstone
- Health, fitness and aquatics programs operating in our centres of community throughout Greater Vancouver, which includes swim lessons for kids
- Employment and newcomer programs
- Leadership development programs for youth
- Chronic disease management and mental wellness programs

**To learn more, please visit our website at [gv.ymca.ca](http://gv.ymca.ca).**

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