



CHILD CARE FAMILY HANDBOOK



Welcome to the Y!

For over one hundred years, the YMCA-YWCA has been a leading charitable organization across Canada – providing programs and services such as child care, camping and outdoor education, health and fitness, leadership training, and community health programs for children, youth, families, adults and seniors. The YMCA-YWCA is an inclusive, welcoming and supportive environment for people to develop in spirit, mind and body. Our values of Caring, Honesty, Respect, Responsibility and Inclusion guide our everyday decisions and actions.

As a charitable, community-based association of volunteers and staff, the YMCA-YWCA’s mission is to work together to enhance individual and community potential through participation, learning and leadership.

This handbook has been prepared to provide you with an overview of our child care programs; an introduction to our policies and procedures; and to answer any other questions you may have about how we operate. Throughout this handbook, we use the term “Parent” to describe both parents and guardians of children.

The YMCA-YWCA is dedicated to strengthening families and communities. We value the strength of each family and respect the diverse backgrounds that enrich our programs. We recognize that each child is an individual and that each family has different needs and expectations. Our goal is to build partnerships with families and to provide information, resources and referrals to help children grow to be healthy, caring and competent adults.

YMCA-YWCA Child Care programs are situated on traditional, unceded and occupied territories of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt), Lekwungen (Songhees), Sc’ianew (Beecher Bay), and the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples, who have lived in harmony with this land since time immemorial.



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 children's early life experiences set the foundation for lifelong learning, building self-confidence and establishing positive relationships. YMCA-YWCA Child Care is a place where children can grow and reach their potential. The benefits of a quality child care experience will last a lifetime. Y child care:

- Provides environments that are caring, supportive and secure.
- Involves children in learning through active hands-on play, exploration and discovery.
- Offers activities to help children develop self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-reliance.
- Promotes the values of caring, respect, honesty, responsibility and inclusion.
- Develops social and emotional competence.
- Involves children in philanthropic activities, such as the YMCA-YWCA's Strong Kids Campaign.

Our child care programs provide safe, healthy, creative places where children can work in small groups with a variety of materials. We provide opportunities where children develop values, self-confidence and social skills. We know that children learn best in environments that are child centred and age appropriate. Our routine is flexible to meet the needs of the children and may vary depending upon daily activities and outings.

All YMCA-YWCA Child Care programs follow a play-based curriculum. Play-based learning is essential to the healthy social and cognitive development of all children.



ACTIVE PLAY

We strive to create environments where children engage in active play experiences every day. Children spend 2-3 hours outside in nature every day. During extreme weather, we will modify our programs so that children are still able to enjoy active games and activities indoors.

Our child care programs focus on creating opportunities for the children to explore and experience life firsthand. Electronics are not a part of our daily routine and are limited in use for educational means only.

Inclusion



YMCA-YWCA Child Care is open to children of all abilities. We strive to provide an inclusive environment and programming to meet individual needs. We work collaboratively with the child's family and any external support services to ensure effective inclusion. Families with additional support needs should speak with the Child Care Manager upon registration in order to set up a successful transition into the program.

Family-Centered Care

Parents and guardians are encouraged to participate in the program whenever possible. Parental involvement is a key element in the success of our child's experience in YMCA-YWCA Child Care.

Participation can include: verbal or written feedback, sharing information about your child's development, attending meetings, workshops, family events and celebrations, fundraising events, or volunteering on field trips or in the centre. Whatever your talent, interests or schedule may be, there are plenty of ways to get involved. Please speak with a program Supervisor for more information.



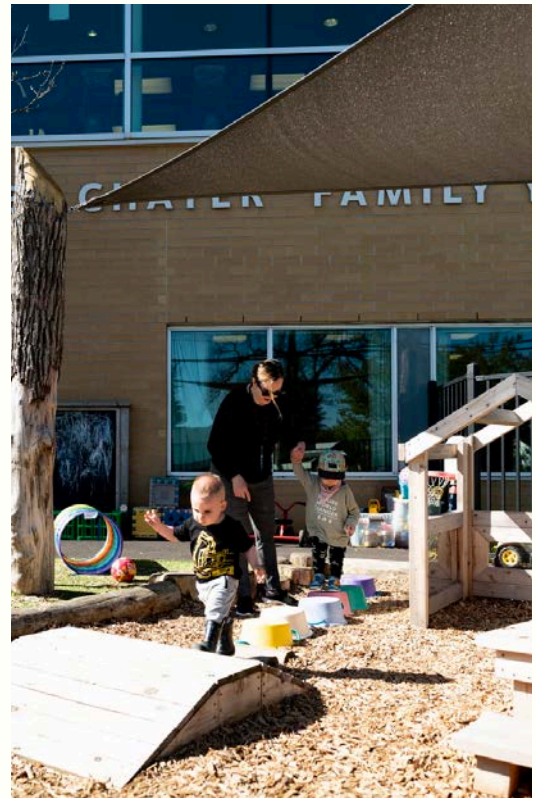
FIELD TRIPS AND OUTINGS

Neighborhood outings are part of our regular routine. These outings provide children with new experiences and foster a sense of community. Local trips may include walking to a nearby park or beach. Costs for all field trips are included in the child care fees.

School District Non Instructional Days and Professional Development

PEXSISEN YMCA-YWCA Child Care will provide registered full-day school-age child care services on SD62 non-instructional days, including winter (one week only), spring, and summer breaks. Full day school-age child care programs require a separate registration and are not included in the monthly child care fees. Dates will be communicated annually, and registration will open first for families currently using before and after school care spaces.

Costs for any out trips or special activities will be included within the full-day school-age child care program fee.



All YMCA-YWCA Child Care programs will close for 3 Staff Professional Development days per year. When possible, the YMCA-YWCA will align these dates with Victoria and Sooke School District Non Instructional Days and will be communicated at the start of the calendar year. Supporting professional development strengthens our staff teams and the level of care provided for children and families. It is also mandatory for Early Childhood Educators to attend professional development to maintain their ECE credentials.



HOURS OF OPERATION

Each of our child care centres have unique hours of operation. Please refer to your child care offer for the specific hours of care your program provides.

All Y child care programs close for Statutory holidays, staff professional development days, and for a week

over winter break. Select programs, such as those operated in partnership with school districts may be required to close for annual maintenance at other points in the year. These closures will be communicated with families with as much notice as possible.

Child Guidance



YMCA-YWCA Child Care Centres provide a nurturing environment where children are treated with respect, adults are caring, and children can reach their full potential. Our goal is to assist children to learn coping strategies and to develop pro-social, developmentally appropriate behaviours. At times, however, it is necessary to set limits and standards of appropriate behaviour. Y staff are guided by our Child Guidance Policy, which they are required to adhere to at all times.

When approaching a challenging situation or behaviour, our staff utilizes a strength-based approach. A strength-based approach means entering a situation, identifying the strengths of the child first, and then supporting the child to build on their strengths to overcome challenges.

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

- Assist children in developing self-control, self-confidence, and self-discipline.
- Assist children in developing socially acceptable and appropriate behaviour.
- Recognize that each child is an individual whose age, experience, environment, developmental level and culture influence their behaviour.
- Use positive and proactive strategies for guiding children's behaviour.

The YMCA-YWCA Child Guidance Policy is posted on the Family Board and is based on the requirements of the Provincial Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Regulation.



Child Care Staff

YMCA-YWCA Child Care staff includes certified Early Childhood Educators, Early Childhood Assistants, Infant and Toddler Educators, Special Needs Educators and Responsible Adults, and meet all licensing requirements. As child care professionals, our staff have the necessary training and experience to deliver high quality programs and are dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

All staff are thoroughly screened to confirm their suitability for working with children. Screening includes: an interview, a Police/RCMP Criminal record Check with Vulnerable Sector Clearance, a BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Screening, current First Aid certification, 3 professional references and License to Practice in BC designation. In addition, staff must also provide a record of work history, copies of diplomas or certificates detailing education, training and skills, and are required to attend training and relevant re-certification events in order to provide a high level of quality care for your child.

Please note: Staff are not permitted to offer outside care (i.e. babysitting) to families attending our Child Care programs.

Reporting Suspicions of Child Abuse

The Child, Family and Community Service Act of British Columbia states: Anyone who has a reason to believe that a child or youth has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected, is required to report it to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD). At the YMCA-YWCA, we take this responsibility seriously and understand the legal need to report suspicions/disclosures, not determine if abuse has occurred.

Investigations are the responsibility of the MCFD and/or the Police. It is the responsibility of MCFD and/or the Police to notify parents that a report has been made.



PRACTICUM STUDENTS

YMCA-YWCA Child Care Centres may accept work experience students from Early Childhood Education programs or community volunteers to assist in our programs. Students and volunteers are screened to assess suitability prior to working in our programs, and must undergo an interview, provide a Police/RCMP Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Clearance, a BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Screening, current First Aid Certification, three professional references, and attend an orientation to the program.

Students and volunteers are supervised at all times and are never left alone with children.

YMCA-YWCA Curriculum

YMCA Playing to Learn (for early years) and A Place to Connect (for school age) are research-based curriculum models rooted in the philosophy that children learn best through play, in environments where educators encourage and support their choices.

Throughout their time in the program, children will explore and discover their interests in small groups with trusted educators. We believe this is the best approach to building a framework and capacity for lifelong learning. Our curriculum strives to develop responsible, respectful, caring, honest, healthy, and inclusive citizens.

The goals and approaches in our YMCA Playing to Learn and A Place to Connect align in philosophy, standards and recommendations with the BC Early Learning Framework.



Daily Experiences

Daily programming is centered around the children's expressed interests and developmental needs. Opportunities for exploration will include indoor and outdoor time, music and movement, creative and sensory engagement, puzzles, stories, blocks, dramatic play, and plenty of time to build positive, pro-social relationships.

School-age and older preschool children are offered increased opportunities to shape their experiences, emphasizing choice, strengths, and leadership roles. These experiences foster confidence, personal and social responsibility, and build inclusive, welcoming communities.

For younger children, educators pay special attention to creating flexible, individualized schedules and routines that highlight children's interests and strengths. New discoveries, developmental milestones, and play highlights are shared with families. Health habits (eating, bathrooming and sleeping) are documented and children are encouraged to participate in these routines within their capabilities.

Staff Ratios

- Infant and Toddler program Educator/Child ratio is 1:4
- 30 month to school age (3-5 year olds) program Educator/Child ratio is 1:8
- School age Staff /Child ratio is 1:12 for K-grade 1 and 1:15 for grade 2-5



Please phone the program to let staff know if your child will be absent from the child care centre.

Drop Off and 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.

In before school care programs, children are released from the program when the school bell rings. YMCA-YWCA staff escort children in kindergarten to their class. After school, older children make their own way to the program and YMCA staff pick up and escort kindergarten children from their classrooms to the program.

Children will not be released from the Child Care Centre if the authorized pick-up person appears incapable of providing safe care (i.e. suspected intoxication/drug use). Should this occur, staff will suggest that the person call a friend or taxi for alternate care of the child and/or transportation home. If staff feel that a child is at risk, or the authorized pick-up person makes an unsafe decision to drive, staff will phone the police.

If a child is not picked up within 5 minutes after the closing time, staff will contact the family and all emergency contacts. If 30 minutes after closing; if parents or any of the designated emergency contacts still have not been reached, staff will call Emergency Services of the Ministry of Children and Family Development. An MCFD Social Worker will sign your child out and will place your child in care until you can be located.

CHILDREN WILL ONLY BE RELEASED TO AUTHORIZED PERSONS, INCLUDING PARENTS/PERSONS LISTED ON THE AUTHORIZED TO PICK-UP LIST/EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST IN THE REGISTRATION PACKAGE OR PARENTS/GUARDIANS RECORDED ON A LEGAL DOCUMENT (I.E., CUSTODY AGREEMENT), UNLESS STAFF ARE NOTIFIED IN WRITING. PHOTO IDENTIFICATION IS REQUIRED TO VERIFY THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON PICKING UP YOUR CHILD IF STAFF ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH THE PERSON.

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. Please note that three late pick-ups in any 6-month period may result in withdrawal of services.

Custody

If a custody agreement is in place for your child, a copy of your custody agreement 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 written information on access. Staff will follow information provided by the enrolling parent. 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.

Emergencies

In the case of an emergency or natural disaster, staff will attempt to contact parents as soon as possible. In the event that we need to evacuate the building, you will be notified of where to pick up your child. It is essential that parents advise staff of any changes to residence, place of employment or phone numbers (home/cell). These updates include alternate emergency contact information. If local phone lines are down, staff will notify any Out of Town emergency contacts regarding information pertaining to your child (where they can be picked-up).

All YMCA-YWCA Child Care Centres (staff and children) practice emergency evacuations monthly.



Health

If you think your child is ill, please keep them at home. You must not mask symptoms of illness such as fever with medication prior to bringing a child to care. Sick children need to have opportunities to rest and recover and preventing the spread of illness to other children and staff is important.

A child should not attend when they:

- Cannot fully participate in the program
- Have a fever of 38 degrees Celsius or higher
- Has diarrhea or vomiting
- Have a new or unexplained cough
- Has conjunctivitis
- Have skin infections or new or unexplained rash

Communicable Diseases: Communicable diseases such as chicken pox and measles must be reported to staff as soon as they are diagnosed.

A child may return to care when they:

- Are able to fully participate in the program
- Have been fever free for 48 hours without medication
- Have been diarrhea and vomit free for 48 hours
- Has seen a doctor and been prescribed antibiotics, and have taken antibiotics for 48 hours as prescribed
- Has been examined by a doctor and received medical clearance to attend

If a child arrives at the centre ill, parents will be asked to find alternate care for that day. If your child becomes ill during the day, you will be called to take your child home.

Our policy is to notify parents if their child is ill or requires medical attention. If immediate medical help is required, staff will call an ambulance and then will notify parents/emergency contacts. As per Licensing Regulations, we cannot provide care to a child unless we have received completed registration forms detailing any medical/health related information and parent/emergency contact information. Registration forms must be fully completed a minimum of 2 business days before your child begins care. If the paperwork is incomplete, your child will not be allowed to start the program.



Island Health recommends that your child's immunizations are current before your child enters the program. A up-to-date written record of each child's immunization must be on file. If a child is not immunized, a letter stating this must be provided for the child's file. If an outbreak of a communicable disease occurs, the non-immunized children will be excluded from the program immediately and until the outbreak has been declared over by Vancouver Island Health Authority.



Medication

Staff may administer medication if your child is on a strict medication schedule, provided the following procedures are followed:

- Only medications (including Epi-pens) prescribed by a doctor can be administered in program.
- Medications must be in their original container with the prescription stating your child's name, dosage and time to be given.
- Parents must complete the Consent to Administer Medication form.

Food and Allergies

The Y is a nut aware space. Please do not bring nuts or nut products into our child care programs.

The YMCA-YWCA promotes healthy eating habits and uses the Canadian Food guide as a resource when providing snacks for children. We provide a nutritious morning and afternoon snack containing at least two food groups.

Families are responsible for providing lunches each day. We ask families to avoid sugary items, such as chocolate, juice, pop, and candy. Should a family wish to provide a special snack for a birthday or another occasion, they should first reach out to the child care supervisor to confirm it is safe for all children in the program.

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. We require families refrain from packing foods containing nuts, as we frequently care for children with anaphylactic reactions to nuts.



Commitment to Privacy

The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island 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 website.



Nap and Rest Time

Naptime allows children to physically rest and emotionally unwind. It provides a balance to the day's active program. Although some children require a nap during the day, naptime is not mandatory for all children. We ask that all early years children in full-day programs rest for a short time, followed by quiet activities (to allow those who need to sleep the quiet space to do so). Children's naptime schedules may vary depending on age or individual needs.

Gradual Entry – Early Years

The gradual entry process is required for each new child. Even though your child may have had other group experiences, this will be a new group for them with unfamiliar faces. This gradual orientation to the program allows time for your child to feel comfortable, to start developing new friendships and to become familiar with staff. We recognize that this process can be stressful for parents, but it allows your child to become acclimatized to the program and feel more comfortable and confident when it comes time to leave them for the whole day.

Our gradual entry process is as follows:

Day 1: 9:00am-11:00am - Child attends for two (2) hours.

Day 2: 9:00am-12:00 pm - Child attends for the morning and stays for lunch.

Day 3: 9:00am-3:00pm - Child stays for naptime.

Days 4&5: Child can stay all day. If possible, child stays for a shorter day.

Gradual entry is not typically required in school-age child care programs.



Kindergarten Gradual Entry

Each September, children in kindergarten typically have a gradual entry schedule for the first few weeks of school. Unfortunately, our school age programs are not able to provide additional hours of care during this time. We do encourage children to attend during our regular hours of operation.

Moving to the Next Age Group

When your child reaches the age for moving to the next age group, they will be put on the internal wait list for space. If there are no vacancies in the next age group, we cannot guarantee that your child can stay at the centre (i.e. if a child turns 36 months in January and there are no vacancies in the next age program until July). Any vacant space will be filled in the following priority:

1. Children who are currently enrolled and who are ready (meet age requirements) will move to the next age group.
2. Siblings of children enrolled at the centre.
3. Applicants on the waitlist will be contacted.

Early years children moving to Kindergarten who would like to participate in before and after school care must join the wait list, even if they are already enrolled in an early years program.

Fees and Enrollment Policy

Child Care fees are charged automatically on the 1st of each month through Pre-Authorized Payment. Payment may be arranged by credit card only. A Pre-Authorized Payment Form must be completed at the time of registration and is included in the registration package. Fees are pro-rated for the number of days of care in the year.

If your child is absent due to sickness, vacation or for other personal reasons, it will be necessary to pay the full fee in order to maintain your child's space.

If a payment is declined or returned you will be notified to arrange payment. If payment is not received in a timely fashion it is deemed as non-payment.

If payment is not received on the due date, you will be notified to make payment; 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 services.

The YMCA-YWCA will not be responsible for any costs charged by your bank/financial institution for NSF fees. When appropriate, the Manager, Child Care, in consultation with the Finance Department, will work with families to develop alternate payment plans.

Repayment

The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island is committed to ensuring that parents receive any repayments (i.e. overpayment) within 10 business days.

Should it become necessary to close your YMCA-YWCA 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-YWCA 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 closures of less than five business days.

Affordable Child Care Benefit (ACCB)

The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island welcomes families using the Affordable Child Care Benefit. The government's ACCB program is available to families based on provincial eligibility requirements. Parents who receive the ACCB are responsible for the difference between the subsidy and YMCA-YWCA fees. Parents are responsible for keeping their ACCB 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.

Withdrawal of Service

The YMCA-YWCA requires a minimum of two months written notice to withdraw your child from the program. All withdrawals take effect on the first of the month. For example, for an April 1st withdrawal, notice must be provided by February 1st. Families will be responsible for paying the two months fees if the required notice is not given. If you wish to withdraw from the programs, please email your program Supervisor. Upon receiving written notice, our administrative team will deactivate the child's account and cancel any pre-authorized payments that were set up. The withdrawal policy applies to all parent/guardians even if the child is scheduled to start at a later date; or if the child is not accepted into the elementary school in which the program serves. Once the child is registered the parent/guardian is fully responsible for all child care costs.

In some situations, it may be necessary for the YMCA-YWCA 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 Y, put staff, the child or other participants at risk, or diminish the value of the YMCA-YWCA 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:

- Behavioural concerns (the YMCA-YWCA 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).
- Inappropriate conduct, including harassment, threatening behaviour, violent acts toward staff, children or other families involved in the program.
- Unresolved custody issues (if a family's result in ongoing conflicts at the centre or with staff).
- Late pick-up issues.
- Late or non-payment of fees.
- When a family's requests cannot be accommodated, as they conflict with the principles, policies and procedures of the YMCA.

EARLY YEARS KINDERGARTEN AUTO-WITHDRAWAL

Children eligible to attend kindergarten will be automatically withdrawn for August 31 of the year they turn 5. If families would like to withdraw their child(ren) prior to August 31 of the year they turn 5, they must follow the above withdrawal process. If your child is not attending kindergarten the year they turn 5, please contact your program Supervisor prior to March 1 to discuss enrolment options. Children attending kindergarten are not eligible to maintain their enrolment past August 31 of their kindergarten year.