

<b>Policy Name:</b> YMCA Child Care Commitment to Inclusion and Diversity	<b>Created On:</b> December 2024 <b>Last Update:</b> January 2025
<b>Owned By:</b> Child Care Department	<b>Application:</b> YMCA HBB Child Care

At the YMCA of Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford, we believe in the importance of treating every child with respect and dignity, fostering an environment where they can thrive and reach their full potential. Guided by our mission we focus on the holistic development of children, nurturing their well-being within a safe and supportive setting.

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford is committed to fostering an environment that upholds the values of anti-oppression, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, and human rights in all aspects of our operations, striving to create a just and inclusive society for all.

The YMCA is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people in its care. We are committed to promoting equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging and we recognize our responsibility to promote safe spaces where children can be their authentic self: where each child is treated with respect and dignity.

We recognize that children come from diverse families and strive to create a safe and inclusive environment that celebrates family diversity and promotes positive relationships among children, families, and staff.

#### Key Principles of Inclusion at the YMCA:

- **Respect for Every Child:** We recognize that each child is a unique individual, bringing their own strengths and perspectives to our programs. We value the diversity each child adds to our community.
- **Holistic Development:** Our programs are designed to nurture children in all areas of development—physical, emotional, and intellectual—encouraging growth in a well-rounded, supportive environment.
- **Family and Community Partnership:** We see parents, caregivers, and families as essential partners in the development of their children. YMCA staff and volunteers actively engage with families to ensure their needs and goals are met.
- **Adaptations and Modifications:** We are committed to fostering an inclusive environment where all children, including those with disabilities, feel valued and supported. We strive to adapt our programs to meet the diverse needs of every child; however, as a charity, we may not always have the resources or specialized expertise required to fully support every unique need. In such cases, we encourage families to collaborate with us, and they may provide additional support to enhance their child's participation and experience.
- **Collaboration with Community Partners:** As a charity, we recognize that we may not always have the resources or expertise to meet every unique need. To bridge this gap, our staff actively collaborate with community partners to access additional resources, training, and expert consultation, enhancing the support we can provide.

In all that we do, the YMCA remains committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and enriching environment for all children and families.

## **YMCA Child Care Inclusion and Diversity Approach**

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to outline the YMCA's commitment to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all staff, children, and families in our childcare programs. We are dedicated to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances, has access to opportunities for growth and development. This document provides guidance to staff, volunteers, and families on how to implement and uphold the principles of inclusion and diversity within the YMCA community.

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### **1. Commitment to Inclusion and Respect**

The YMCA of Hamilton | Burlington | Brantford is committed to creating a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We recognize and celebrate the unique qualities, backgrounds, and abilities of all children and families, we do our best to ensure that our programs are accessible and welcoming to everyone.

- All children and families, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, religion, disability, or other characteristics, are welcomed and valued.
- YMCA staff and volunteers are expected to treat every child and family member with kindness, dignity, and respect, and we ask that families extend the same courtesy in return.

### **2. Holistic Development of Children**

Our programs are designed to promote the development of children by:

- We strive to provide a balanced program that nurtures each child's development.
- Activities, experiences, and interactions are designed to support the individual growth, well-being and sense of belonging for every child.

### **3. Adaptations and Modifications**

We recognize that every child is a unique individual and may have different needs and abilities. YMCA staff and volunteers are dedicated to adapting programs and activities to eliminate unnecessary barriers to participation and collaborate on individual support planning when needed to support with engagement, expression, well-being and belonging.

#### **4. Family Engagement**

We believe in the importance of collaboration between YMCA staff, families, and the broader community. Parents and caregivers are considered essential partners in the developmental process, and we actively seek their input and engagement.

- YMCA staff and volunteers will maintain open communication with parents and families to ensure that their needs and expectations are met.
- Families will be consulted about any accommodations or modifications required to support their child's participation.

#### **5. Training and Education**

To ensure that we provide the best possible care and support for all children, YMCA staff and volunteers will receive ongoing training on inclusion, diversity, and working with children of varying abilities.

- All YMCA childcare staff and volunteers will undergo training that includes an understanding of diversity, inclusion, and the needs of children with disabilities.
- Training will include strategies for fostering an inclusive environment, adapting programs, and providing appropriate support for all children.
- We will seek guidance and professional development from external experts and community partners to enhance our staff's knowledge and skills.

#### **6. Community Partnerships**

The YMCA will actively seek partnerships with community organizations, specialists, and other service providers to improve our ability to support children with disabilities.

- As needed, the YMCA will collaborate with external experts, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and other specialists, to support the needs of all children.
- These partnerships may include consultation, training, and other resources that help us create an inclusive environment for all children.

#### **7. Accessibility**

The YMCA is committed to providing equal opportunities for all children and families, regardless of their background, identity, or abilities. Discrimination of any form—whether based on race, gender, ability, religion, or any other characteristic—is strictly prohibited.

- Any form of discrimination, harassment, or exclusion directed towards children, families or staff will not be tolerated and will be addressed promptly
- Complaints or concerns regarding discrimination or exclusion will be taken seriously, and appropriate actions will be taken in accordance with YMCA procedures.

## **8. Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and Indigenous Partnerships**

The YMCAs in Canada have a commitment to building healthy communities through the power of belonging. Communities that are safe and vibrant, with a strong economy and a sustainable environment.

The YMCA is also committed to learning the truth and reconciling Canada's history with Indigenous Peoples. We have been listening and learning from Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers who have shared their teachings with YMCAs, establishing relationships and nurturing existing partnerships with Indigenous communities, and upholding our responsibilities on the journey of reconciliation.

- We have met with some local elders and will continue to build upon these conversations to ensure we incorporate these learnings into our program offerings. Sharing needs to be promoted and developed alongside research and data collection on the growing urban presence of Indigenous peoples and inclusive and participatory approaches.
- YMCA Associations as a whole and individual staff members have taken time to build trust and cultivate vibrant and meaningful relationships with Indigenous clients, partners, and communities. Most successes have occurred through ongoing collaboration and partnership founded on respect and inclusion.

## **9. Monitoring and Evaluation**

To ensure the effectiveness of this policy and its implementation, the YMCA will regularly evaluate the inclusivity and accessibility of our programs.

- Staff and volunteers will provide regular feedback on the inclusivity of programs and activities.
- The YMCA will periodically review program outcomes to ensure that all children are being adequately supported and are benefiting from the programs.
- Feedback from families, children, and community partners will be considered to make any necessary improvements.

## **10. Review and Updates**

These guidelines will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain relevant and effective in promoting inclusion and diversity. Updates to this document may be made based on feedback from staff, volunteers, families, and community partners or changes in applicable laws or best practices.

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## **Conclusion**

The YMCA is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment where all children and families can thrive. By upholding the values of diversity, respect, and inclusion, we will continue to provide opportunities for children to grow and develop in an environment that embraces their uniqueness.