

Home Child Care **PARENT / GUARDIAN HANDBOOK**

February 2024



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Welcome to our Program

Niagara Region Children's Services is committed to providing the best quality child care possible. This handbook was developed to provide important information that parents/guardians should know about the Region's Home Child Care Program.

Home Child Care Providers are independent operators on contract with Children's Services. We arrange initial orientation for Providers and provide regular training workshops. Providers are required to meet the regulations, standards and policies of Niagara Region and the provincial *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. The Provider may have additional policies to the operation of his/her business. It is important to discuss these policies to ensure there is a clear understanding of services and operation.

Your child will be attending the home of:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Cell: _____

Children's Services Home Child Care staff are known as Home Child Care Advisors. **The Home Child Care Advisor who currently works with your Provider is:**

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

You must notify your Children's Services Fee Subsidy Caseworker of any changes to your circumstances such as hours of care, employment or education. **Your Children's Services Fee Subsidy Caseworker is:**

Name: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Role of the Agency

Niagara Region's Home Child Care program supports: daytime, evening, overnight, and weekend care seven days a week based on provider availability and agreement.

The goal of Niagara Region Home Child Care Program (the agency) is to provide your child with the best possible quality child care. We work closely with you and the provider to help guide your child through all the stages of childhood development and growth. Our policies and procedures have been created to comply with the Ontario government's *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, Niagara Region Corporate policies and Children's Services policies. The Regional Licensed Home Child Care Program is participating in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement where the focus is to increase quality, accessibility, affordability and inclusivity in early learning and child care.

Licensing

Our Homes operate under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and are licensed by the Ministry of Education, (MEDU), Early Learning Division. In order to maintain our license, the Home is inspected annually by a MEDU program advisor to ensure compliance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

Licensed home child care offers the flexibility of hours of care that many families need. The goal of the Niagara Region Home Child Care Program (the agency) is to provide your child with the best possible quality child care.

As a licensed agency, we carefully select and contract with independent operators who provide child care services in their homes for children between birth and 12 years of age. We provide training to the Providers, make unscheduled visits to their home, and monitor the home for safety, cleanliness and the number and ages of children.

All home child care providers must agree to abide by legislation as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and the policies and procedures of Niagara Region Children's Services.

Your Home Child Care Advisor (Registered Early Childhood Educator) is available to answer any questions you may have or address any concerns about the home child care service your child is receiving.

The Niagara Region Home Child Care program is licensed on an annual basis by the Ministry of Education. The program is audited by the ministry each year to ensure compliance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. In addition, a number of Home Child Care homes are inspected to ensure they meet the requirements set out in the legislation and policies. Providers are required to have a summary of the most recent licensing inspection findings available.

Number of Children in the Provider's home

As governed by the regulations set out under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and Niagara Region policies, any Home Child Care Provider who is affiliated with a Licensed Home Child Care Agency, may have up to six children in care at any one time. Below you will see a breakdown that outlines the total number of children per age group permitted in care at any one time:

- No more than six children in care under the age of 13 years, including the Home Child Care Provider's own children under the age 4 years
- No more than three children under the age of 2 years

Criminal Reference Checks

Vulnerable Sector Check: There are often other individuals in the home, including the Provider's partner and children. Some Providers have extended family members that live with them or others such as exchange students. You are entitled to know at all times who is residing in the home and who is regularly on the premises. Criminal Reference Checks are required for all adults in the home and frequent adult visitors to the home during hours of child care. Criminal Reference Checks are required every five years, with annual declaration sign off.

The Ministry of Education requires Criminal Reference Checks of all Home Child Care employees as well as adult students and volunteers, every five years. Annually, all Home Child Care Advisors, students and volunteers complete an annual declaration. Home Child Care Advisors carry out their duties according to the requirements, policies and procedures of Niagara Region and the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* which apply to areas such as program implementation of activities, playground safety, serious occurrences, duty to report suspected child abuse, and confidentiality.

Closures

Providers determine their availability to provide child care on statutory holidays.

- Family Day
- Canada Day
- Christmas Day
- Good Friday
- Labour Day
- Boxing Day
- Victoria Day
- Thanksgiving
- New Year's Day

Our Values and Approach

We believe that learning and development happens within the context of relationships among children, families, educators and their environments. Belonging, Wellbeing, Engagement and Expression are the four foundations that ensure optimal learning and development. These foundations inform the goals for children and expectations for our programs. How Does Learning Happen and Ontario Pedagogy for the Early Years provide our programs with guidance and direction when implementing quality child care programs.

Children

We believe that children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential. They grow up in families with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives. Every child should feel that he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor to his/her surroundings and deserves the opportunity to succeed.

Families

We recognize that parents are the first and best teachers of their own children. We assist families in their roles through the provision of a caring home, resources, training and support. Families should feel that they belong, are valuable contributors to their child's learning and deserve to be engaged in a meaningful way.

Community

We have relationships with many community service organizations and agencies to support and enhance our services. In addition, staff and provider representatives sit on many advisory committees and organizations that support early childhood development. Opportunities to engage with people, places and the natural world in the local environment help children, families, educators, and communities build connections, learn and discover, and make contributions to the world around them.

Educators

The best educators, first and foremost, use a warm, responsive, and inclusive approach, building positive relationships with children, families, colleagues and communities. Educators participate as co-learners with families and children learning. Knowledgeable educators support providers to get involved in play with children to support development, challenge thinking, and extend learning. They engage in reciprocal relationships with families and caregivers, learning about, with, and from them. Educators share their professional knowledge and experience and also seek out the knowledge and perspectives of families.

Providers

Child Care Providers are self-employed, independent operators contracted by Niagara Region Children's Services. We offer training and resources to our Providers to assist them in providing quality services

Program and Routine

The activities and routines offered by a Provider vary from home to home. It is important that you speak to the Provider to discuss the children's program that is offered. Providers must complete a daily log which identifies the activities of the day.

Home Child Care Advisor Home Visits

Home Child Care Advisors monitor the quality of home child care services through unscheduled visits to each home. Every three months staff conduct a safety inspection at each home, ensuring the Provider meets health and safety standards and the requirements of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

Our Home Child Care Program is committed to providing an inclusive environment for all children. The goal of our program is to foster relationships that build independence, trust, confidence and positive self-esteem for each child.

The Home Child Care Advisor supports providers in offering a high quality program where each child is an active participant in their environment. We view learning as a process, where children grow and develop by exploring, interacting and problem solving by:

- Cultivating authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults, and the world around them
- Nurture children's healthy development and support their growing sense of self
- Provide environments and experiences to engage children in active, creative, and meaningful exploration, play and inquiry
- Foster communication and expression in all forms

Prohibited Practices

This provision forbids corporal punishment and other harmful disciplinary practices to protect the emotional and physical well-being of children. These practices are never permitted in a home child care environment. Young children benefit from an affirming approach that encourages positive interactions with other children and with adults, rather than from a negative or punitive approach to managing unwanted behavior.

The following shall not be permitted:

- a. Corporal punishment of a child
- b. Deliberate use of harsh or degrading measures on the child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect
- c. Depriving the child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding
- d. Locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining children
- e. Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine the children

Developmental Screening

As a standard of practice within our operations, all children (birth to five years of age) are screened with parental consent, using a developmental screening tool (DISC Preschool Screen, or DPS). This screening tool helps Home Child Care Advisors identify children who may benefit from additional supports for healthy development. You will be asked to sign a consent form indicating whether or not you would like to have your child screened.

Transportation

Some Providers transport children in their vehicles to attend community programs. Transportation is a private arrangement between you and the Provider. You must ensure that the Provider has the appropriate car seat should your child require one. Providers are not permitted to transport your child without your written consent. Providers must have current car insurance and a driver's license.

Rest

For each infant who receives home child care at the premises, a cradle or crib or playpen that complies with the standards for cradles, cribs and playpens in the regulations made under the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act, and bedding. For each child 18 months old up to and including five years old who receives home child care at the premises for six hours or more, a cot or bed and bedding.

Each toddler or pre-school child who receives child care six hours or more in a day, has a rest period not exceeding two hours in length and a toddler, pre-school or kindergarten child is permitted to sleep, rest or engage in quiet activities based on the child's needs.

The provider must ensure that the play materials, equipment and furnishings in their homes are maintained in a safe and clean condition and kept in a good state of repair.

Infants

Children between the ages of 0-12 months of age will be placed for sleep in a manner consistent with the recommendations set out in the Joint Statement of Safe Sleep; Preventing Sudden Infant Deaths in Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada. Written documentation from a medical doctor will be kept in your child's file if you are choosing to waive this requirement.

Overnight Care

Providers will periodically perform a direct visual check up to provider bedtime and no longer than nine hours overnight. If the provider is up during the night, a direct visual check will take place.

Each provider has an electronic sleep monitoring device but they are not to replace the direct visual checks of sleeping children.

Outdoor Play

Each child who receives child care for six or more hours in a day must spend time outdoors for at least two hours each day, weather permitting, unless a physician or parent advises otherwise in writing.

Meals/Snacks

Meal and snack time provide important social experiences for children. Adequate and appropriate nutrition is vital to children's health, growth, development and well-being. Menus are planned in accordance with Health Canada's "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide", "Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide- First Nations, Inuit and Metis" or "Nutrition For Healthy Term Infants" are varied and nutritious to promote healthy eating from an early age. Snacks and meals are served at regular meal times. Menu alternatives are available for children who need special diets. Drinking water must be available at all times. Providers must post weekly menus and these menus are planned in consultation with a parent of the child and the Home Child Care Advisors. Daily menu changes/substitutions must be noted. Discuss any special dietary requirements/food allergies with the Provider. While Providers try to accommodate the needs of the children, there may be circumstances where you will need to provide the food for your child. For infants under one year of age, parents must provide written instructions regarding the daily food intake of their child. Please be sure to package each item and label it with your child's name. You must complete specialized diet forms in order for the Provider to be able to give these items to your child. Please be sure to keep your Provider up to date on any changes in your child's dietary requirements or limitations. This information will be kept on file.

Attendance and Communication

It is important that you keep everyone informed of changes that affect the care of your child.

Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy

Your child's safety and well-being is of the greatest importance to us.

- **Parent/Guardian Responsibility:** You must notify your Home Child Care Provider if your child is going to be absent or if your child's schedule has changed for the day i.e. different arrival time. Notification must occur no later than approximately one hour before the scheduled arrival time.
- **Home Child Care Provider Responsibility:** where a child does not arrive for care and the parent/guardian has not communicated the absence or change in arrival time, the Home Child Care Provider must contact the parent/guardian to confirm the child's absence

Review the complete safe arrive and dismissal policy found here: niagararegion.ca/living/childcare/home-child-care/default.aspx. Which will include procedures regarding releasing a child from care.

Home Child Care Provider

After welcoming your child into the Provider's home, the Provider will note his or her arrival in their daily log. When you pick up your child, please make sure the Provider acknowledges your departure and marks the attendance accordingly. Pick up and drop off times are natural opportunities for communication with the Provider. If pick-up and drop-off times are too busy to allow communication with your Provider, you are encouraged to call your Provider during the day to arrange a time to talk.

Home Child Care Advisors

You need to notify your Home Child Care Advisors if you move or change your contact information or hours of care. If you have concerns regarding the care of your child, it is important to share them with the Home Child Care Advisor and your Home Child Care Provider. If you feel that your concerns have not been addressed to your satisfaction, you are encouraged to contact the Home Child Care Program Manager at 905-980-6000 extension 3823.

Children's Services Caseworker

You need to keep your Children's Services Caseworker informed of changes to your circumstances, including address, telephone numbers, employment/schooling, finances and hours of care. Due to limits on the number of children placed in a Home Child Care home, we cannot guarantee continued placement should your hours or days of care change.

Placement of Children

Home Child Care Advisors are familiar with each Provider and are able to assist you in determining the most suitable Provider and home for your child.

Termination of Care

You must notify your Provider, your Home Child Care Advisor and your Children's Services Caseworker immediately if you plan on terminating your care. Please provide at least two week's notice. Should you not require child care for a short period of time, please notify the Home Child Care Advisor and your Children's Services Caseworker to arrange for a break in service. Children's Services cannot guarantee that your child will be able to return to the same Provider.

Administration

Registration

Registration forms must be completed prior to starting in the home and each time there is a change to your information, such as a new address, phone number or hours of care. A Home Child Advisor will provide you with an orientation to the Home Child Care program and arrange for you to meet and interview a Provider about the care he/she provides. When you are comfortable with placing your child with a specific Provider, you must notify the Home Child Care Advisor of your decision so that the approval can be confirmed prior to starting care.

Fees

You will need to discuss any fees that you are required to pay with your Provider and work out a payment plan. Fees are determined based on your eligibility for a fee subsidy, which may cover all or part of the cost of child care. It is recommended that fee payments be made every two weeks to the Provider. Late payments or failure to pay may result in losing your child care placement. Children's Services cannot guarantee placement in another home, and your outstanding balance will need to be paid prior to any further service being provided to you.

Children's Services pays Providers according to the hours of care provided. Each month, the Provider prepares an attendance sheet and submits it to Children's Services. Providers only get paid for days they are available to provide child care.

Parent fees - effective January 1, 2023

Canada wide early learning child care eligible infant, toddler, preschool, kindergarten (3.8 years - 6 years)	
Hours attended	Parent fee
0 - 5:59 Hours	\$12
6 - 10:59 Hours	\$20.93
11- 15:59 Hours	\$31.16
16 - 23:59 Hours	\$40.38
Premium rate applied for weekend care only	An additional \$10.00 per day

Canada wide early learning child care ineligible school age (6.1 years - 12 years)		
Hours attended	Parent fee	Parent fee enhanced rate (resource consultant or behaviour consultant support)
0 - 5:59 Hours	\$23.80	\$26.00
6 - 10:59 Hours	\$44.30	\$47.60
11 - 15:59 Hours	\$65.95	\$71.10
16 - 23:59 Hours	\$85.45	\$91.65
Premium rate applied for weekend care only	An additional \$10.00 per day	An additional \$10.00 per day

Safety

Income Tax Receipts

It is your responsibility to obtain income tax receipts from your Provider for any fee payments you make to them for your child care. Providers must give you a receipt upon request.

Absent Days

You are given a number of absent days per year to be used when your child is ill or away on vacation. Should all of the absent days be used before the end of a 12-month period, your Provider will charge you the fee that she would otherwise receive from Children's Services for your child's care. You will not be charged an absent day if the Provider is unable to provide care due to illness or other reasons. Please discuss absent days with your Provider.

Absent days cannot be used if a Provider is not available to provide child care.

Hours of Care

The hours of approved child care are set by your Children's Services Caseworker and any changes to those hours must be approved by the Children's Services Caseworker. It is your responsibility to keep the Children's Services Caseworker and Home Child Care Advisor informed of any changes including employment, school schedule, etc. Children's Services does not compensate Providers for additional time due to the late pick up of children. Any extension of the hours of care that are not approved are a private arrangement between you and the Provider requiring you to pay for those hours.

Back-up Situations

We recommend that you arrange back-up care should your Provider become ill or be otherwise unable to care for your child. In cases of a planned absence, your Home Care Advisor or Children Services Caseworker will try to help arrange back-up care. Please remember that Providers are self-employed persons and may choose to take vacation as they wish, but they must also give ample notice.

Clothing

Scarves and mittens with strings are a potential safety hazard and are therefore not allowed. Please provide a full change of clothing that is marked with your child's name. Neither Niagara Region nor the Provider is responsible for any items that are lost or misplaced.

Diapers

You must provide diapers and wipes to the Provider -labelled with your child's name - as needed.

Footwear

Please ensure your child has proper fitting shoes in order for him or her to play safely. Running shoes are the recommended footwear.

Sun Safety

Your child may be playing outside during peak UV times of the day. During spring, summer and fall please apply sunscreen to your child before their arrival. Your Provider will apply sunscreen before afternoon outdoor play with your signed permission. Please note that some Providers do not supply sunscreen. Sun hats with a brim are also recommended to protect your child from the sun's harmful rays.

West Nile

Niagara Region Public Health recommends taking precautions against insect bites, particularly those which may cause West Nile. Your Provider will apply insect repellent with your signed permission.

Accidents

Your Provider will advise you of any accidents that result in a minor injury to your child. The Provider will ask you to review an accident report and sign it. The Provider will give you a copy of the report. Any incidents that occur will be recorded on the Log.

Duty to Report

Our staff and contracted Providers are obligated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* to report any suspected child abuse to Family and Children's Services of Niagara (FACS).

Supervision

Each child must be directly supervised at all times and only by the Provider. Each home has designated play, sleeping and outdoor areas which have been approved by our Home Child Care Advisors.

Custody

Where custodial arrangements are in place, the legal custodian must provide all relevant legal documentation to the Provider and Home Child Care Advisor regarding the conditions of custody. If no custodial arrangements are in place, we are obligated by the Courts of Justice Act to provide access to your child.

Sickness

The safety and well-being of children is of the highest priority in our program. We understand the concerns and needs of working parents and try to accommodate the difficulties associated with a sick child. However, Providers are not required to care for children who are ill or pose a risk of spreading sickness to other children in the Provider's home. We follow several policies and procedures to minimize the spread of infections and promote a healthy environment. We ask that you sanitize your hands before entering the main area of the centre. You are also required to keep your child home if he or she shows any of the following symptoms of illness:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Fever
- Pink eye
- Impetigo
- Rashes

If you suspect that your child may have an infectious disease such as measles, rubella or chicken pox, please have the condition diagnosed by a Doctor and notify us.

If your child has a contagious illness or condition, your child is required to be absent from the program for a prescribed period. It is very important that you have back-up child care arranged for your child. We are unable to care for ill children and cannot accommodate children in our program who need to be kept indoors because they are feeling unwell.

High fever, diarrhea, vomiting and persistent cough, as well as contagious diseases are conditions that cause great concern to Providers and other parents using the Provider's home. However, we are sensitive to the needs of the working parent to be a reliable employee, and urge Providers to accommodate your needs as far as they are able. We work with Providers in following the recommendations of Niagara Region Public Health in handling children with the conditions mentioned above.

Medication

Providers are permitted to give medications. You will need to sign a form giving instructions. The medication must be in the original container.

Allergies

As a safety precaution, please inform your Provider and Home Child Care Advisor of any food or environmental allergies your child has. We have an anaphylactic policy which will be shared with you if your child has allergies. Treatment information must be documented for your child's safety.

Head Lice: Children with head lice should be kept home until treated. If the Provider detects that your child has head lice, you will be contacted immediately and requested to pick up your child as head lice can spread very quickly. Your Provider will provide you with information on treatment.

Serious Occurrence: Should an occurrence of a serious nature happen, a report is made to the Ministry of Education and notification is posted in the Provider's home. Specific details regarding the occurrence are confidential.

Checklist for Parents

A change of clothes for indoors marked with your child's name.

An extra pair of mittens and winter hat marked with your child's name.

Remove drawstrings from clothing.

If your hours of arrival and departure time change, confirm with your Children's Services Caseworker if you are receiving subsidy.

Provide the name of an emergency back-up person.

Have a back-up plan for care if your child is ill.

Let us know if there are any routines or items that will help your child through transition times (ex. sleep, lunch).

If your child is sick, call the Provider and advise him/her of the nature of the illness and the expected return date.

If you are unable to pick up your child, make sure the Provider is notified and that you document any special arrangements you have made for the release of your child to someone other than yourself.

If you move, change jobs or change any of your contact information (address, phone numbers) please notify the Provider, the Home Child Care Advisor and your Children's Services Caseworker.

Make sure that you inform us of any food or other allergies that your child has.

Please note that Providers will only administer prescribed medication if provided in the original container labeled with your child's name and physician's name, and with completion of written authorization by a parent.



Niagara  **Region**

905-980-6000 or 1-800-263-7215
niagararegion.ca

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