

Regionally Operated Child Care Centres: Program Statement

Parent Handbook Insert

Authority: *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*

The Ministry of Education requires all licensed Child Care programs to develop and implement a Program Statement, which guides the day-to-day beliefs, values, and best practices of our program. Our licensed Child Care programs are guided by The How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years Document (HDLH).

Niagara Region Licensed Child Care programs recognize that all children are competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential.

Niagara Region Licensed Child Care programs strive to support optimal development, in partnership with parents, by ensuring that the Four Foundations of Learning and Development outlined within HDLH? are considered in all aspects of our programs.

The Four Foundations of Learning and Development	How Niagara Region Licensed Child Care Supports the Four Foundations
Belonging	We provide an environment that supports the diverse needs of all children and families in the Niagara Region. We strive to be accepting of all exceptionalities, and we adjust our environment to meet the needs of each unique child. To support inclusion, we consider each child's capabilities rather than focusing solely on their needs. We value and support the families we serve and recognize them as partners in their children's learning as we believe they are the child's first Educators. Our Educators are true professionals who build relationships with children and their families and connect with organizations within their community recognizing that "it takes a village to raise a child." Materials, photographs, posted material and resources reflect diversity in race, family composition, abilities etc.
Well-Being	Niagara Region Licensed Educators promote mindfulness throughout the day. Children are given opportunity to finish tasks and practice new skills. The moments spent caring for individual, physical needs are viewed as an opportunity to empower the children to be independent, to gain self-confidence and to be supported through the process with much or as little support as they need.

The Four Foundations of Learning and Development	How Niagara Region Licensed Child Care Supports the Four Foundations
Engagement	Planned programs are developed to reflect the children's interests and individual development, enabling children to choose the learning experiences, materials and play partners they want to engage with. Educators encourage and support children to make their own decisions and solve problems. They help children to experience logical consequences and hypothesis through their play to support children's feelings of engagement and value within the program and with others.
Expression	Educators encourage children's self-expression through their play, art mediums, music and movement, the use of open-ended questions and by providing time for children to reflect, hypothesize and share their responses.

Niagara Region Licensed Child Care recognizes that each child enters our care with their own unique history, personality, and abilities. All children develop new skills at their own pace. Observations of your child and their interests are the basis for planning developmentally appropriate experiences that nourish developmental domains.

We document children's learning to enable us to reflect on each child's unique development and to share heartfelt experiences with the children and families within our programs.

We encourage our Educators to recognize the importance of self-reflective practice and on-going professional learning opportunities to provide nurturing, responsive learning environments.

This program statement aligns with our local Inclusion Resource Services Model (IRSM). The IRSM is a team-based approach used in collaboration with the Educators, Inclusion Quality Coordinators (IQC) and Community Pedagogical Advisors (CPA). The IRSM provides the right level of support to children based on their individual needs while also increasing in-class coaching and collaboration with educators ensuring all children benefit from high-quality, inclusive environments.

Educators, child care centre support employees, students and volunteers are required to review the program statement annually and whenever modified with encouragement to reflect on the content continuously.

A) Approaches to promote health, safety, nutrition, and well-being of the children;

Your child's health and well-being are our top priority. Our Educators provide safe and appropriate supervision of children based on age, development, and environment.

Niagara Region Children's Services Licensed Child Care programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Ensuring that all employees are trained and able to appropriately respond to health, safety, and emergency situations.
- Providing opportunities for children to engage in play that is at a risk level that is appropriate for their development.
- Consulting with Niagara Region Public Health to ensure that all health and safety procedures are in accordance with research-based best practices.
- Providing nutritious foods and beverages that incorporate family and cultural preferences and are in accordance with the Canada's Food Guide, including one main meal and various snacks throughout the day.
- Being sensitive to and accommodating for children's food restrictions, allergies, and dietary preferences (personal, medical cultural, and religious).
- Creating family-style, positive eating environments with foods and portion sizes that are responsive to children's cues of hunger and fullness.
- Supporting mental health wellness by encouraging children's development of self-regulation, resiliency, and rich emotional vocabulary.
- Providing daily opportunities for sleep, rest or engagement in quiet activities depending on each individual child's needs and development.
- Providing children with time outdoors to engage in active play and learning in a safe environment.
- Monitoring children's engagement in activities to determine optimal periods for transitions.

B) Approaches to support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, guardians, childcare providers and employees;

Positive and responsive relationships are foundational to high-quality early learning and care. Our educators foster these relationships through the programs they implement, creating nurturing environments that reflect each child's interests. By offering thoughtful invitations and activities, they support children in reaching developmental milestones while building on their strengths, interests, and emerging skills.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Welcoming and greeting children and families at arrival and departure.
- Providing opportunities for children to be heard and for their contributions to be appreciated within their communities.
- Honouring children's ideas and contributions by responding to them in a respectful way and by focusing on using authentic language in our interactions with them.
- Interacting with children on their level.
- Getting to know the children on an individual basis to identify and work to proactively minimize stressors, and to help the children become self-aware.
- Actively listening to children and giving them the time and space to express themselves.
- Responding to challenging behaviours with the most appropriate and effective but least intrusive strategy.
- Reframing challenging behaviours by reflecting on why they may be occurring and what the child might be trying to express.
- Rather than just saying "No" to a child, we will explain the reason why and offer appropriate or acceptable options wherever possible.
- Encouraging children to be respectful of the ideas of others and modelling this ourselves.
- Being aware of the audience when discussing the child or children with co-workers or parents/guardians.
- Establishing professional and positive relationships with their colleagues in their rooms and the centres in which they work.
- Parents/guardians will receive pedagogical documentation on their child completed by the Educator(s)

c) Approaches to encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate;

Children's present and future well-being is influenced by their ability to self-regulate. (How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years)

Educators adjust the environment and activities to meet the needs of the children, while encouraging critical thinking and providing choices to all children.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Modeling resiliency and problem-solving skills with children and helping them to identify their feelings, the feelings of others, and possible solutions.

- Placing importance on encouraging children to develop authentic skills for solving problems, instead of having them take part in a prescribed solution (e.g., making a child say sorry).
- Staff will take the time to stop and listen and be present in the moment to build authentic relationships with children.
- Respecting a child's space and boundaries. Seeking consent where developmentally appropriate.(Offering of touch, hugs, etc. prior to engaging in or entering a child's personal space).

D) Approaches to foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry;

Our program builds on children's interests. Educators create learning environments which offer invitations based on children's interests where children can participate, explore, discover, and learn, giving them the opportunity to express themselves.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Observing and engaging with children to understand their questions and inquiries and using these as a guide for programming.
- Respecting and supporting the children's sense of curiosity and wonder.
- Viewing the environment as the "third teacher" and understanding the significant impact it has on our program.
- Organizing the learning environments in a way that makes them aesthetically appealing, uncluttered, engaging and welcoming.
- Incorporating materials that add to a homelike feeling within the learning environments (e.g., curtains, plants, lamps, natural lighting, soft colours, pillows, real materials).
- Providing interesting and complex open-ended learning materials for children to engage with and explore.
- Including real items (e.g., dishes, lamps, glass jars) for children to use and explore in their play.
- Providing natural elements (e.g., sticks, rocks, shells, plants) to help children explore the natural world.
- Role modeling and encouraging respect for materials in the shared learning environment.
- Engaging in open-ended conversations with children and asking thought-provoking questions to help expand the children's learning and the Educator's understanding of their explorations.
- Having an awareness of the many languages that children use to express themselves and providing opportunities for children to share their thoughts and ideas in a variety of ways.

- Reviewing documentation (i.e. Individual documentation booklets, story boards, pictures) of learning experiences with the children to encourage their reflection on their learning.
- Scaffolding upon the child's interests to further their learning experience.

E) Approaches to provide child-initiated and adult-supported experiences;

Learning environments are offered in all aspects of our program to support children's interests and development throughout the day. Educators create the learning environments through observation and discussion with the children.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Actively play partnering (i.e. Engaging, supporting and extending play) with children to expand their learning and support their social experiences.
- Knowing when to be an intentional observer in a play scenario and to support these learning experiences from afar.
- Asking to enter children's play when age appropriate to do so, to illustrate respect and sense of self.
- Showing flexibility in supporting children in their expansion of play and the use of play materials (e.g. Moving toys from one area to another in the playroom).
- Acting on teachable moments throughout the day during indoor and outdoor activities to expand children's interest and knowledge.
- Limiting the number of transitions throughout the day wherever possible to support the children and flow of the Program.
- Transition times, such as, to/from the playground or washroom, are designed to be safe, positive learning experiences for children through planned and spontaneous songs and experiences. Wherever possible we divide large groups into small groups, each with an Educator to support the children's physical and emotional well-being and support children's ability to manage routines and self-regulate effectively.

F) Approaches to plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development will be supported;

Our Educators offer learning environments which build on children's interests and are developmentally appropriate and challenging to the children who are in each group.

They have an extensive understanding of child development and know the development of the children in their care.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Facilitating referrals and working with community partners for children who may benefit from additional supports for healthy development.
- Supporting positive learning environments using inclusive programming tools and resources.
- Changes in interests are adapted to, and adjustments are made during experiences to support children's success and learning.
- Each child will be welcomed and greeted by the Educator in the room.
- Provocations and invitations will provide opportunity for all children's developmental needs to be met.
- Ensure there are enough materials in the room to promote choice in free play.
- Facilitate and model positive interactions between children.

G) Approaches to incorporate indoor, and outdoor play as well as active play, rest, and quiet time into the day;

Our programs offer a selection of activities for the children to participate in where natural elements and nature are introduced into your child's play environment.

Niagara Region Children's Services Licensed Child Care programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Providing at least two hours of time spent learning outside and 30 minutes for before and after-school care daily, weather permitting.
- Children are encouraged to explore the outdoor environment. We support this exploration by ensuring children are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions. For example, raincoats, splash pants and rubber boots for rainy day exploration.
- Provide provocations and learning invitations which encourage participation in all areas of the program.
- Monitoring children's engagement in activities to determine optimal periods for transitions.
- Providing daily opportunities for sleep, rest or engagement in quiet activities depending on each individual child's needs and development.

H) Approaches to foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about their children and the program;

'Family engagement' is not about giving families' information, but rather an opportunity to build, connect and strengthen relationships with each family and ultimately each child. We value parents as our partners and work with them through various activities and communication modes.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Communicating with families in-person daily, at minimum, both at arrival and departure.
- Educators seek out opportunities to talk with parents while being mindful and aware of the needs of the children.
- Communicating our perspective of the children's learning and development with families in documentation sent electronically and posted on documentation boards.
- Encouraging families to share their perspective on the children's learning and development through in-person sharing and electronic responses.
- Encouraging families to share pictures and stories of their child's time at home and with family (e.g. family photo wall in the learning environment).
- Incorporating aspects from a variety of cultures within the learning environment (e.g., food, music, art, photographs, artifacts).
- Inviting family participation within the daily program and encouraging them to share their varied perspectives and cultural experiences with the children.
- Creating a comfortable place in each learning environment for families to stay and visit.
- Planning special events and social activities for families to engage in throughout the year (e.g. Parent Engagement Nights, Graduation Ceremonies, and Seasonal Open House Events).
- Communicating with families about centre updates (newsletter, staffing updates etc.).

I) Approaches to involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children;

Our Child Care Centres work closely with the community to offer new opportunities within our programs to enrich our services. We value community partnerships within our services to enhance the lives of children, families, and employees.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Working closely with Regional Departments, recognizing their expertise and resources that they offer. These include Seniors Department, Public Health, Facilities Department and Social Assistance and Employment Opportunity.
- Establishing relationships with the Regional Long Term Care Homes. This could include visits, sending holiday cards etc.
- Collaborating with various professional services in Niagara to support families in care. These include, but not limited to; Bethesda, Niagara Children's Centre which includes Speech Language Pathology and the Inclusion Quality Coordinators (IQCs) and Pathstone Mental Health.

- Mentoring and supporting peers and participants of high school, adult learning programs, and college and/or university student placements at our centres.
- Supporting local food purchasing where available
- Collaborating and engaging with community partners where possible (i.e., library, museum).

J) Approaches to support staff or others who interact with the children in relation to professional learning;

All employees participate in continuous learning in their respective employment that is offered both internally and externally.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Educators meet to collaborate on ideas and information that help to develop programs.
- Working in collaboration with their team partners to evaluate, develop and implement the planned program.
- Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) are required to participate in the College of Early Childhood Educators Continuous Professional Learning Program.
- Having Centre Champions who attend community network groups where they have the opportunity to share information they learned with their colleagues (e.g. via email or at staff meetings).

K) Approaches to document and review the impact of the strategies on the children and their families set out in clauses A to J above;

We document, measure, review/revise our practices and policies on a regular basis, taking into consideration the direction of the Ministry of Education, *Child Care Early Years Act, 2014*, *The College of Early Childhood Educators Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* and Public Health recommendations. We strive for continuous improvement to support best practices in all our services, welcome input and feedback from our families.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Ongoing observations, documentation, and reflection of children's learning to plan for individual and group settings learning needs.
- Educators are provided with time to prepare documentation to make learning visible.
- Team meetings and staff meetings are planned to discuss children, programming, centre initiatives and education in the field of Early Childhood Education.

- Conducting anonymous parent surveys yearly to secure feedback and suggestions regarding our program and the service we provide where the results of the survey will be shared with families.

L) Approaches to the use of technology within the program;

Our programs recognize that technology can be a supportive tool when used intentionally and in a developmentally appropriate manner. Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs emphasize hands-on, play-based learning experiences; therefore, technology use within the learning environment is limited and purposeful.

We believe that children learn best through active exploration, social interaction, and engagement with their environment. Technology is not used as a primary learning tool, but rather as a supplement to enhance learning experiences when appropriate.

Niagara Region Children's Services licensed childcare programs support these goals through the implementation of a variety of approaches, including;

- Ensuring technology is used sparingly and with clear educational intent, and not as passive entertainment.
- Using technology to support learning opportunities such as research and extending children's interests.
- Avoiding prolonged screen time and ensuring that technology does not replace active play, outdoor learning, or social interactions.
- Using technology primarily as a tool for Educators.
- Supporting children in developing an early understanding of technology use in a safe, respectful, and supervised manner.
- Ensuring digital content is age-appropriate and inclusive.
- Maintaining hands-on, play-based experiences as a priority.