



Upper Canada
Child Care

PARENT HANDBOOK

1. HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION

Upper Canada Child Care Centres was incorporated with the objective of providing high quality, affordable child care in Ontario under the guidelines of the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA). Our first non-profit child care centre opened in Toronto in 1983, in York Region in 1991, and Simcoe County in 1989. We have grown to over 80 centres across all three regions.

2. PHILOSOPHY

Children learn in relationship to their surroundings and others, through collaboration, exploration, observation and reflection. Children learn when they are actively engaged in experiences that are personally meaningful, reflect their own interests, and allow them to make connections between what they already know and what they are experiencing. We know children learn when they possess a sense of physical and emotional well-being, and are willing to take risks and meet manageable challenges.

Most importantly, we know that children learn through their play. Lively or quiet, we see the connection between children's play-freely chosen, enjoyable, active and guided by personal interests-and the learning and social development that helps children succeed.

At Upper Canada Child Care Centres, we build on caring, responsive relationships between our educators, children, and families to create learning environments that foster a sense of belonging, provide rich opportunity for play, and cultivate each child's competence, capacity and potential.

3. PROGRAM STATEMENT

Upper Canada Child Care is committed to providing quality programs that are consistent with Ministry of Education policies and pedagogy, as outlined in the following documents:

- *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy in the Early Years (HDLH)*
- *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)*
- *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research About Young Children*

UCCC views all children as competent, curious individuals who are rich in potential and capable of complex thinking. Each child is a unique person with their own interests, abilities and dispositions, and deserves to feel accepted, understood, supported and respected within our programs.

Through focusing on the four foundations of learning: well-being, engagement, belonging and expression, our programs promote physical, social and emotional health, and foster communities of learners made up of children, their families and educators.

With these priorities in mind, we have defined a set of goals and approaches, in compliance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, that guide our daily practices. For further details, please refer to our *Program Statement* document attached to this handbook.

4. OUR VISION and VALUES

Our Vision

"A smile on each child's face...every day."

Our Values

Support

We offer tools and resources that help build successful partnerships throughout our childcare communities.

Safety

We provide an environment that promotes active exploration of the world, ensuring physical well-being and emotional security.

Trust

We foster a culture of integrity by establishing consistent expectations and clear boundaries while acknowledging the competencies and capabilities of children, families, and staff.

Professionalism

We practice our profession in collaboration with one another, demonstrating a commitment to advocacy, ethical conduct, and continuous professional learning.

Respect

We cultivate meaningful relationships by honouring diversity, and engaging in authentic communication.

5. OUR STAFF

Upper Canada Child Care centres are staffed by teams of dedicated educators with diverse backgrounds that reflect the communities we serve. Registered Early Childhood Educators are graduates of a college or university early childhood education program and are registered with the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators, our professional, self-regulatory body.

All centre staff hold a valid Standard First Aid Certificate with infant/child CPR-C and a clear Vulnerable Sector Criminal Reference Check. Staff participate in mandatory workplace training including, but not limited to: *The Workplace Health and Safety Act*, *WHMIS*, and *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA)*. As well, each centre has staff on site with a current *Food Handler Certificate*.

Upper Canada Child Care staff are required to follow agency policies and procedures, as well as public health, and fire regulations, and participate in an annual policy review.

We believe that professional development is important. Training provides teachers opportunities to learn new skills and access information on current issues. Our staff participate in a variety of opportunities, including regular training sessions, workshops, and an agency conference. Educators take part in regular team and centre meetings, regional networking sessions, and committees. Registered Early Childhood Educators are also required to meet the continuous learning requirements of the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators.

Supply Staff

When a permanent staff member is absent, supply staff are employed to deliver the program. They must meet the same requirements as the staff they are replacing.

Volunteers and Students

Upper Canada Child Care centres are in partnership with various Community Colleges, Universities, and Secondary Schools to provide opportunities for students to complete practical placements. Students make significant contributions to our programs and the experience they gain is invaluable to their studies.

All Upper Canada Child Care Centres are in compliance with the Ministry of Education requirements for supervision of children by staff, volunteers, and placement students. Unsupervised access to children will not be permitted for persons less than eighteen (18) years of age, placement students, or volunteers. For more detailed information about this policy, please consult with the centre supervisor.

All students are required to provide confirmation of a clear vulnerable sector criminal reference check and medical assessment prior to commencing placement at the centre and to review and sign centre policies prior to the start of their placement.

6. DAILY PROGRAM

Upper Canada Child Care programs support play based learning in which children have the opportunity to explore and interact with indoor and outdoor environments at their own pace, according to their own interests. These experiences provide the opportunity for active, creative, and meaningful exploration, which develops self-confidence. Self-directed play also fosters a sense of ownership in the process of learning and belonging in a child's learning group and environment.

Our approach to programming is rooted in the understanding that children's growth follows a developmental sequence that is universal, but through which, each child proceeds at different rates and in unique ways. We use the *Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT)* and *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (HDLH)* documents to guide us in our approach to planning.

Through careful observation, we are able to identify the developing skills and interests of children in our care. Daily experiences are planned based on these observations, however plenty of opportunity for spontaneity is still provided. Our daily activities are recorded and posted to provide insight into our day while classroom documentation and individual portfolios are used to reflect on our learning.

Our programs provide care for a variety of ages:

Infants (3-18 months)

We focus on providing a warm and loving atmosphere where low ratios allow educators to provide individualized care for each infant. Each child's distinct sleep, feeding and play routines are respected, and staff work with families to ensure that routines are consistent with those at home.

Infants are nurtured through a variety of sensory, language and movement experiences. There is time for independent exploration, group play and one to one interactions with educators. Through frequent dialogue and daily written records of each infant's activities (e.g. sleep, food intake, and diaper routine), we foster effective communication between families and teachers which is critical to a positive experience with infant care.

Ratio 1 staff: 3 infants

Toddlers (18-30 months)

Toddlers are able and motivated to move and explore their environments. Our toddler programs provide children opportunities for safe, supervised play, while encouraging their exploration and desire to test the boundaries of their abilities. Educators offer children a variety of creative, sensory, language, music and motor experiences. As social skills develop, educators support toddlers with their emerging capacity for interactive and cooperative play in a warm, positive environment.

Ratio 1 staff: 5 children

Preschool (2.5-5 years)

Educators offer a variety of activities and experiences based on the emerging skills and interests of children. Art, games, loose parts play, sensory play and cooking all foster emerging language, literacy, numeracy and science skills such as observing, inferring and predicting. Dramatic play, music, movement and gross motor experiences also build language and social skills, and physical competency.

Through careful planning of environments, children learn to explore, differentiate, make choices, and understand more complex concepts. By viewing our children as competent and capable, we encourage the development of independence, resilience and self-help skills.

Ratio 1 staff: 8 children

Kindergarten (4-5 years)

Our Junior/Senior Kindergarten programs follow the ELECT and HDLH programs which support the Ministry of Education curriculum, to provide an extension of the school day within a play-based environment. Planned experiences which promote the development of competency and self-esteem are offered. Children are encouraged to provide input into their day and are invited to make suggestions for planning and their environment. Full time care is available on professional development days and school holidays.

Ratio 1 staff: 13 children

School Age Programs (6-12 years)

A diverse choice of activities are provided to school age clients, including: sports, arts, crafts, and games. A period of time is also offered for children who may choose to work on homework. School Age programs implement elements of the ELECT and HDLH curriculums and principles. Full time care is available on professional development days and school holidays.

Ratio 1 staff: 15 children or 1 staff: 20 children (ages 9-12)

Nursery School (2-4 years)

Some centres offer a nursery school program for children ages 2 to 4 years. Each child is supported in developing social awareness through interaction with other children and with responsible, accepting adults. This program also implements the ELECT and HDLH curriculums.

Ratio 1 staff: 8 children

Summer Camp (Kindergarten & School Age)

Summer camps provide an atmosphere of respect, comfort, and security. Children are encouraged to discover their own abilities and interests within an environment that promotes responsible choices. Our program features field trips, special theme days, nature experiences, and arts and crafts with an emphasis on promoting friendships, safety, cooperation—and most of all “fun”.

Younger children also enjoy a fun-filled summer featuring age appropriate field trips, theme days, arts and crafts, and many indoor and outdoor activities. Many of our summer camp locations are operated out of local schools.

7. GUIDING BEHAVIOUR

Steps to Guiding Behaviour:

Staff encourage safe, acceptable, and appropriate behaviour by:

- Helping children to develop positive relationships with each other by supporting their efforts to join play, by focusing attention on positive interactions with others, and by encouraging children to value one another’s individuality.
- Supporting children in their efforts to respond to challenges and conflict by encouraging them to take an active role in problem solving and identifying alternative solutions.
- Responding sensitively to emotions, and encouraging children to identify and label feelings. Educators recognize that feelings of distress, fear and discomfort may take time to resolve, and they allow children the time and support required to recover from difficult feelings.
- Encouraging children to identify what sorts of activities and experiences help them to remain calm and focused, and what type of activities they need to limit to maintain self-regulation.
- Providing small group experiences and smooth transitions that minimize distractions and promote positive interactions.

Client Conduct

To promote a safe, comfortable, and inclusive atmosphere, each child and parent/guardian is at all times expected to:

- Be respectful of self, others, the environment (both indoor and outdoor), equipment, materials and property.
- Communicate through listening and speaking in ways that attempt to resolve conflict in a peaceful manner. Abuse of any kind (e.g. verbal, physical, emotional etc.) is not tolerated.

Employee/student/Volunteer Conduct

To promote a safe, comfortable, and inclusive atmosphere, each employee/student/volunteer of Upper Canada Child Care is at all times expected to:

- Uphold the core values of Upper Canada Child Care: *Safety, Respect, Trust, Professionalism and Support*.
- Follow approaches to child guidance that are outlined in the *Program Statement*. All staff, students, and volunteers are mentored and monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that these approaches, and their accompanying strategies, are implemented in a manner consistent with our core values. When issues or concerns arise, staff are provided with enhanced supports to help them develop the skills required to be successful.

The following actions are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment of a child.
- Physical restraint of a child, such as confining a child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself, or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining a child, or confining a child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame, frighten, or undermine the self-respect, dignity, or self-worth of a child.
- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Communication with families, school personnel, and external resources is important to ensure that the developmental needs of all children are met. When indicated, and with written parental agreement, children requiring specialized interventions may be referred to community agencies and organizations for these services. Access to external resources may involve additional cost to parents.

8. PARENT ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Parents/guardians are encouraged to visit, participate in programs, and attend special events such as BBQ's, family workshops and holiday celebrations. Parents/guardians are also encouraged to be involved in ways that reflect their interests and talents. (E.g. sharing recipes, reading stories, or leading a classroom activity, etc.)

Ongoing communication between families and staff is essential, and happens through dialogue, electronic communication, newsletters and notices posted in the centres. Parents/guardians have the opportunity annually to evaluate our programs through a confidential *Family Satisfaction Survey*.

Resolving Issues and Concerns

A positive partnership between parents/guardians and staff is important to the development of each child. When families have a concern related to the care of their child and/or the operation of the program it becomes the individual and collective responsibility of those involved to take action.

For further details regarding our resolution process, please refer to the *Parent Issues and Concerns* policy attached to this handbook.

Reporting Abuse or Suspected Abuse

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. If a parent expresses concern that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) directly.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to CAS as per the "duty to report" requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

9. NUTRITION

A well-balanced and nutritious diet is essential for healthy growth and development. Our lunch and snack menus are developed in accordance with Ministry of Education requirements and *Canada's Food Guide*, and are approved by a certified nutritionist. Centres that do not have facilities for food preparation are served by approved catering companies. We focus on providing a variety of nutritious ingredients, including whole grains, legumes and fresh fruits and vegetables. Menus are changed seasonally, and are posted in each centre.

We strive to maintain a nut-safe environment, and as a result we prohibit food from home in the centre. School age children are required to bring a nutritious nut-safe lunch to the program when attending for full days, and our staff check all lunches for unsafe products. All items that contain or may contain peanuts are returned home. We provide alternate menu options for children with any other food allergies and dietary restrictions.

We promote healthy eating habits by encouraging children to identify their own needs, to make informed choices with food, and to take an active role in serving themselves.

10. HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Staff perform a daily visual check to ensure that children are well enough to participate in the program. If staff observe signs of illness that would prevent your child from full participation in the daily routine, your child will not be accepted into the program, at that time. If your child becomes ill during the day, you will be contacted to pick up your child. Children who have a communicable disease, or display symptoms of such, cannot be cared for in the centre. They may return when they are no longer communicable and are symptom-free for 24 hours.

The exclusionary policy is set by the regional health services departments. In the event of an outbreak, the local public health requirements/guidelines will be followed. Upon registration families will receive a copy of *Recommended Exclusion Guidelines for Common Communicable Illnesses*. Please notify the centre supervisor whenever your child will be absent due to illness, appointments or vacation.

Daily Outdoor Play

Regulations stipulate that outdoor play is part of our daily routine. If your child is too ill to play outdoors due to an acute illness, they should remain at home until full participation is possible.

Our programs will continue to participate in outdoor play during mildly inclement weather (i.e. light rain, cold weather conditions). Please ensure your child comes ready to participate by providing clothing suitable for physical activity, the weather, and the season. A second set of clothes should be kept in a labelled bag at the centre. Clothing should encourage independent dressing. Please note that although we will do our best to avoid losses, the centre will not be responsible for lost clothing or articles.

Our programs often go on neighborhood walks, visiting parks and natural outdoor areas, such as fields, ponds and forests. These outings provide children the opportunity to explore natural environments and challenge themselves through physical activity and experiences.

Rest and Sleep Times

Sleep is important to each child's health and well-being, and is integral to physical, cognitive and emotional development. Children vary in the amount of sleep that they need, however health experts agree upon general guidelines for sleep requirements. Good habits, including established nap and bedtime routines, help to ensure that young children get the amount of sleep required for optimal development.

In accordance with CCEYA regulations, our centres establish daily routines which provide for sleep or rest needs of children, as determined in consultation with each child's family, and will implement supervision measures to ensure safety during sleep time routines.

Administration of Medication

The centre will administer prescription medications to children, in accordance with provincial legislation. This requires that the following expectations are followed by families:

- Provide centre with written medical authorization, including the dosage and times a drug is to be given.
- Medication must be received in the original container/packaging, clearly labeled with the child's name, name of the drug, dosage, the date of purchase, and instructions for storage and administration. Parents/guardians should ask the pharmacist to divide the dosage into two containers so one can be left at home and one left at the centre until the dosage is finished.
- Directly hand any medication to a staff member. Medication is not to be left in a child's bag.
- Staff will not administer expired medication.
- Non-prescription medications must be accompanied with a doctor's note and will be administered according to the policies outlined for the administration of prescription medications.

Individualized Anaphylaxis Plans

In accordance with CCEYA regulations, development of an *Individualized Anaphylaxis Plan*, with input from the child's physician (optional) and parent, is required at the time of enrollment for children who are at risk of an anaphylactic reaction. Each plan must include child specific emergency procedures to be followed by staff in the event of an anaphylactic reaction.

Any child who requires emergency medication such as an EPIPEN must have the appropriate medication present in the centre during their attendance or they will not be allowed to participate.

Individualized Medical Plans

In accordance with CCEYA regulations, development of an individualized medical plan, with input from the child's physician (optional) and parent, is required at the time of enrollment for children who have special medical conditions. Each plan must include directions regarding medical devices and medications required to support the child, and specific emergency procedures to be followed by staff in the event of a medical reaction.

Emergency Medical Attention Procedures

In an emergency, staff will take any or all of the following actions:

- Call an ambulance (911)
- Contact a parent or guardian
- Contact the emergency contacts
- Administer reasonable first aid measures

11. General Operating Procedures

Days and Hours of Operation

Full time care is provided five days per week. We are open fifty-two weeks a year. Our general hours of operation are from 7:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. The specific hours of operation are posted in the child care centre.

We will be closed for the following holidays:

Labour Day	Victoria Day
Family Day	Boxing Day
Thanksgiving Day	Canada Day
Good Friday	New Year's Day
Easter Monday	Civic Holiday (Simcoe Day)
Christmas Day	

Note: All centres close at 3:00 pm on Christmas Eve (December, 24th)

Our goal is to provide service under all circumstances. Unexpected closures due to conditions beyond our control may result in an inability to provide services within our regular hours of operation. It may also be necessary to provide care at an alternate location. Upper Canada Child Care makes every effort to provide the regular level of care in these situations. In the case of a prolonged closure, the Board of Directors will determine any changes to hours of operation. Families will be advised of changes as soon as possible.

Admissions and Orientation

Families are accepted into the program on a first-come, first-served basis (priority is given to siblings and transfers from other Upper Canada Child Care sites). Families may be added to a waitlist due to limited availability in a program. A child's position on the waiting list will be available to their parent(s) upon request by contacting the centre supervisor. In order to maintain privacy and confidentiality, the position of the family on the waiting list will only be provided to the parent(s) named in the registration.

When space becomes available, the centre will contact families on waiting lists with directions to complete the process. A child is considered enrolled once all registration and financial forms have been submitted, confirmation from the program supervisor is received, and a child care contract is signed. Prior to a child's start date, families are encouraged to attend an orientation session. Orientation is an opportunity to ease transition of the family into the program routine.

Information Updates

Under the CCEYA, families are required to provide the centre with the following information:

- Home address and telephone numbers (including cell phone numbers)
- Work address, telephone numbers, and name of company
- Addresses and telephone numbers of the people you have authorized as emergency contacts and/or to pick-up and drop-off children
- Name, addresses and telephone number of your family physician
- Immunization dates
- Custody arrangements and/or special circumstances

To abide by a temporary or final custody order, separation agreement, or other domestic contract, a copy of the official document is required. It is the registering parent's responsibility to notify the supervisor of any changes to any agreement, in writing. Please ensure that all details are included. If a parent is experiencing problems associated with custody and access, please discuss this with the supervisor.

Arrivals, Departures and Release of Children

For the safety and protection of children, Upper Canada Child Care ensures strict procedures regarding arrival and departure of children. Staff will ensure that parents/guardians deliver their children directly to a teacher, and notify staff when they are taking their children home. Daily attendance records will be kept with each group at all times, and parents/guardians are required to sign the attendance record upon arrival and departure of their children.

You are required to notify centre if someone other than a main contact person will be picking up your child. If this person is unknown to staff on duty, they will be required to show photo identification.

Late Pick-Up Fee Policy

Occasional and unforeseen circumstances may occur causing parents/guardians to arrive after closing time. Late fee rates are posted in the centre and are paid directly to the staff supervising your child. Our *Late Fee Policy* is posted in the centre and is designed to encourage parents/guardians to arrive on time. We do not provide an extended hours service and ask that you respect the staff and the hours of operation.

If a child has not been picked up longer than one hour after the centre closes, and staff are unable to reach families or emergency contacts, we are required to notify the regional Children's Aid Society and local police department.

Payment Policies

- Once placement has been confirmed for your child, a non-refundable family registration fee of \$40.00 is required to register.
- A security deposit of \$200.00 per family (families receiving fee assistance are exempted) is required. It will be applied to your last week(s) of care when you withdraw from the centre with the required notice.
- Fees are processed exclusively in the form of monthly pre-authorized payment. Accounts will be debited according to individual payment terms. Either the full fee amount will be debited on the 1st business day of the month or two equal payments are withdrawn on the 1st and 15th of each month. Any payments which fall on a weekend or holiday will be withdrawn on the next business day.
- All payments returned from the bank (i.e. NSF) will be subject to a processing fee of \$40.00
- Fees will not be refunded for statutory or civic holidays, school holidays, professional activity days or any absent days due to vacation or illness.
- Failure to resolve any unpaid or overdue balances will ultimately result in termination of service. Child care spaces will not be held for accounts in arrears.
- A receipt of payment will be issued to the account holder(s) noted on the preauthorized payment form after year end for income tax purposes. Bank statements serve as interim receipts

Withdrawal Procedures

Families are required to provide one month written notice to the centre supervisor prior to withdrawal or making changes to child care arrangements. If appropriate notice is not provided, fees will continue to be charged to the account for the one month notice period.

Should the supervisor of the program, in consultation with the director, determine that a child cannot adjust to the program, or if the parent has not upheld the terms of the *Child Care Contract*, termination of services may occur. The process of termination for all children will include any or all of the following steps:

- Documentation of incidents
- Meeting with appropriate parties
- Counseling and/or consultation with outside agencies
- Referral to an outside agency
- Suspension
- Removal from the program
- Notification to the appropriate government entities/Board of Directors

The safety of all enrolled children is our primary concern. The provision of our service is conditional upon the compliance of parents and children with our Code of Conduct outlined in the *Child Care Contract*. If it is determined that we can no longer provide care, a signed, written notice of permanent withdrawal will be provided to a family one month in advance. However, behaviour that poses a safety hazard will not be accepted and may result in immediate termination of service.

Please note that a child suspended from school may not attend a child care centre located on the same site during the suspension.

Emergency Management Procedures

Each Upper Canada Child Care Centre has written policies and procedures regarding the management of emergency situations that outline:

- Preparation for emergency management, including establishing appropriate gathering/evacuation sites and regularly conducting evacuation drills.
- Roles and responsibilities of centre staff during emergency situations.
- Guidelines for communication with parents, emergency personnel and external supports throughout an emergency. Parents will be notified electronically and/or by phone when a program has been evacuated due to an emergency event.
- Procedures to support children and staff who experienced distress during the emergency. For detailed information regarding emergency management procedures, please consult with the supervisor.

Workplace Harassment, Bullying, and Violence

All Upper Canada Child Care Centres are in compliance with *Bill 168* of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* relating to violence and harassment in the workplace. For detailed information about the policies, please refer to the bulletin board in the centre where these policies and procedures are posted.

Serious Occurrence Notification Form Posting

All Upper Canada Child Care Centres follow Ministry of Education requirements to post a *Serious Occurrence Notification Form* at the child care centre where a serious occurrence has taken place. The *Serious Occurrence Notification Form* will be posted within the timelines of the Ministry requirements and will maintain the confidentiality of the parties involved. For detailed information about the policies, please consult with the supervisor at the centre.

Information Sharing Consent and Privacy

A signed Information *Sharing Consent Form* enables sharing of pertinent information, related to your child, between the school and the child care centre. Ongoing communication between the two provides consistency and enhances a student's educational experience.

The collection, use, and disclosure of parental and children's personal information by a centre is for the purpose of providing childcare services to children enrolled in centre programs. The centre will protect the privacy of all personal information in its possession in compliance with prevailing privacy legislation and in accordance with the Upper Canada Child Care *Privacy Policy*

Field Trips and Outings

Centres may go on occasional field trips that require bus transportation. Families will be notified in advance of all trip details.

The Parent Handbook will be available to all parents/guardians. Families will be notified anytime updates are made. This Parent Handbook is **not** complete unless accompanied by:

- A document which details fees, ages, and operating hours of the centre for which you are registered.
- The Upper Canada Child Care *Program Statement*
- *Parent Issues and Concerns Policy*

Please contact the centre supervisor for any further clarification needed.