

YMCA Forest School

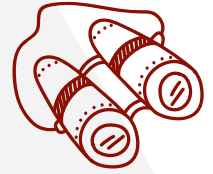
at Cedar Glen
Outdoor Centre
Handbook



Table of Contents



YMCA of Greater Toronto Core Values, Mission, & Vision	3
Land Acknowledgement & Commitment to Reconciliation	4
What is Forest School?	5
About YMCA Forest School at Cedar Glen	6-7
Adventurous Play	8
Our Staff	9
Typical Day at YMCA Cedar Glen Forest School	10
Environmental Sustainability	11
Location and Directions	11
Preparing for Forest School	12-13
Policies	13
Registration, Fees, and Refund Policy	14
Arrival & Departure Procedures	15
Food Policies	15
Health & Safety Policies	16-19
Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons	20
Educator Responsibilities	20
Planning, Observation, & Documentation	21
Staff to Child Ratios	21
Behaviour Guidance	21
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging	22
Financial Assistance	22
Family Communication	23
Resolving Concerns & Issues	23-24
Withdrawal of Services	24
Privacy	25



YMCA of Greater Toronto Core Values, Mission, & Vision

Our charity has a 170-year history of igniting the potential in people in the Greater Toronto Area. From the opening of our first child care centres during the Second World War to hosting food banks and vaccine clinics during the COVID-19 pandemic, our tradition of responding to pressing community needs endures. Today, you'll find our programs and services at more than 440 locations across the GTA.

Our Mission: The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charity that ignites the potential in people, helping them grow, lead, and give back to their communities.

Our Vision: Vibrant communities where everyone can shine.

Our Values

- **Inclusiveness:** We create welcoming places and programs where everyone feels they can belong
- **Integrity:** We are truthful, trustworthy, and take responsibility for our choices, actions, and commitments
- **Kindness:** We are caring and compassionate
- **Optimism:** We believe in the strengths and potential in people and communities
- **Respect:** We treat every person with dignity
- **Well-being:** We are dedicated to people's physical, social, and mental health

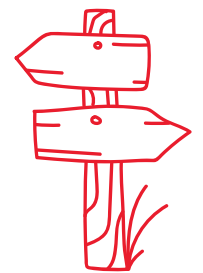


Land Acknowledgement & Commitment to Truth Telling & Reconciliation

We at Cedar Glen would like to take a moment to acknowledge the land we play on. We also encourage you to take a moment and reflect on your personal journey of truth and reconciliation.

YMCA Cedar Glen is located on ancestral lands home to the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island. This area homed the Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-oh-show-nee), the Ojibway/Chippewas (Oh-jib-way/ Chip-eh-wah), Petun (Pee-tun), Anishinabek (Ah-nish-in-nah-bek), and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. These lands are the ancestral territories of many nations, including the Mississaugas nations, the Huron-Wendat, and were the ancestral territories of the Tionontati or Petun. Before the European Settlers arrived here, these lands were already under a treaty. Originally formed by the vast Indigenous communities that shared this Territory long before contact, The Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Treaty, was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe Confederacies, and Mississaugas to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes (“the Dish”).

The Cedar Glen community continues to recognize and work with Indigenous community partners and alongside the Indigenous Advisory Circle to Cedar Glen. We strive to understand past injustices and continue to move towards truth and reconciliation.





What is Forest School?

Forest School originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s, and has since been adopted all around the world.

The Child and Nature Alliance of Canada (CNAC) defines Forest School as “an education ethos and practice that centres the Land and the child-at-play. Children and educators build a relationship with the Land through regular and repeated access to the same outdoor space over an extended period of time. Educators support learning through a pedagogical framework that is rooted in place and play, directed and inspired by the child (emergent curriculum), and driven by a process of inquiry.”

Forest school, unlike more traditional outdoor education experiences, is not focused on learning ABOUT the outdoors, rather on learning IN the outdoors. Children are free to choose and direct their own play, and are supported by observant, qualified, caring educators.

The Principles of Forest School are:

- 1) Forest School takes place in an outdoor space
- 2) Forest School supports regular access to the same outdoor space, and supports children in developing a relationship with the Land and an understanding of themselves as part of the natural world
- 3) Forest School educators hold that children are competent, curious, and capable learners
- 4) Forest School is led by educators who share power with learners through play-based, emergent, and inquiry driven teaching and learning methods
- 5) Forest School educators value children’s play (self-directed, freely chosen, and intrinsically motivated) and allow children the time to dive deeply into their play
- 6) Forest School educators view risky play as an integral part of healthy childhood development; knowledgeable, qualified educators support children to co-manage risk
- 7) Forest School relies on loose, natural materials to support open-ended, creative play and learning

CNAC commits to centering and honouring Indigenous voices through Forest School and recognizes that Indigenous people from across Turtle Island have educated and raised their children on this Land since time immemorial. CNAC recognizes that the Forest School program and content was not co-created with Indigenous people, and imposes a settler/colonial way of being with the Land. Efforts toward building a reciprocal relationship are on-going and include a recreation of the Forest School Practitioner’s Course with Indigenous partners across Canada.

To learn more, check out

<https://childnature.ca/about-forest-and-nature-school/>





About YMCA Forest School at Cedar Glen

YMCA Forest School grew out of a desire to connect children with each other and the Land, and allow children the time and space to explore the wonder of the natural world. Cedar Glen's 263 acre property is perfectly suited to support exploration, inquiry, and imaginative play in a natural setting.

As thought and development has been put into the Forest School program on site, the Indigenous Advisory Circle to Cedar Glen has provided input and continues to engage with the Forest School program and its staff and participants. We hope to continue to grow our programming to give equal voice to both Indigenous and Western worldviews so Forest School can become a safe, meaningful, and culturally relevant experiences for all participants.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto has a long history of delivery high quality children's programming through our Health & Fitness Centres, Camps & Outdoor Education experiences, and highly regarded childcare programs. The way the YMCA views and works with children and values play fits perfectly with the Forest School model. As outlined in our YMCA Early Learning Parent Handbook:

At the YMCA we understand that children learn through play. Play by definition is enjoyable, spontaneous, active, and undertaken without external goals and sanctions. This means children are self-learners and do not require an adult to choose what or how they should learn. When the child's natural activity of play is supported by caring and responsive professionals in positive, developmentally appropriate learning environments, capacity, curiosity, and potential will be maximized.



The YMCA of Greater Toronto also has a “Statement on Play” that aligns with Forest School perfectly:

“Each child can reach their full human potential through play. Our intention is to provide the best possible environment that allows the best possible play for all children in our care. We endeavor to meet the play needs of all children and must do whatever possible to support the natural urge to play. Play helps the child to be both engaged with everyday activities and to be absorbed in an ecstatic self-forgetfulness. It ensures involvement, enjoyment, and various forms of success. Play can be powerful or profound, but it is always purposeful. Play is a vehicle that propels learning and development. Play and development are intertwined; neither precedes the other. All domains of development are supported by play, and play has the additional benefit of being self-initiated and therefore a joy rather than a chore. Play makes discovery pleasurable, but it also propels the child into the vast realm of learning. Play provides a way for children to be healthy in body, mind, and spirit.

Play fosters skill development. It offers opportunities for gaining new skills as well as refining existing ones.

Play is directly linked to the child’s learning. The child’s cognitive development and academic success are enhanced by the play experience.

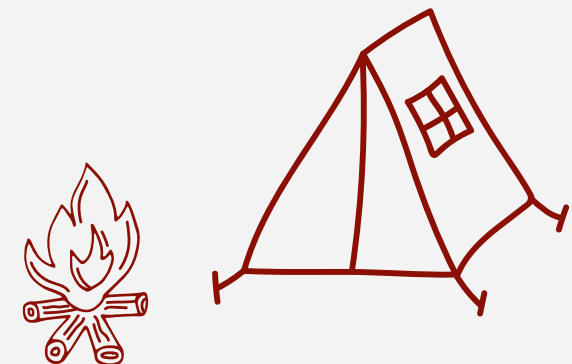


Play is physical and increases activity levels, fitness, balance, gross motor skills, and fine motor actions. A wide range of scientific, mathematical, perspective-taking, and other cognitive processes occur in play.

Play is social and aids in language learning while supporting social skills development. Self concepts and emotions are better understood through play, as is the building of emotional intelligence.

Important self-regulatory skills may be acquired and reinforced through play.

Play builds resilience and can help children manage stress. There are often therapeutic benefits to play. Typically children direct their play in ways that address their own socioemotional issues.”





Adventurous Play

In addition to the YMCA Statement on Play, at YMCA Forest School we support children in adventurous play. Adventurous play helps children become confident, capable people who have a sound sense of their abilities and interests, and the ability to take age-appropriate responsibility for their own safety. It is central to healthy childhood development, and the benefits have been confirmed by numerous research projects.

Adult anxieties about children can lead adults to over protect them. This makes it harder for children to learn the consequences of their actions and can make learning less engaging. Furthermore, educators, public health professionals, and child development experts are concerned that children today spend less time playing and learning outdoors, with damaging results for them and society. For this reason, unstructured outdoor play is central to the YMCA Forest School experience.

YMCA Cedar Glen takes reasonable steps to manage and balance risks alongside our Forest School participants, while at the same time allowing children to play freely. While minor injuries like bruises, bumps, and scrapes are not uncommon, serious injuries are rare, and life-changing injuries and fatalities are unlikely in the extreme. Still, as with almost any activity, indoors or outdoors, it is impossible to guarantee they will not happen. It is important that parents/caregivers are able to accept this condition as a part of their child's participation in Forest School at YMCA Cedar Glen.

The variety of risks is more than can be listed here and will vary depending on the program. However, educators are trained and experienced, and their role is to support children in learning and playing while keeping risks to an acceptable level.

Here is a list of some of the more significant risks that may be associated with participation at Forest School:

- Injuries from executing strenuous and demanding physical activities
- Injuries resulting from matches, fire, or other tools
- Injuries resulting from the presence of harmful plants, natural loose parts, wild animals, and/or ticks
- Changing and inclement weather, including storms, high winds, and lightning
- The possibility that your child may not heed safety instructions or directions given to the group or delivered individually
- Injuries arising from the actions of other children
- Negligence on the part of other participants

In unstructured outdoor play, children freely choose which experiences and forms of play they are comfortable engaging in. Your child is under no obligation to participate in all experiences and may choose not to participate at any time during the program.

To help manage risk, staff conduct daily and seasonal site assessment, as well as program risk-benefit analysis as needed. These forms and records are available for review if requested.

(Credit to CNAC for the wording and philosophy of this section)



Our Staff



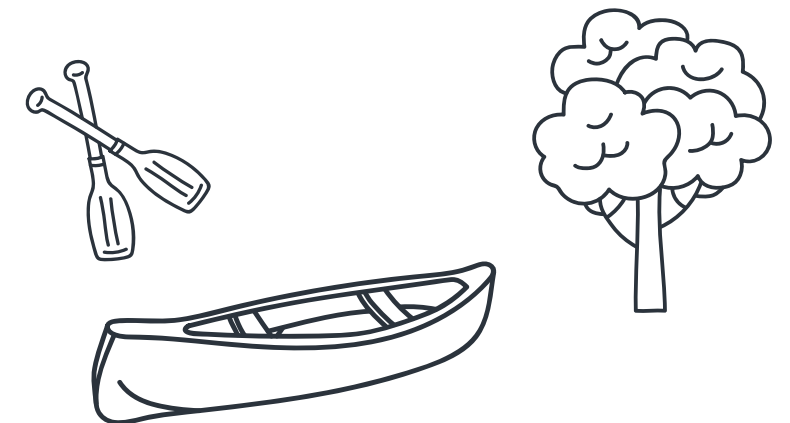
All of our staff at YMCA Forest School are passionate outdoor professionals who love spending time exploring and playing on our amazing property with children.

All YMCA Cedar Glen staff undergo a thorough vetting process during recruitment – an in person interview and three reference checks are required for all staff. Staff are also required to regularly provide a Vulnerable Sector Screening to the YMCA of Greater Toronto's HR department.

All of our staff are trained in Standard First Aid and carry a first aid kit on their person at all times.

Staff involved in Forest School have undergone additional training under our Certified Forest School Practitioner that applied directly to facilitating a successful Forest School experience for all of our participants.

We operate in a 1:8 ratio – our groups will be no larger than 16, and will always be supervised by a Forest School Educator.





Typical Day at YMCA Forest School at Cedar Glen

At YMCA Cedar Glen, our Forest School space is tucked into the woods just behind our Glenview Lodge accommodation building. Our preference is to be outdoors, but we do have access to both indoor washrooms and an indoor meeting space inside the building if required.

We start and end each day together in a circle – welcoming each other, intentionally connecting with and thanking the Land, and debriefing our learning are all daily activities. Beyond the regular structure of opening and closing, the children determine how the rest of the day goes as their play evolves.

Some of the activities we may engage in include:

- Shelter and fire building
(using matches, found materials, ropes, tarps, and more)
- “Sit Spots” (quiet time in nature)
- Nature crafts and painting
- Tool use (hammers, saws, whittling knives)
- Identifying animal tracks, studying wildlife
- Knot and rope skills
- Leaf and flower pressing
- Bug/Frog catching
- Sensory activities like water play, sand play
- Scavenger hunts
- Team, group, and other games
- Playing in hammocks, building swings
- Running, climbing, jumping, sliding, splashing, rolling ... and more!

Each session provides natural opportunities for literacy and mathematics through storytelling, song, rhyme, reading, drama, counting, sorting, classifying, and predicting.





Environmental Sustainability

At YMCA Forest School we aim to minimize the impact we have on our environment without limiting the children in their play and learning. We do this by conducting regular site impact surveys, documenting our use, communicating with site and facility staff, using biodegradable and organic materials, and removing any garbage we create. We ask that parents support us in our endeavor to keep our property green by sending food in reusable containers.



Location and Directions

Our address and phone number:

3300 11th Concession
Schomberg, ON L0G 1T0
(905) 859 9622 (general site line)

Location:

We are located approximately 1 km north of King Road between Hwy 50 (Bolton) and Hwy 27 (Nobleton). (GPS 43.906301,-79.7063207)

The phone number for our Forest School program is **905 859 9622**

Other ways to connect with us are:

www.cedarglen.ymcagta.org
www.ymcagta.org/forestschool

 [YMCA Cedar Glen Outdoor Centre](https://www.facebook.com/YMCA Cedar Glen Outdoor Centre)

 [YMCA of Greater Toronto](https://twitter.com/YMCA of Greater Toronto)

 [@ymcagta](https://www.instagram.com/ymcagta)

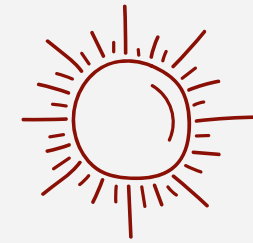
When you arrive on site, please follow the driveway to the right, and proceed to the large parking lot (turn right at the sand volleyball court beside the road). After you exit your vehicle, walk along the sidewalk toward the long, north, wooden building ahead of you. Enter at the door that says "Glenview West" and head down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs, turn right along the hallway to the Lupine Room where staff are available to sign your child in for their program.

At the end of your child's program, you can pick them up in the same location.



Preparing for Forest School

Forest school happens outdoors in all types of weather. It is important for your child to be properly prepared each day to remain comfortable and safe. Please review the following seasonal lists to ensure your child has everything they need to support a successful Forest School experience.

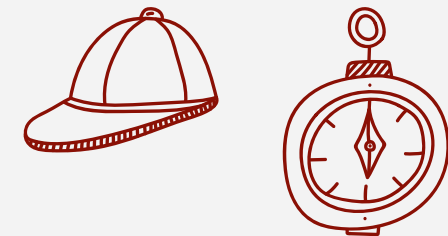


Spring & Fall

- Long sleeved shirt (please avoid cotton)
- Long pants (please avoid cotton)
- Long socks (able to pull up over the cuff of the pants for bug protection, not cotton)
- Running or hiking shoes (no sandals or open toed shoes, please)
- Sun hat
- Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, and jacket)
- Bug jacket (optional)

Children also require

- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- 1 small backpack containing their nut-free lunch, snacks, and refillable water bottle
- 1 bag containing 1 (half day) or 2 (full day) full changes of clothes, including underwear and socks, plus extra outer layers if possible



Winter

- Base layers – synthetic or wool long underwear and top (no cotton)
- Insulating layers of warm pants and sweaters (wool or fleece recommended, no cotton)
- Warm socks (wool recommended)
- Snow pants and jacket or snowsuit
- 2+ pairs of mittens (please avoid gloves, mittens are much warmer)
- Warm hat, scarf/neck gaiter
- Boots (waterproof, insulated)
- Indoor shoes or slippers to keep feet warm and dry when indoors

Children also require

- 1 small backpack containing their nut-free lunch, snacks, and refillable water bottle
- 1 bag containing 1 (half day) or 2 (full day) full changes of clothes, including underwear and socks, plus extra outer layers if possible

Why are you so against cotton? Wherever possible, we recommend that you do not dress your child in cotton clothing for Forest School. Once wet or damp, cotton clothing is cold and uncomfortable to wear. Cotton clothing worn next to the skin sucks heat away from the body very quickly. Cotton takes a long time to dry, and can cause your child to be uncomfortable in the outdoors. Natural materials like wool or synthetic materials like fleece retain their insulative properties when wet, are warmer, and tend to dry faster than cotton clothing.

Please remember that children in Forest School will be outside in all conditions. Children love to explore (and are encouraged to do so!) dirt, snow, muddy puddles, all things mucky, slimy and wet! As you prepare for Forest School, keep in mind that your child's gear will likely need to be washed and dried after every Forest School experience.

Reviewing the gear list can be overwhelming - it seems like a lot of gear! It is not necessary to invest in expensive name brands or new items. Thrift stores and online market places are great options to find children's clothing at reduced prices. Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC), Mountain Warehouse, Canadian Tire (and more!) also have great options at reasonable prices.

If you are cleaning out your closets, or you children have outgrown some gear or you no longer have a use for an item, we would love to create a "gear library" for future participants to borrow items! The items we are hoping to collect are:

- Winter hats, neck tubes/gaiters, waterproof mittens
- Rain boots, rain pants, rain coats
- Snow boots, snow pants, winter coats
- Warm layers (fleece sweaters/pants, wool socks, etc.)
- Full brimmed sun hats
- Small backpacks





Policies

Registration, Fees, and Refund Policy

Registration is available in advance, on a first come, first served basis through the YMCA of Greater Toronto's online registration portal "My Y," or by calling Membership Services at 1 800 223 8024.

PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL POLICY If you wish to withdraw a participant from a program, you can do so by accessing the participant's Registration History via your My Y Account or by submitting your request to withdraw by email to **register@ymcagta.org**. Withdrawals that are processed online or requested by email 10 days before the start of the program will receive a refund minus an administration fee of 10% per program being withdrawn. Withdrawal requests received with less than 10 days' notice will receive a refund minus an administration fee of 50% of the cost of the program being cancelled. These requests must be submitted by email to **register@ymcagta.org**. A doctor's note is required for any withdrawal due to medical reasons. Refunds are not granted for inclement weather. Any request received after the start of the course will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Refunds take 2-3 weeks to process.

DISCLAIMER All Programs are subject to change or cancellation due to low enrolment or other unforeseen circumstances that are prohibitive to the operation of the Program. In these cases, you will receive a full refund of your fees paid. The YMCA further reserves the right not admit or assume responsibility of a participant, if participant's medical information is not completed and if the authorization is not signed by the parent/guardian and returned to the YMCA prior to the commencement of the registered program.

Arrival & Departure Procedures

Parents/guardians or their designate (as indicated at the time of registration) are required to personally escort their child into the program and pick up their child at the end of the day. Please ensure the YMCA staff is aware you have arrived or that you are leaving with your child. You must sign your child in and out each day.

Upon pick up, you will be required to display government issued ID to confirm your identity and that you are listed as an authorized pick up on your child's registration form. Until we become more familiar with you, and anytime a new person picks up your child, ID will be required. If you require an individual to pick up your child who is not indicated as an authorized pick up on the registration form, please advise YMCA staff in writing (email is fine).

YMCA staff are counting on you to be on time to pick up your child at the end of the program hours. We do understand that weather and traffic accidents happen, however we appreciate you calling to let us know you will be late or making arrangements for an alternate adult to pick up your child. Program registration may be withdrawn for families that frequently pick up their child late.

Food Policies

Nut Aware

YMCA Cedar Glen is a nut aware facility. We do not purchase or serve any products that contain or may contain nuts on our property, and share this information with all of our guests. Please ensure that you pack a nut free lunch and snacks for your child while participating in Forest School.

Snack Sharing

In order to accommodate food allergies and dietary restrictions, participants in Forest School are only permitted to consume the food their parent/guardian has prepared for the day. Children are not to share snacks or food. Please ensure you pack enough food and snacks for your camper, and that it is labelled appropriately.

From time to time, Cedar Glen staff will provide food to campers (i.e. marshmallows, hot chocolate), but will ensure it meets all dietary restrictions as indicated at the time of registration.

Garbage-Less Lunches

In an effort to reduce waste, we encourage all participants to bring a garbage-less lunch and snacks to Forest School. Children will pack any garbage from their lunches home with them. Please consider the size/weight of the containers in which your child's lunch or snacks are packed – our participants are encouraged to carry their own snacks and water bottles on their adventures. Please also keep in mind that children tend to eat more during a day of active, outdoor play than they normally might, please pack accordingly.

Drinking Water

Participants are asked to bring a full, re-fillable water bottle to program each day. Potable water is available on site to re-fill throughout the day as needed. Please make sure your child can open and close their water bottle on their own.

Health & Safety Policies

Poison Ivy

Poison Ivy is present in a few areas on site at YMCA Cedar Glen. To limit exposure, we encourage all participants to wear a long sleeves, long pants, and close toed shoes during the spring and fall. Our staff are aware of areas on site where Poison Ivy is present, and will do their best to limit exposure.

In the event a child is exposed, washing the area with soap & water within 15 to 60 minutes is likely to remove any oil that may cause a reaction. Our staff will be prepared to facilitate washing of exposed areas if they are aware it has occurred.

Ticks

Ticks are present throughout the GTA and York Region, including YMCA Cedar Glen. As long as the temperature is above freezing, ticks are active. To limit exposure, we encourage all participants to wear long sleeves, long pants, and closed toed shoes for spring and fall programming.

We encourage families to use insect repellent to deter ticks – one containing DEET or another product that feels right for your family. Children are encouraged to carry their insect repellent with them, and staff can help them to reapply throughout the day.

If a tick is noticed crawling on a participant, it will be brushed off and parents will be advised so they can complete a more thorough check at home. If a tick is attached, parents will be notified and asked to pick up their child to see appropriate medical attention.

Parents are encouraged to complete a full body check of their child each day after participating in a Forest School program.

You can learn more about ticks through [York Region Public Health](#).

Head Lice

Head lice may affect participants at YMCA Forest School. Head lice is not considered a communicable disease, but rather an annoyance that can spread rapidly between children. If head lice or nits are present, we ask that you:

- Inform YMCA Cedar Glen Forest School as soon as possible so other families can be notified
- Follow the treatment suggestions on the information sheet provided by Toronto Public Health before your child returns to program

Sun Safety

Practicing good sun safety is required at YMCA Forest School. All participants are required to wear a hat (full brim recommended) when outdoors. We recommend that children also wear light, loose fitting, long sleeved shirts and pants to protect their skin from the sun.

Please apply sunscreen on your child before dropping them off for Forest School. Our educators will encourage children to re-apply sunscreen frequently throughout the day, and are available to assist any children who may require it. We recommend lotion based sunscreen over spray based – the spray type sunscreen, while easy to apply, often results in over spray (which can make the ground slippery), and can easily be sprayed in eyes or inhaled.

Incident Weather

If weather/road conditions make travel to/from YMCA Cedar Glen unsafe and we need to cancel programs for that day, we will contact families by email to inform them of our closure. In the event that we cannot re-schedule the missed program, full refunds for days missed due to weather closures by YMCA Cedar Glen will be provided.

Extreme Weather

Our educators regularly consult the forecast, and weather-related safety is considered in all decisions making such as how far to venture from shelter, how long to be outside, what type of activities to undertake, etc.

In the case of forecasted thunder, lightning, or high winds, educators and staff will ensure participants are close to shelter for quick access should it be necessary. In the event of high wind or tornado warnings, staff will proceed to the nearest building to seek immediate shelter.

On extreme heat days (as indicated by York Region Public Health), staff will monitor participants and make adjustments to program as necessary. The focus on heat days will be low energy activities that can occur in shaded areas. Children will be reminded to take frequent breaks, stay hydrated, and reapply sunscreen frequently.

On extreme cold days (as indicated by York Region Public Health), staff will monitor the children and make adjustments to program as necessary. Staff will assist children in keeping their skin covered and staying warm and comfortable. Participants will have access to an indoor, heated area for frequent warm up breaks as needed.

Medications and Allergies

Life Threatening Allergies (Anaphylaxis)

The YMCA strives to protect the children in our care with life threatening allergies by reducing as much as possible exposure to known allergens. Any parent/guardian of a child with a life-threatening allergy is

responsible for providing the YMCA with detailed information about their child's known allergens, signs and symptoms of an allergic response, and steps to take in an emergency prior to their child starting at Forest School. It is also very important that parents/guardians inform YMCA staff any time there is a change to a child's allergies.

Please contact YMCA staff, and we can provide you with an Individual Anaphylaxis form to fill out, and keep on file for your child. Please also bring along their epi pen (and a spare, should you have one).

YMCA staff will carry all emergency medications in a fanny pack while in program with your child. If you prefer your child to carry their own medication, please indicate this on the Individual Anaphylaxis form when you complete it.

Medications

Whenever possible, parents should administer medications to their children at home if this can be done without affecting the treatment schedule. When a child is ill, it is in their best interests to remain at home where they are comfortable and able to rest and recover. The YMCA is permitted only to administer medications prescribed by a doctor, nurse practitioner, or other licensed health care provider, with a prescription label on the original container belonging to the medication, or accompanied by a doctor's note that outlines the following:

- Date note was written
- Time to be administered or detailed reason for administering including signs and symptoms
- Expiry date of the note (i.e. is it for a specific time period or ongoing until further notice)
- Child's legal first and last name
- Name or drug or medication
- Dosage to be administered

Any time you bring prescription drugs or medications to be administered to your child at the program, the YMCA staff will provide you with a Medication Administration Authorization form to complete the details on dosage, time of administration, and permission for the YMCA to give your child the drug or medication.

YMCA staff will carry all emergency medications (i.e. puffers) in a fanny pack while in program with your child. If you prefer your child to carry their own medication, please indicated this on the Medication Administration Form when you complete it.

Illness

Please help prevent the spread of illness by keeping your child home from the program anytime they have the following signs and symptoms of communicable illness until symptoms have stopped for at least 24 hours or a doctor has determined your child is not experiencing a communicable illness.

- Temperature above 38 degrees Celsius (or 100 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Difficult or rapid breathing or a severe cough
- Vomiting more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Unexplained (i.e. not related to diet, medication) diarrhea more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Sore throat, especially if accompanied by fever
- Undiagnosed skin rash
- Persistent scratching of body or head
- Eyes that are red or yellow, bowel movement is gray or white, or urine is dark or tea coloured

If your child experiences any of the signs and symptoms of communicable illness listed above while at Forest School, YMCA staff will contact you or one of your authorized pick up individuals to take your child home. While your child waits for

you or your designate to arrive, they will be separated from the other children (in a supervised area) until it is determined they do not have a communicable illness.

Emergency Procedures

The YMCA is committed to being prepared to keep all staff volunteers, and participants safe in the event of an emergency or natural disaster. The YMCA trains all staff and volunteers before interacting with children, and annually on emergency procedures. YMCA Cedar Glen has site-specific emergency procedures in place to deal with medical emergencies, injuries, weather emergencies, missing participants and more. All of our staff are trained on these procedures prior to working in program with children, and are refreshed on them at least annually thereafter.

Children are naturally active and curious. It is not uncommon for young children to experience cuts, scrapes, and bruises while running, jumping, and playing as part of their Forest School experience. All YMCA staff hold a valid certification in Standard First Aid and Adult/Child CPR and carry a First Aid kit with them while delivering program.

Any time your child has a minor accident, YMCA staff will inform you at the time of pick up.

In the event your child is involved in an emergency, you will be contacted directly by the YMCA. If the YMCA is unable to reach you directly, we will call the emergency contacts you have identified in your child's registration package.

COVID-19

With any illness, it is important that your child stay home until they are well. Please review our the "Illness" procedure in this section for more details.

Requirements for masks/eye protection indoors or outdoors in educational settings has been lifted by the Government of Ontario. Please inform your child's educator if you want your child to continue wearing a mask.

As we continue to follow the direction of York Region Public Health and the Government of Ontario, these practices may change. We will make every effort to inform parents and families of any upcoming changes to the COVID procedure as soon as we become aware.

Toileting

While we are at our main Forest School site, we have easy access to indoor washrooms and sinks inside the Glenview building. Children will be reminded and given the opportunity to use the washroom regularly (especially before we are going to be away from our “home base” for some time). All children must be fully toilet trained and independent in the washroom to attend Forest School.

As we venture out onto our site, there are several locations where portable washrooms are available.

If a child needs to use the washroom and none of these options are convenient, staff will support them to either find a private spot in the forest (urinate) or to use our “luggable loo” (urinate/defecate) which is a portable toilet.

Our staff are trained to deal with these situations professionally and discreetly, and children are oriented to washroom procedures on their first day in the program.

Handwashing

A handwashing station is available at our main Forest School location, as well as in the washrooms in the Glenview building. When running water and soap is not available, alcohol-based hand rub will be made available. Children are required to wash/sanitize their hands after using the washroom and before eating. There may be other activities that require handwashing as well (i.e. frog catching)

You are welcome to send your child with their own (labelled) alcohol based hand rub, but our staff will always carry it too!

Policies Regarding Tool Use

In our Forest School, children are presented with the opportunity to use certain tools. This opportunity is only presented to children who have demonstrated that they are capable of following the guidelines relating to proper tool use, can use the tool properly, and are able to respond to direction and instruction while using the tool.

Some of the tools we may engage with include: carving knives, rasps, peelers, bow saws, fire building materials (matches, fire starters).

Children are only permitted to use tools in one specific area of Forest School to ensure close supervision. Only a small number of children may use tools at one time to ensure proper supervision.

We have specific guidelines developed for each type of tool (ask if you’d like to see them!), but in general children are required to:

- Remain seated while using the tool (except in the instance of a bow saw, where they must stand in a designated spot at the saw horse only)
- Only walk while carrying the tool, always ensuring to replace safety covers, etc. beforehand
- Wear appropriate eye protection, if necessary
- Wear a leather glove on the opposite hand while using a tool
- Only use a tool in a motion “down and away” from their body
- Give adequate space between themselves and others when using tools (at least 6 ft on either side)

The use of tools at Forest School is a privilege, one that can be removed if a child is not able to demonstrate all of the appropriate safety considerations at all times.

As with all types of play at Forest School, children are able to freely choose how/if they participate, and will not be forced to use tools if they are not comfortable.



Protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons

Everyone, including members of the public and those who work closely with children, share a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm. This is called “Duty to Report,” and is defined under section 72(1) of the Ontario Child and Family Services Act. The YMCA recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices to protect children and vulnerable persons from abuse.

YMCA educators are trained to recognize the indicators of neglect and abuse and are legally required to report any suspicions that a child may require protection. The role of the child protection agency is to investigate and determine if there is any proof of abuse or neglect and implement supports for the child and their family. It is important that YMCA educators ensure all reports are kept confidential, including only discussing with the family that a report has been made if the child protection agency authorizes them to do so.

Educator Responsibilities

The responsibilities of YMCA Forest Schooleducators are wide-ranging and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Ensuring physical safety of participants by co-assessing and co-managing risk with them on an ongoing basis so all participants feel connected and comfortable in the natural world
- Considering the social and emotional safety of participants and endeavoring to foster a caring and respectful community so that risk taking and question posing necessary for deep, inquiry based learning can occur
- Modeling care and respect for the natural world, as well as safe use of tools, loose parts, and found natural items during Forest School
- Playing with and closely observing students – the trajectory of their play, the evolution of their interests, their questions and struggles – in order to support children and share meaningful feedback with caregivers and families



Planning, Observation, & Documentation

The forest school educator's role is one of facilitator – a good facilitator must move seamlessly between active engagement with the children to observation and planning to enhance future experiences.

After sparking engagement with nature play, and making available to the children materials, resources, and experiences that expand their play, the educator steps back to observe, giving the children space to play and explore. Educators are watching for children's interactions with each other and the natural space, collecting and documenting these experiences, and then using this knowledge to enhance future learning.

Staff to Child Ratios

1:8 (groups no larger than 16)

Behaviour Guidance

The YMCA believes that it is the role of the adults in a child's life to support them to learn how to interact successfully with the world around them – including other children, adults, and the environment.

YMCA Forest School Educators set the stage for positive behaviour by implementing the following approaches:

- Building dependable, positive, and nurturing relationships with children and their families
- Fostering healthy social connections with other children
- Responding to each child's developmental needs through observation and reaction to cues
- Providing small group experiences which allow for more individualized attention

- Role modeling inclusive, respectful, and collaborative interactions with children and other adults
- Ensuring the learning environment is flexible and materials are plentiful and available to children at all times
- Providing children with the freedom to make choices
- Engaging as a play partner with children, to demonstrate pro-social skills including promoting discussion, problem solving when conflict arises, and understanding how our actions affect others

If an undesirable behaviour occurs at Forest School, our staff will address it and seek to resolve it directly with the child. It is important that parents and facilitators work together, and we strive to keep families informed of any situation that arises at Forest School, and seek their advice as needed.

Our policy is as follows:

- Abuse of an activity or object leads to loss of the privilege of using that object or material for a specific length of time
- Repeated, unprovoked hurting of another child and/or using objects as weapons to injure staff or children leads to a call to the parent(s) to come and take the child home
- Serious injury of a child or staff member, or habitual behaviour that compromises the safety of the children may lead to withdrawal of enrolment

The goal of discipline is to develop self-discipline. Our program fosters an environment in which children learn to respect others and their surroundings. We teach and encourage children to use problem solving and conflict resolution skills. Other discipline techniques we may employ are prevention, facilitator shadowing, redirection, positive modelling, and gentle reminders. Discipline shall be fair, consistent, and appropriate for the age and maturity of the child. Physical punishment that is frightening or humiliating is never used.



Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

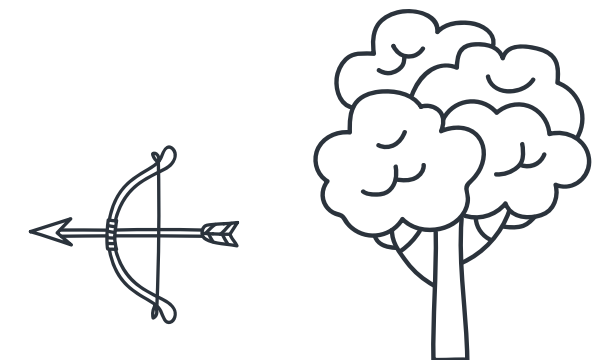
The YMCA is committed to creating and sustaining an environment that celebrates diversity and appreciates the dignity and worth of all members of the community. We are committed to pursuing equality and to creating an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and barriers to equal opportunity.

YMCA programs are designed to develop children in spirit, mind, and body. We believe every child is a unique individual and adds value to our programs. YMCA staff strive to ensure the environment and programs are adapted to the needs of all children.



Financial Assistance

As a charity that serves all segments of our community, the YMCA of Greater Toronto provides financial assistance in times of need. This is a short term support made possible due to the generosity of our donors, members, volunteers, staff, corporate, and community partners. For more information on how to apply, please speak to your program supervisor.





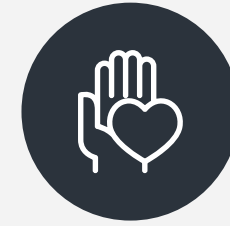
Family Communication

At YMCA Forest School at Cedar Glen, we look forward to building connection and relationships with our participants and their families.

We will always let you know if your child has been involved in any accidents, is ill, or if we have any concerns regarding their behaviour at Forest School. Depending on the severity, this may be via a phone call during the program, or face to face at pick up time (please review the appropriate sections in this manual for more information).

At pick up each day, feel free to ask your child's educator for any highlights or exciting moments they may have noticed. We also love to hear from parents about all the fun things their kids share with them about Forest School at home!

We encourage you to share your concerns and observations with us, and we look forward to working toward equitable solutions together. You can connect with us face to face at drop off or pick up, over the phone, or via email. We will always do our best to follow up with you in a timely manner.



Resolving Concerns & Issues

YMCA staff are committed to connecting, partnering, and engaging parents to provide the best possible care for each child. In situations where issues and concerns arise, YMCA staff together with the family and YMCA management will work as a team to reach a resolution in a timely, confidential, fair, and consistent manner.

The YMCA is guided by values that influence our actions and the decisions we make. The YMCA values are Inclusiveness, Integrity, Kindness, Optimism, Respect, and Well-Being. The YMCA is a shared experience for everyone to enjoy. When conflict arises, it is expected that the conflict will be resolved in a respectful manner in keeping with the YMCA values.

If a concern arises, parents are encouraged to speak directly with their child's educator in person, by phone, or via email. If concerns are not addressed adequately, families are encouraged to speak with a supervisor.

If a family member has been unable to resolve an issue/concern through the informal process outlined above, a formal complaint may be made in writing (by mail or email) to:

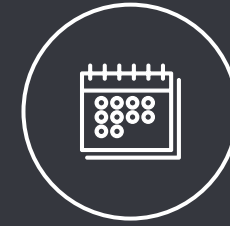
YMCA of Greater Toronto
90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 300
Toronto, Ontario
M4P 2Y3

memberservices@ymcagta.org

Please provide contact information as the YMCA will be unable to respond to anonymous complaints. If you are unable to submit a formal complaint in this way due to a disability, you may contact the YMCA to request accommodation, which will be provided in keeping with the YMCA's Accessibility and Customer service policy on our [website](#).

The YMCA is committed to a fair process when dealing with complaints. Families will be treated with respect and kept informed of the status of their complaint. The YMCA will respond in 3 business days to confirm that your complaint has been received. The YMCA aims to resolve all complaints within 30 days of receipt. If this timeline cannot be met, the family will be informed of the reasons and given a revised timeframe. Upon completion of a review, the family will be provided with reasons for the decision relating to the complaint, which will complete the formal complaint process.

Any YMCA staff that receives a complaint or concern shall maintain confidentiality by not discussing allegations with other individuals, except on a 'need to know' basis. No person, who in good faith and under this policy, submits a concern or complaint shall suffer retaliation.



Withdrawal of Services

The YMCA strives to meet the individual needs of all children and families enrolled in our YMCA programs. However, situations do arise from time to time where it may be necessary for the YMCA of Greater Toronto to withdraw services for a child and/or their family. The YMCA does not make these decisions lightly, and takes reasonable care to ensure a thorough assessment of the child's needs, community supports available, and the YMCA program's ability to support the child have been undertaken before withdrawing services.

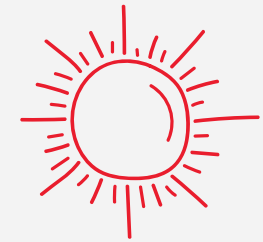
Examples leading to withdrawal of services may include:

- Non payment of program fees
- Frequent late pick up
- Parents/guardians or their children who exhibit violent or harassing behaviour towards our staff, volunteers, other children or families
- Community resources for children with special needs are unavailable or have been exhausted
- Refusal by parent/guardian to meet with YMCA staff and/or consent to the use of support services for children



Privacy

All YMCA staff and volunteers understand the importance of keeping all personal information in the strictest of confidence. The YMCA will not share any personal information without written parental consent. For a full version of the YMCA Privacy Policy, please click [here](#).



Contact Us:

YMCA Forest School at Cedar Glen
3300 11th Concession
Schomberg, ON L0G 1T0

The phone number for our Forest School program is **905 859 9622**

Other ways to connect with us are:

www.cedarglen.ymcagta.org

www.ymcagta.org/forestschool

 [YMCA Cedar Glen Outdoor Centre](#)

 [YMCA of Greater Toronto](#)

