



Child and Family Centre

Child, Parent/Guardian & Caregiver Handbook

What to expect from your EarlyON
experience in Waterloo Region

www.earlyyearsinfo.ca
(519) 741-8585 x3001



Territorial Acknowledgement

The YMCA of Three Rivers recognizes and acknowledges that we deliver our programs and services on the traditional territories and treaty lands of the Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabeg, Mississauga of the Credit, Wendat, and Neutral nations. We acknowledge also that the history of Indigenous nations in these regions is not static, and cannot be briefly summarized. This land is part of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum, the Haldimand Treaty of Oct. 25, 1784, Treaty 3 of 1792, and Treaty 29/Huron Tract Purchase of 1827. Today, our catchment area is home to First Nations, Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island.

As treaty people, we commit to building relationships characterized by respect and equality. In particular, we encourage non-Indigenous staff, volunteers, members, and clients to reflect on their personal obligations and locations as recent arrivals to the territories sustained by the three rivers for which we are named.

To learn more about our commitment to Justice, Access, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity visit www.ymcathreerivers.ca/jaide.

Personal Conduct Policy

Everyone at EarlyON will treat everyone else with respect. It is the responsibility of EarlyON staff to ensure the safety and privacy of everyone at EarlyON and to ensure compliance with our policies and procedures. If you choose to attend EarlyON you choose to hold yourself, and those individuals you bring with you to EarlyON accountable to:

- Respectful – Be kind and open towards others. Treat our EarlyON materials and environments with respect. Be responsible for yourself and anyone you bring into our spaces.
- Empathy – Be caring, curious, and seek to understand others.
- Inclusion – Be welcoming and create spaces so that everyone can belong.

Handbook Acknowledgment

By attending the EarlyON program you agree to follow the standards outlined in this handbook.

Our Program Statement

Welcome to EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Waterloo Region. We are a universal service system supporting all children, parents/guardians and caregivers in learning, growing and connecting – together. Our program statement describes our view of the play, inquiry learning, relationships, approaches and reflective practice, as well as the goals and approaches we use to ensure the following objectives as described in the Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline (2024).

- Children have access to play and inquiry-based learning opportunities alongside their parents/guardians and caregivers and experience positive developmental health and well-being. This could include experiences in the EarlyON program where children 0-6 engage with older siblings on school closure days, evenings or weekends.
- Parents/guardians and caregivers have access to high quality services that support them in their role as their children's first teachers, enhance their well-being, and enrich their knowledge about early learning and development.
- Parents/guardians and caregivers have opportunities to strengthen their relationships with their children through play.
- Services and supports are responsive to community needs.
- Francophone children and families have access to French language programs and gain enhanced knowledge about language and identity acquisition.
- Indigenous children and families have access to culturally responsive programming and services.
- Parents/guardians and caregivers are provided with timely, relevant and up-to-date information about community and specialized services.
- Local service providers such as CMSMs/DSSABs, school boards, EarlyON providers and other community partners work in collaboration to strengthen partnerships, coordinate seamless access to services and ensure that EarlyON Child and Family Centres are an integrated part of the Ontario early years' system.

The Mission, Vision and Values of the YMCA of Three Rivers as Lead Agency for EarlyON | Waterloo Region can be found [here](#).



What Is EarlyON?

About EarlyON

EarlyON Centres are funded by the Ministry of Education and are open for FREE to ALL families. Our wide variety of programming and services are tailored to children from birth to six years, and their parents and caring adults. We offer families the opportunity to play, learn, sing, explore and discover with other families and EarlyON professionals. EarlyON provides centre-based, mobile sites and virtual programs that where families can:

- Engage in play-based learning activities;
- Get advice from EarlyON professionals;
- Learn more about other family services and supports in your area;
- Connect with other families with young children

You are welcome to visit any EarlyON location in Ontario. It is important to participate in a tour at each EarlyON location you visit as each location can have different experiences and expectations. To learn more about EarlyON operated by the YMCA of Three Rivers, visit <https://bit.ly/EONWR> or use the QR Code.



Our Staff Team

Our EarlyON team of EarlyON Professionals consists of:

- EarlyON Educators and Registered Early Childhood Educators who deliver programs and services, and make connections with families through a variety of methods.
- EarlyON Administrators who provide support to you, your family, and to our EarlyON teams with any questions about your KEyON account, our EarlyON locations, promotions, programs, and more!
- EarlyON Leadership Professionals who oversee all aspects of our EarlyON Operations and services in collaboration with the EarlyON staff team and onsite Community Partners.

Consolidated Municipal Service Manager

The Region of Waterloo is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for EarlyON in Waterloo Region. In 2018, the [Region of Waterloo](#) chose the YMCA of Three Rivers as the Lead Agency of EarlyON Child and Family Centres in the Waterloo Region. The YMCA collaborates with community partners to provide welcoming; high-quality; play-based learning experiences for our community.

Contact information for the Region of Waterloo can be found on [their website](#) or by calling (519) 575-4400.



Where Can I Find EarlyON?

Delivery Methods

We use a variety of models to support EarlyON programs and services delivery including centre-based, mobile, phone and virtual delivery. To view our current locations, visit <https://bit.ly/EONWRLocations>. Some programs and services are also offered online through Zoom, Phone, Email, Webchat and more! Please contact us at (519) 741-8585 x3001 or earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org for more information.

Centre-Based

In Waterloo Region, we operate 6 EarlyON Child and Family Centre locations. These locations operate consistent schedules year round and include EarlyON programs and services, as well as a variety of onsite community partners to support your family all in one location! Where possible, our centre-based locations also offer regular extended day access including evening and weekend hours.



EarlyON I Cedar Creek
55 Hilltop Dr, Ayr



EarlyON I Roger Street
161 Roger St, Waterloo



EarlyON I Riverside
250 William St, Elmira



EarlyON I St. Boniface
225 Starlight Ave, Breslau



EarlyON I Water Street
73 Water St. N, Unit 105, Cambridge



EarlyON I Oak Creek
80 Tartan Ave, Kitchener

Mobile Locations

We operate a variety of EarlyON mobile sites that operate in schools, community centres, YMCA Health and Wellness Facilities, and more. These mobile sites are designed to provide programming to families who are unable to access a consistent centre-based location. All families are welcome to attend mobile sites. Mobile locations and their onsite programs and schedules may change regularly throughout the year.



Your EarlyON Experience



01 - Supervision of Children

You as the parents/guardians and caregivers are responsible for the supervision of your child(ren) attending EarlyON unless they are registered in a childminding program. Please actively supervise your child(ren) and engage in their learning and play experiences while at the EarlyON. Active supervision means that you can see your child(ren) at all times and where possible, you are actively engaged in their play. We recognize that learning to play independently is a skill that takes time to develop. If your child(ren) is/are playing independently at EarlyON, please ensure you can see them at all times and are close enough to them to support them in their play and social interactions with others as needed throughout their visit.

Parents/guardians and caregivers must remain on the premises and can not leave the building while their child(ren) is/are in EarlyON programming or spaces.

If you need to go outside or leave the EarlyON building or program space, please take your child(ren) with you. You can also choose to arrange care for your child(ren) with another onsite adult participant. If another adult is responsible for the supervision of your child(ren), please tell our EarlyON professionals. This helps to keep your child(ren) safe should an emergency occur while you are outside of EarlyON. Our EarlyON professionals are not permitted to supervise child(ren) if their parents/guardians and caregivers exits the EarlyON.

Your EarlyON Experience

02 - Entering EarlyON

It is recommended that you create your KEyON account before coming to EarlyON. If you haven't created an account, we can support you in creating one during your visit. Everyone is required to sign in.

At our reception area, our EarlyON team will ask you to verify that everyone attending with you today is healthy and able to participate. Our team will also ask adults entering without children or a KEyON account for Government-Issued photo identification. The YMCA of Three Rivers aims to uphold a high standard for child protection and child safety. This includes verifying the identity of adults who are entering our spaces. This is especially important in our spaces like EarlyON, where children are present.



When signing into EarlyON using KEyON, our team will help you to sign in with our fob system, or they may ask you for some information to help to find your KEyON account to sign you in without a fob.



03 - Program Times

Each EarlyON location has different hours of operation for our Drop In spaces as well as different programs and services offered. To view our current program schedules visit <https://bit.ly/EONWRPrograms> or www.KEyON.ca. Our EarlyON professionals will also have site calendars posted onsite to support you.

Your EarlyON Experience

04 - Location, Program, and Room Capacities

In order to determine the attendance capacity of our EarlyON locations, and individual programs, we consider:

- The fire plan capacity of the EarlyON space;
- The experience of our EarlyON professionals within the space;
- The identified capacity to ensure a quality EarlyON experience for those attending.

When a location itself has reached capacity, a sign will be posted outside the EarlyON space or centre. We ask that participants please respect our capacities at each location. Please kindly ask our EarlyON professionals for suggestions of other programs, locations or times you can attend if you are unable to attend the program or location you wanted to today.

05 - Shoes in Program

Parents/guardians and caregivers and children are able to self-select whether or not they choose to wear shoes at most EarlyON locations. For the safety of those participating, some programs do have specific requirements about onsite footwear.

Shoes that are wet, or visibly soiled, are required to be removed. Please contact our EarlyON Administration team before your visit if you are unsure of a site-specific requirement or ask an EarlyON professional on arrival.

06 - Personal Belongings

EarlyON is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Parents/guardians and caregivers are responsible for any belongings that you or the children with you bring into EarlyON. To ensure a safe environment for all, please keep all coats, shoes, diaper bags, backpacks, carseats or other items in the designated areas. Please speak to an EarlyON professional for site specific information around where to store personal belongings.

07 - Eating and Drinking at EarlyON

Many of our EarlyON locations provide designated areas for eating or drinking onsite. At times these areas are within the EarlyON, and at times, they are in another area of the building. All food must remain in

Your EarlyON Experience

designated eating areas.

Participants are able to bring drinks into our EarlyON environments. We ask that all drinks be in cups with spill-proof lids and that drinks are monitored by you at all times. Drinks left unattended, even for a short period of time, may be discarded by the EarlyON professionals onsite.

For health and safety, EarlyON toys and program supplies are not permitted in designated eating areas. Please wash your hands before eating and before returning to play with EarlyON materials.

08 - Diapering and Toileting

In accordance with Public Health, all diaper changes must be done in the washrooms. Change tables or floor-based change pads are available. If your child is toilet learning, EarlyON Centres have potty seats available in each washroom as well. Toileting accidents happen. If there is an accident in any of our spaces, please inform us and we will support proper cleaning and disinfecting of the area.



09 - Allergies and Scent Sensitivities

All EarlyON locations are scent and allergen aware. We strongly discourage the use of scented products in our program spaces.

To learn more about the allergen policies at a specific EarlyON location, please ask an onsite EarlyON professional or contact our EarlyON Administration team at (519) 741-8585 x3001 or earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org.

10 - Personal Electronic Devices

EarlyON programs are adult and child participating. We encourage you to actively participate with your child



Your EarlyON Experience

while attending EarlyON. The use of laptops, iPads or other large electronic devices are strongly discouraged. We ask that cell phone use is restricted to emergencies only where possible to enable you to actively participate with your child. If you would like a referral to a location that provides opportunities for you to register your child to attend without requiring your supervision or participation, please speak to an EarlyON professional.

11 - Taking Photos/Videos

Pictures and recordings taken at EarlyON may be of you and your child only. Pictures and recordings of other adults or children, including our EarlyON professionals are not permitted.

If you are taking a video call, we encourage you to wear an earbud or headphone to protect your privacy and position yourself so that your back is facing the wall so you do not capture other children or adults in your video.



12 - Emergency Procedures

As part of our emergency safety and child safeguarding procedures, all adults and children are required to sign themselves in and out of the EarlyON upon each visit. All adults and children must participate in all fire drills, and other safety procedures that occur while they are at EarlyON. When you hear an alarm when attending EarlyON, you must:

- Familiarize yourself with the fire exits at each EarlyON location you visit.
- Follow the immediate direction of our EarlyON professionals for direction on whether we are moving to a secure indoor area, or are required to exit the building.
- DO NOT gather belongings. Please take immediate action to follow staff guidance. For this reason, wearing indoor shoes are encouraged at each EarlyON visit to facilitate exiting the building safely if required.
- Please calmly escort children outside to the designated meeting area outlined by staff
- Supervise your children at all times.

Your EarlyON Experience

Follow the direction of EarlyON professionals for guidance on when you are able to resume play in EarlyON.

13 - Planned and Unplanned Closures

At times our EarlyON locations or programs will require planned or unplanned closures or cancellations. Planned closures will be shared on our website at <https://bit.ly/EONWRLocations>, on our site calendars or posters, and on our social media pages.

Unplanned closures will be shared on our social media pages, or in the case of registered programs, via a phone call or KEyON email to registered participants.

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) @EarlyONWR.

14 - Duty to Report

We are committed to the safety of children. Our staff have the responsibility to report child safety concerns to a Children's Aid Society and to follow all instructions given by the Children's Aid Society.

15 - Inclusion and Diversity

JAIDE at the YMCA of Three Rivers is a core commitment our organization roots itself into for our employees, volunteers, participants (families/members/clients), and the greater communities in which we are located. JAIDE is not just a project; it is a way of being and becoming. As individuals who are part of our Y through EarlyON, we want to share with you the importance of our JAIDE work and the expectations we have for everyone in our spaces, to ensure we are meeting our commitments and holding ourselves accountable to our values. JAIDE stands for Justice, Access, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. To learn more about JAIDE visit www.ymcathreerivers.ca/jaide

We recognize that every person at EarlyON has a range of strengths and needs. We aim to provide opportunities for everyone to participate, and to feel valued and a sense of belonging. When you attend EarlyON, you agree to value diversity, and to treat everyone with respect in your words and actions.

Health and Safety

01 - Health and Wellness

If you or your child feel sick or have any new or worsening symptoms of illness, please stay home. Please only visit EarlyON after your symptoms are improving for 24 hours (or 48 hours for nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea). Please contact your health care provider if needed.

Children who are too ill to play, attend childcare, or attend school are too ill to come to EarlyON.

EarlyON professionals will refuse entry if you have symptoms of illness. EarlyON professionals may also ask you to end your visit early if your symptoms get worse during your visit.



02 - Teaching Responsibility

Throughout your play at EarlyON, we also encourage you to help your child to tidy up in between activities. This helps your child to learn to understand the importance of cleaning up after themselves as part of the play process, and helps us to ensure that our EarlyON environments remain accessible, and engaging for all children and families.

We know that young children learn by “taste testing” items or by putting them into their mouth. If a toy is visibly dirty or has been mouthed, please put the item into one of the “to be cleaned” bins available throughout the EarlyON space. If you are unable to find a bin, please ask an EarlyON professional for support.

03 - Security

The YMCA of Three Rivers aims to uphold a high standard for child protection and child safety. This includes verifying the identity of adults who are entering our spaces. This is especially important in our spaces like EarlyON, where children are present.

Health and Safety

KEyON accounts and KEyON fobs are not to be shared with other adults. Adults entering without children and without a KEyON account will be asked to provide Government-Issue Photo Identification when arriving at EarlyON.



If after entering EarlyON, you need to go outside or leave the EarlyON building or program space, you will be required to take your children with you. You can also choose to arrange care for your children with another onsite adult participant. If another adult is responsible for the supervision of your child, please tell our EarlyON professionals. Our EarlyON professionals are not permitted to supervise children if their parents/guardians and caregivers has to exit the EarlyON.

04 - Smoking/Vaping

There is no smoking or vaping permitted at EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and indoor and outdoor mobile programs.

If smoking or vaping outdoors, please follow our supervision policy of any children you brought with you to EarlyON.

Please also follow all site specific guidance about smoking or vaping on each individual property.

Creating and Updating Your KEyON Account

www.keyon.ca

All adults participating in EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs or services must have their own KEyON account. Please create your [KEyON account](#) prior to attending, or ask for help in creating an account during your visit. We also invite you to watch our [KEyON How-To Video Series](#)

KEyON Calendar

For tips on how to use the KEyON calendar to view programs or pre-register watch our [KEyON How-To Video Series](#). Are you a family that prefers a PDF or printable KEyON calendar? Visit <https://bit.ly/EONWRPrograms>.

KEyON Support

Please do not create more than one KEyON account. If you create multiple accounts for the same adult, challenges in registration and attendance are expected.

Have trouble with your login information or need help with registration? Contact our EarlyON Team at (519) 741-8585 x3001 or earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org.

Need Help Logging Into Your KEyON Account?

Contact our EarlyON Team at (519) 741-8585 x3001 or earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org.



Username

Password

 Log In

EarlyON Programs

EarlyON Programming

Some of our programs and [services](#) are drop-in and some require pre-registration. Visit our [Programs Page](#) to learn when and where programs are offered. You can also use our Find a Program tool. Program descriptions for EarlyON program offerings can be found on our [website](#).

Our PDF Calendars mark programs that require pre-registration in **Bold and Green text** with “®”.

On KEyON, registered programs are shown with a light blue background on our calendars, whereas drop in programs are white. If you are unsure if a program is registered or drop in, click on the program in the KEyON calendar for more information.

EarlyON in Waterloo Region Newsletter

[Newsletter Sign Up](#)

Don't miss a thing!

Sign up for our EarlyON | Waterloo Region Newsletter through the [link](#) or QR Code.



On-Site Community Partners

Parenting and caring for children and youth is not always easy. Often parents/guardians and caregivers have many questions and trying to find the right person and community agency to talk to can sometimes be overwhelming. We have included some of our local community partners below, and we encourage you to call us at (519) 741-8585 x3001 or email us at earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org to talk with an EarlyON professional. We can support you with the information or referral resources you are looking for.



Learn more about On-Site Partners

To learn more about our on-site community partners, visit <https://bit.ly/EONWRServices>. Please note that meeting with some community partners requires pre-booking of appointments. Dates, times and locations can be found on our website.

Meet with an EarlyON Professional

Our EarlyON team is here for you. We can support you with the information or referral resources you are looking for.

- Call us at (519) 741-8585 x3001
- Connect with us through our website chat box
- Email us at earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org
- You can use [this link](#) to request your appointment and we will follow up with you as early as the next business day to confirm a time and platform. Appointments will be held at EarlyON locations. Virtual appointments occur via telephone, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams.



Sharing Feedback

We welcome you to connect with us to share your feedback, questions or suggestions about our EarlyON Child and Family Centre locations, programs and services in Waterloo Region. We welcome you to connect with us to share general feedback at earlyyearsinfo@ymcathreerivers.org or (519) 741-8585 x3001. If you wish to share feedback in person, please ask to speak with an EarlyON Lead.

Feedback can also be shared by:

- Writing your feedback and inserting it into an onsite comment box;
- Contacting us on social media @EarlyONWR;
- Adding a Google Review to our EarlyON Centre listings online;
- Calling or emailing EarlyON Leadership

Description	Email
Stacey McCormick EarlyON Operational Manager	stacey.mccormick@ytr.ymca.ca

Creating Accountable and Supportive Spaces

Three reminders
for everyone in
our community

1

Respect

Be kind and open toward others. Be responsible for yourself and anyone you bring into our spaces.

2

Empathy

Be caring, curious, and seek to understand others.

3

Inclusion

Be welcoming and create space so that everyone can belong.

Our mission as a charity is to make our diverse communities healthier and more vibrant. With dignity and respect, our programs and services inspire individuals to reach their full potential. Our YMCA is on a journey to address issues of justice, access, inclusion, diversity, and equity (JAIDE) within our Y and beyond. To learn more, please visit ymcathreerivers.ca/about