

Shine On

YMCA Day Camps 2025/26 School Year Family Handbook





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Dear Camp Families,

Thank you for choosing the YMCA of Greater Halifax/Dartmouth's summer day camps. We are excited to start our summer adventures with your child(ren)!

At Summer Camp, we aim to provide an exciting and safe environment where your child can build new friendships, try new things, explore, learn and play. Our open communication, active listening and child-directed play allows for a summer filled with positivity, adventures and lifelong memories.

Camp programs strike a healthy balance between energetic, physical activity and reflective crafts and games; between structured programming and camper led play. We play sports, make crafts, swim and go on trips to explore our communities. Whether at the playground or the pool, we'll help your camper shine and make the most of the summer.

Each week of camp has a theme, and every Friday we'll have theme day: a morning full of activities based on the theme. Expect to hear about dinosaurs, the ocean, outer space and more!

This summer, we have more camp sites than ever before: 9 different locations within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). While each site will have different schedules, staff and participants, they all have one thing in common: YMCA Values. Caring, Responsibility, Honesty, Respect and Belonging are the principles that guide every decision that goes into camp. It is by these values that we will measure the success of camp. When you come to camp, we hope you'll find a place where you and your child are treated with respect and care, and where your child belongs.

We've been hard at work since the beginning of the year getting everything ready for summer camp and can't wait to share it with you all.

Sincerely,

The Summer Day Camp Team



The YMCA's Purpose

The YMCA's purpose is *"By igniting the potential in people, the YMCA helps in strengthening our evolving communities"*. The Day Camps program contributes to this purpose by creating fun and safe spaces for individuals to learn and play with their peers in their community.

The YMCA's Core Values are key to fulfilling our mission:

- Caring: Compassion towards others
- Respect: Respect for our volunteers, staff partnerships, participants, and supporters.
- Responsibility: Respond to society's needs in a socially proactive manner
- Honesty: Integrity and fairness at all time
- Belonging: a place where everyone is welcomed

Our organization's purpose is to build healthy communities through the power of belonging.
Together, making a difference.

2024-2029 Strategic Plan

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



Igniting the Potential in Youth

Youth are the leaders of today and the foundation of tomorrow's society. We will empower youth to reach their full potential through connections, opportunities, and inclusivity.



Strengthening Community

Empowering communities is an investment for a brighter future. We will strive to meet people where they are by strengthening connections, building trust, and maximizing our impact alongside people and community partners.

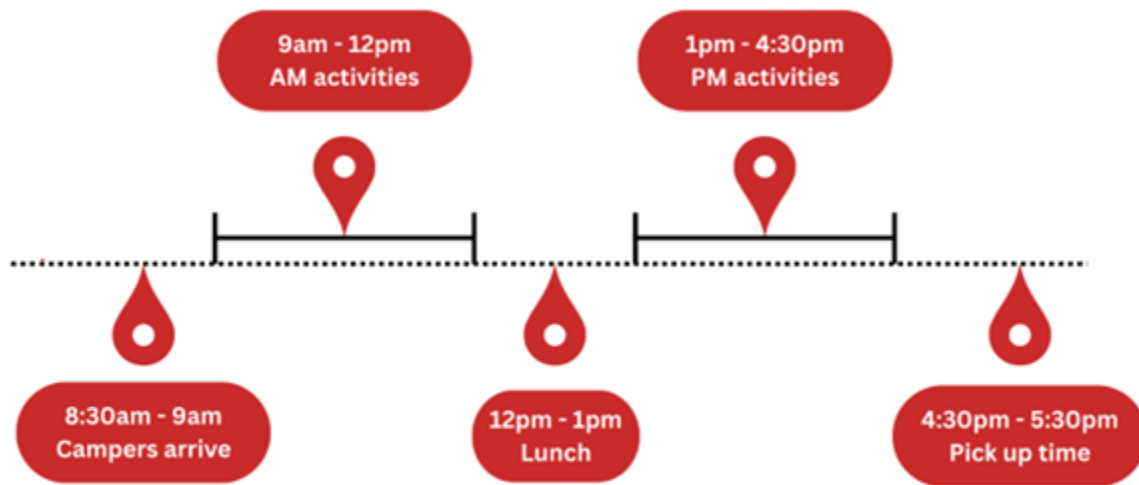


Nurturing Wellness

Everyone deserves the opportunity to ignite their true potential. We will continue to grow our value as an inclusive organization where people can enrich their mental, physical, and spiritual health and wellness.



A Typical Day at Camp



Drop Off and Pick Up

- Camp drop off starts at 8:30 am every day
- Scheduled daily activities are from 9:00 am – 4:30pm
- For the safety of all children at camps, we ask that you show identification at sign out. We are only able to sign out children to individuals listed on their file. Please contact your Camp Site Lead to update the pickup list.
- The YMCA has a firm pick up time of 5:00pm. Late pickups will be subject to a \$50 fee to compensate staff.
*The YMCA understands unforeseen circumstances may arise and we will provide a one-time exception. We ask in this case you contact us as soon as possible to let us know of a late pick up in order for us to make suitable arrangements.
- If your child is not attending camp on any given day, please make staff aware as soon as possible.

Our camps aim to provide a space for children to play, grow, and be a part of a community. A typical day strikes a balance between self-guided play and staff-led programs, and features lots of high energy play.



Common activities include whole group games, arts and crafts, visits to local parks and playgrounds in the community, sports, and swimming (location dependent).

What to Pack for Day Camp

We want campers to be equipped with everything they need to have a successful day at camp. We ask that you pack the following each day:

- Weather appropriate clothing
- Lunch and snacks (Hot lunches are provided at the Community YMCA **only**, for all other locations food and beverages are not provided by the YMCA; if you are registered at any site other than the Community YMCA, please ensure your child has enough food to fuel them for the entire day)
- Water Bottle
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- One set of additional clothing
- Running Shoes
- Swimsuit and towel (dependent on location enrolled)

Please leave the following items at home

- Personal electronics like cell phones and video game devices
- Valuables, or sentimental items that could be lost or damaged
- Food containing nuts



Waitlist

When registering for camp, if the location is full, we can add you to the waitlist. If a space opens up, we will call the phone number listed as the head of household to let you know and offer the opportunity to register. If we are unable to reach anyone after two phone calls, we will offer the spot to the next family in line.

Withdrawal from Camp

If for any reason you would like to withdraw your child from the program, we ask for 14 days written notice prior to the start of camp to receive a full refund. Requests submitted within 14 days of camp starting will receive no refund, excepting extenuating circumstances.

Swimming

Swimming is a part of the program for all YMCA day camps. Before your week of camp, you will be told which days your child will need to bring swimming gear.

When swim time comes, children are given a choice of whether to go swimming. We encourage all participants to go swimming but will provide alternative activities for those who choose not to.

Water Safety

Day camps will only swim in pools with enough lifeguards on duty and will abide by all pool rules.

While swimming, all participants must either:

- I) Wear a properly fitted life jacket and swim only in the shallow end of the pool
- II) Complete a brief swim test to demonstrate their ability

Life jackets will be provided by camp, but you may pack your own if you prefer.



Sick Days

If your child is absent for a day at Camp, we ask you to let us know as soon as possible for us to plan accordingly. If your child is unwell, please do not bring them to Day Camp. We ask that you make alternative arrangements for their care. If a child becomes unwell or develops symptoms whilst at Camp, a parent or emergency contact will be called to pick up the child. We ask that your child stay at home until symptoms pass. Please note that if your child is sick for a full day(s) or partial day(s), credits or refunds are **not** provided by the YMCA.

Below is a chart of common diseases with information on the symptoms, and timeframe on returning to camp:

Disease name	Symptoms	Return Date
Fever	If a fever exceeds 39C, the child should see a doctor.	24 hours after the last fever and the child is well enough to participate in all parts of the program.

Vomiting	Vomiting/Stomach upset	24 hours after vomiting has stopped and child is well enough to participate in all parts of the program.
Colds	Stuffy or runny noses, sneezing, watery eyes.	When the child is well enough to participate in all parts of the program
Flu	Sore throats, muscular aches, fever, chills, possible vomiting and diarrhea	24 hours after vomiting and diarrhea has stopped, and when the child is well enough to participate in all parts of the program.
Diarrheal diseases	Abnormal loose bowel movements	Diarrhea can be infectious. Children should be kept at home until 24 hours symptom free.

Medications

In case of emergency, we ask that you make YMCA staff aware of any medication/prescription your child takes on a regular basis. If you would like YMCA staff to administer medication to your child, please indicate as such in your camper registration form, and request a Medication Administration Authorization form by emailing: day.camps@halifax.ymca.ca

Prescription Drugs - may be administered as ordered by the physician, and as stated on the original (readable) prescription container for the child, once a YMCA Medication Administration Authorization form has been filled in by the parent/guardian.

Non-prescription Drugs – may only be administered by YMCA staff if the medicine is supplied in the original container and the parent/guardian completes the YMCA Medication Administration Authorization form to be kept on file.

Parents/guardians must send dispensers/measuring utensils along with any medication.

All medication and medical supplies should be given to the Site Lead, who will store it in a locked cupboard.



Allergies and Dietary Requirements

With the exception of the hot lunch at Community YMCA, families are responsible for packing lunch and snacks for their children, we ask that you pack enough food for your child throughout the day.

If your child has an allergy to food or any special dietary concerns, please inform the YMCA Day Camps staff when enrolling your child. There are a variety of reasons for this, including life-threatening food allergies and other medical conditions that may require special considerations to be implemented.

Your child's severe allergies will be documented on site along with YMCA procedures to protect your child from cross contamination and exposure to the allergen(s).

If your child carries an epi-pen, please inform your camp site lead upon drop off, in addition to making notes in your camper information form.

YMCA Day Camps are nut free zones, we kindly ask that you do not pack any nuts in your child's lunch/snacks for the day to ensure those with severe allergies are not at risk.

Accident and Incident Procedures

If an incident or accident occurs at one of the sites, such as an injury, our staff will document the details in an incident report within 24 hours. This report will include what happened, any first aid provided, the date and time the incident/accident occurred, and the steps taken to ensure your child's safety.

When you arrive, a staff member will present the report to you, explain the situation, and ask for your signature to confirm you have been informed. Once signed the report will be submitted to the Day Camps Director, for review and proper filing.

Lost and Found

Camp is a busy environment; we find children often go home without one or more of their belongings. Camp staff will collect all unclaimed items at the end of each day and display them each morning during sign in. All unclaimed items will be donated to a local charity at the end of each month.

Camp staff will do everything within reason to help reunite you with missing items, however the YMCA of Greater Halifax will not accept responsibility for personal items lost or damaged during camp.



Emergencies

When registering for camp, we ask for an emergency contact who can be reached in the event of an emergency. In cases of a serious accident, illness, or injury, we will make an immediate call for an ambulance, then attempt to contact the parent/guardian, and the emergency contact.



Promotional Materials

When registering for camp, you will be asked to complete a photo/video consent form with the following questions:

"I consent to photos of my child being used for promotional materials, media, or forwarded to third party funding bodies/ educational institutions."

"I consent that photos of my child can be displayed on communication platforms where other enrolled families can see them."

"I consent that photos of my child can be displayed on internal YMCA communication platforms to be shared across the Association."

"I consent to photos/videos of my child being included in brochures, photo albums, displays, online media, websites or printed items used for organizational advertisements of programs and services."

You may withdraw your consent at any time.



Duty to Report

At camp, our staff members have a responsibility to ensure all children attending camp are safe. If our staff suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, even under suspicion, they are obligated to report this to a child welfare agency. Everyone has a duty to report, and our main goal is to ensure each camper enrolled with the YMCA is safe and cared for.

Behaviour Guidance Policies

The following Behaviour Management Techniques will be used by the staff of the YMCA Greater Halifax/Dartmouth Summer Day Camps Team.

Acceptable Alternatives – a counselor will explain why a behaviour is unacceptable and provide an alternative behaviour, i.e. “When you throw sand at Johnny, it hurts his eyes. Please keep the sand in the sand box”. It is done in a matter-of-fact way and in terms simple enough for a child to understand.

Positive Reinforcement – a counselor will recognize when a child is displaying appropriate behaviour and reward the behaviour with praise, i.e. “Kelly you helped Suzy put the toys away, good helping”.



Positive Directions - when speaking with campers, staff will use positive phrasing rather than the negative, i.e. "Walk please" instead of "Do not run inside".

Offer Choices – counselors will offer the campers acceptable alternatives, i.e. "Do you want to clean up the playdough or the puzzles?" instead of "Do you want to clean up?" which will invite a "No" response from the child.

Positive Role Modelling – counselors will model appropriate behaviours for the children each day in all aspects of their day.

Setting Limits – Counselors will set age-appropriate limits in a positive way with occasional reminders when needed.

Good Behaviour Management - NEVER ridicules, insults or scares, BUT guides, respects and reinforces positive behaviour.

If a child exhibits behaviours such as hitting, harming self or others, throwing objects, etc., which may impact the health and safety of the child, his/her peers or staff, appropriate interventions may be implemented.

Staff Will Not:

- Use corporal or physical punishment in any form.
- Use harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, emotional or physical.
- Confine or isolate children.
- Deprive a child of the basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing or bedding (i.e.. withholding meals, snacks or desserts).
- Staff will not use food as a punishment or as a reward for behaviours.

Camper Behaviour Policy

Our goal for our day camps is for all children to feel safe, welcome, and have a positive experience. If there are repeated challenging behaviours that are a risk to themselves, another camper, or staff members, we may deem it necessary to dismiss a camper from the program. Dismissal of a camper is the last resort should the behaviours continue after the supports implemented by the YMCA staff, in collaboration with the parent/guardian continue.



High risk behaviours include:

- Stealing, vandalism as well as other damaging or illegal acts.
- Physical violence towards campers or staff.
- Physical or verbal abuse towards campers or staff.
- The use of a weapon.
- Leaving the camp property without supervision or permission.
- Discrimination against anyone for reasons of race, gender, sex, religion, orientation or any other reason
- Sexual activity or misconduct.
- Possession or use of tobacco, cannabis or alcohol products.
- Possession or use of any illegal drugs.
- Any behaviour that does not comply with the mission and values of the YMCA or negatively affects another camper's experience at camp

If any of these behaviours take place, the Camp Director and/or Assistant Director will contact the parent/guardian and inform them of the unacceptable behaviour. Camp staff will work with the parent/guardian for strategies to help avoid future problems. The parent/guardian will be made aware that if the behaviour is repeated, the camper will be dismissed.

Our goal is to ensure that all campers have a safe environment to enjoy their camp experience. We will do our best to work with campers who are having difficulty following our policies and help them enjoy their camp experience. However, campers who are inhibiting the experience of others may be asked to leave camp early.

Parent/Staff Partnership

Communication between Day Camp Staff and families is essential to ensure our campers are having safe and fun experiences at camp.

If you have any questions or concerns, please raise them right away to the Day Camps team on site, who will work with you to resolve any concerns or complaints you may have. If you feel as though the issue remains unresolved, please reach out to the Camp Director. We are committed to maintaining respectful communication and do not tolerate abusive language or behaviour. Our goal is to collaborate with families to ensure that all concerns are addressed constructively and positively, always prioritizing the best interests of the children.



Important Contacts

Alex Jackson – Day Camps Director

Phone number: (902) 222-4990

Email: Alex.Jackson@halifax.ymca.ca

Victoria Collins – General Manager, Child Engagement & Operations

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