

April 25, 2018

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Medicine Hat Public School District is pleased to announce that the **YMCA of Medicine Hat** has been selected to operate Before and After School programs effective September 2018 at the following schools:

1. Connaught School
2. Crestwood School
3. Dr. Ken Sauer School
4. Dr. Roy Wilson Learning Centre
5. George Davison School
6. River Heights School
7. Ross Glen School
8. Southview Community School
9. Vincent Massey School
10. Webster Niblock School
11. Elm Street School – morning only

In February 2018 the District released a Request for Proposal to give operators an opportunity to submit a proposal for consideration by the end of March 2018. After an extensive evaluation process, the YMCA of Medicine Hat was selected to meet the needs of our families. Effective September 4, 2018, the YMCA will provide Before and After School Care on all student instructional days from 7:00 am until school start time; and from end of the school day until 6:00 pm.

We look forward to a cooperative partnership with the YMCA and anticipate continued exceptional service. We will work towards a successful transition as the YMCA prepares for the first day of operation in September 2018. There will be no changes to the operation of the existing programs for April – June 2018. All current Before and After School Care staff are encouraged to apply for employment with the YMCA. See the following *Frequently Asked Questions* document from the YMCA.

Thank you,  
Medicine Hat Public School District



## **Frequently Asked Questions about YMCA of Medicine Hat's Before & After School Care Program**

### **1. Which schools will the YMCA of Medicine Hat be offering Before and After School Care programming in effective September 1<sup>st</sup>?**

Connaught School - 101 8 Street SW  
Crestwood School - 2300 19 Ave SE  
Dr. Ken Sauer School – 20 Terrace Drive NE  
Dr. Roy Wilson Learning Centre – 751 Strachan Rd. SE  
George Davison School – 155 Sprague Way SE  
River Heights School – 301 6 Avenue SW  
Ross Glen School – 48 Ross Glen Rd. SE  
Southview Community School – 2425 Southview Dr. SE  
Vincent Massey School – 901 Hargrave Way NW  
Webster Niblock School – 909 4 Avenue NE  
Elm Street School – 1001 Elm Street SE (mornings only, afternoon care will not change)

### **2. If my child currently attends one of those programs, will my fees change?**

Possibly. Each school has been charging different rates. Effective September 1<sup>st</sup>, fees will be the same at every school. While you may notice a modest increase, it is important to note that as a non-profit, charitable organization the YMCA of Medicine Hat operates on a cost recovery basis. Staffing costs in Alberta have increased significantly over the past 3 years as a result of changes to the province's minimum wage.

Effective September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018, the cost of Before & After School Care at the above sites will be \$5.00 per hour for students regularly attending.

Fees for students attending on a non-scheduled, drop-in basis will be \$6/hour.

Parents will only pay fees for the amount of time their child attends, rounded to, and billed in 0.25 hour increments.



### **3. What is the difference between regular attendance and drop-in attendance?**

#### **Regular Attendance**

Parents/guardians with students who attend regularly will be required to provide the program with the hours they require child care in advance to ensure the YMCA schedules staff accordingly. For example:

- A parent/guardian who works regular full-time hours will provide a schedule to the Program Director at the time of registration outlining the hours of child care required. The Program Director will require advance notice if the child is going to be absent or if different hours of child care are required on any given day.
- A parent/guardian who works varying shifts and receives their work schedule every 1 - 2 weeks will provide the Program Director with notice of the hours of child care required as soon as their work schedule has been confirmed. The Program Director will require advance notice if the child is going to be absent or if different hours of care are required on any given day.

#### **Drop-In Attendance**

Parents/guardians with no set schedule are welcome to access the program. The price for Drop-In Attendance is somewhat higher due to the challenges associated with finding staffing on short-term notice to ensure that licensing staff-to-child ratios are maintained.

The Program Director will require minimal advance notice of drop-in attendance to ensure that staffing ratios can be adjusted and/or maintained:

- For attendance in morning programming, the Program Director requires notice by 4:00 PM the day prior.
- For attendance in afternoon programming, the Program Director requires notice by 10:00 AM the same day.

Note: as per licensing requirements, all children attending the program **MUST** complete registration paperwork before they can attend the program.

### **4. Is there a discount for having more than one child in the program?**

No, the fees listed are per child.

### **5. How will I pay my fees to the YMCA?**

Parents will only pay for the time their child attends, rounded to the nearest 0.25 hourly increment. A pre-authorized payment plan authorizing the YMCA to debit your bank account or credit card is required at the time of registration. Attendance hours will be calculated at the end of the month and an invoice will be emailed to you showing the amount that will be taken from your bank account on the payment date. The payment date



is the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month. If that date falls on a weekend or stat holiday, payments will be pulled on the last business day before the weekend/stat holiday.

## **6. What happens if the funds are not in my account/credit card when the payment is pulled?**

You will be charged a non-refundable \$35 NSF fee. Payment for fees owing and the NSF charge will be due within 30 days of the original payment date. If that deadline is missed, the account will be sent to collections and your child will not be allowed to return to the program.

## **7. When can I register my child?**

We are still working on these details. As soon as we have the information available, it will be distributed through School Messenger and posted on our website.

## **8. Will my child receive any other benefits?**

### **Membership**

All children attending the program 30 hours or more per month are eligible to receive a free YMCA membership. The YMCA of Medicine Hat has an all-inclusive membership model which means that children with a valid membership have access to all YMCA programs free-of-charge, including swimming lessons and youth/preschool programming.

Families have the option to upgrade to a family membership by paying the difference. For details on pricing, please contact our membership services desk at the Downtown (403-527-4426) or South Ridge (403-528-1631) branches

### **Get Active**

The YMCA's Get Active program is designed to improve children's physical literacy. Using the Sport4Life PLAYfun tool, children are assessed at the beginning of the year on 18 different fundamental movement skills that comprise overall physical literacy. Based on the results, programming is designed to target the areas the group scored lowest on. Activities used are varied and include basketball, wrestling, scootering, 9-Square-in-the-Air, snowshoeing, etc. The PLAYfun test is repeated at the end of the year to measure improvement in physical literacy. Over the past 2 years, the YMCA's Get Active Program has seen a 40% improvement each year in physical literacy scores at participating schools!

The YMCA of Medicine Hat is proud to offer its Get Active program on a rotating basis to its Before & After School Care programs. Presently, this program is only available in 4 schools during lunch hours/after school times.



### **9. What happens to the staff who are currently working in the program?**

All current staff are eligible to apply for employment with the YMCA of Medicine Hat. Our preference is to keep as many staff as possible to ensure solid continuity of programming for the children enrolled. At the same time, it will be a competitive hiring process and the best candidates for the positions will be selected.

### **10. Will you utilize volunteers in the Before and After School Care Program?**

The YMCA encourages volunteerism throughout its programs and services. This program will be staffed by paid employees to ensure licensing ratios are maintained, however we would welcome volunteers to enhance our programming! All YMCA volunteers are required to provide a clear Police Information Check with Vulnerable Sector Search and go through a training process, including specific training on our child protection standards. Individuals interested in volunteering should contact the Program Director.

### **11. Are you licensed and accredited?**

Our early years child development centres have been licensed and accredited for many years. We have a very good relationship with the local licensing office.

We are required to get each Before & After School site licensed and accredited. Our licensing application for each site will be submitted as soon as possible with the goal to have each site approved by September 1, 2018.

Accreditation will follow a similar process; however, we do not anticipate having accreditation finalized for each site until September 2019.

### **12. Will my subsidy be impacted by this change?**

You will still be eligible to receive subsidy with this program. We are working with the provincial subsidy office to gather information about what parents are required to do to ensure their subsidy continues without interruption. As soon as that information is available, we will share it with you.

### **13. Who will my contact person be?**

Each site will have a Program Director. This person will have a cell phone and will be your direct point of contact for questions, concerns or attendance. This information will be provided to you closer to September.



## **14. How can I stay up to date on information as it becomes available?**

Important updates will be sent to School District No. 76 to be shared through School Messenger. Updates will also be posted on the YMCA's website: [www.medicinehatymca.ca](http://www.medicinehatymca.ca)

## **15. With this change, how will Before & After School Care Services change?**

You are accustomed to receiving a high-quality service and this will not change. Here's what you will notice:

### **Our scale**

As Canada's largest child care provider, YMCAs are entrusted with the care of thousands of children every day at more than 1,500 locations across the country. No other organization in Canada or the U.S. is delivering a national curriculum in child care programs at the scale we are.

### **We are a charity**

As a charity, all YMCA Child Care programs are non-profit and reflect our values of caring, respect, honesty, responsibility and inclusiveness. Our Educators embody these values in their relationship with every child.

### **We embrace the power of play**

Research has shown that play is the natural way children learn and this serves as the foundation for all YMCA Child Care programs. When children play, they are having fun, exploring their interests and therefore spend longer on a task. Most importantly, they are trying new things, using their imagination, problem solving and developing new skills. Our programs and centres are designed to allow children to participate in independent or small group play while YMCA Educators support their learning.

### **We are driven by the child's interests, not teacher-led**

In both our YMCA Playing to Learn and YMCA A Place to Connect curriculums, there are no pre-determined lesson plans. What happens in each program is driven by what children are showing an interest in at any given time and Educators will work with the children to grow their interest and learning about the topic. Materials, props and activities are introduced to enhance these experiences providing opportunities for learning and development.

### **Accountability of YMCA educators**

Warm, caring and dedicated, our Educators have a passion for nurturing each child's potential. They are qualified professionals and lifelong learners themselves, supported through ongoing in-house training. Our Educators are held accountable for the implementation of our curriculum, our standards for communicating with parents/guardians and adherence to YMCA policies and procedures, including child



protection standards and policies. All staff are required to submit Police Information Checks with Vulnerable Sector Search and Child Welfare Checks prior to hire, with updates every 3 years. See Section III for more information about YMCA's Child Protection Standards.

## **16. What is YMCA A Place to Connect™ Curriculum?**

Across Canada, thousands of children start and end their school day with the YMCA. YMCA Before & After School Care programs are designed to be active, healthy and fun with an emphasis on letting children make their own choices. YMCA staff create a special relationship with each child, helping them develop new physical, cognitive, emotional and social skills in a caring, nurturing environment.

Developed in 2009 by a team of child care experts at the YMCA of Greater Toronto, the YMCA A Place to Connect curriculum brings a standard, high-quality approach to how we deliver before and after school care programs for children 5-12 years old.

### **Why did the YMCA develop YMCA A Place to Connect™?**

The goal is to make YMCA Before and After School Care programs the most enriching places for school age children in Canada. Research shows that children flourish in programs that are structured to let them shape the program, by providing opportunities for choice and leadership with a focus on strengths and the development of skills and relationships.

But research only tells us one part of the story. The YMCA listened to what children and parents told them they wanted in a before and after school program. Children said they wanted something that is fun, active and different from school. Parents told us they wanted a program that is safe, reliable, caring, and active. Combining the latest research with this feedback, YMCA A Place to Connect™ was born.

### **How are children's developmental needs addressed and met through YMCA A Place to Connect?**

*Social Needs:* children need to interact with both peers and adults in order to develop pro-social skills and function as a group member. To meet these needs, Educators must provide times of the day or activities and/or materials which encourage social development and social interaction.

*Intellectual Needs:* Children need to explore, observe, know, understand and develop language and listening skills. To meet these needs, Educators must provide children with materials and activities that stimulate their language, listening and observational skills.

*Creative Needs:* Children need creative self-expression, problem solving skills, invention, Imagination, discovery and experimentation. Educators encourage children to use materials



in novel ways (when appropriate) and think of, and accept, more than one solution to a problem.

*Physical Needs:* Children need to develop physical skills and have adequate nutrition, rest, health and safety. To meet these needs, Educators must provide time in the day for activities which develop gross motor skills through large muscle activities and fine motor skills. This can include manipulation of small materials and development of perceptual motor skills (i.e., body awareness, directional awareness, sensory development, body development and coordination).

*Emotional Needs:* Children need to feel accepted, respected and secure. Educators must provide an accepting, secure environment where children can belong. It is a place where children's ideas are respected, and children's individuality is encouraged. Educators help children learn to cope with frustrations and express their anger appropriately. Program planning must address and help develop a child's positive self-concept through accepting and valuing their family and culture.

#### **What can parents and children expect in YMCA Before and After School Care?**

- A nurturing relationship with YMCA Educators who will encourage their individual development and attend to their emotional needs
- Greetings upon arrival and departure
- Parents are always welcome to spend time in the program observing or volunteering
- Lots of physical activities, games and outdoor play to help children wind down after school
- Spending time and having fun with other children, including those they may not see during the school day
- Planned activities driven by the children's interests to allow them to explore arts and crafts, science, math, reading and more.
- Opportunities for children to take on leadership roles in the program

#### **How the YMCA ensures program quality**

Educators receive comprehensive, on-going training that supports their existing knowledge and experience, including:

- Introduction to YMCA A Place to Connect/Child Development
- Relationship Building
- Program Planning
- Topics such as Physical Activity, Physical Literacy, Bullying Awareness, Healthy Child Development and Developmental Assets

Training also covers policies and procedures, child safety and protection, program planning, healthy child development, relationship-based approach to child care, physical activity and nutrition, games and activities, etc.



### **Annual Evaluations**

Every school age program is assessed on an annual basis by a peer-review team. The assessment is comprehensive, examining program planning, relationships, aesthetics, choice and activities.

More information on this can be found at: <http://ymca.ca/What-We-Offer/Child-Care/Before-and-After-School-Care>

## **17. What are YMCA Child Protection Standards?**

Promoting the safety, well-being, and potential of children and youth is the cornerstone of our work at the YMCA. To this end, YMCA Canada developed Child Protection Standards that each local branch across the country must uphold and follow. These standards meet or exceed the requirements of legislation in every province. Every YMCA Association is audited on an annual basis by a peer-review team to ensure that their Child Protection program is meeting the established standard for excellence. Our work in child protection includes:

- **Standard 1: Policy, Procedure and Organizational Commitment:**
  - Identified Child Protection Lead who is responsible to head up this work in our organization. This person receives special training and professional development opportunities through YMCA Canada
  - A comprehensive Child Protection Policy with accompanying procedures that cover all aspects of human resources, abuse recognition, duty-to-report, emergency procedures, etc.
  - Child Protection Policy is reviewed and updated annually
  - Child Protection Kits located at each facility/program that include all policies, procedures, forms and contact information needed to respond to all child protection issues
  
- **Standard 2: Recruitment and Selection of Employees and Volunteers**
  - Police Information Checks with Vulnerable Sector Search are required prior to commencement of employment with updates at regular intervals after that. (Child Welfare checks required for positions that directly supervise children)
  - Minimum of 3 professional reference checks, with specific questions around the applicant's interaction with, and/or ability, to supervise and work with children, youth, and vulnerable persons
  - Formal interview for all positions with a minimum of two staff members
  
- **Standard 3: Orientation, Training and Development**
  - Standardized child protection training required within first 2 weeks of employment/volunteering



- Refreshers required annually
- Additional training provided to staff/volunteers who supervise children, including workshops with Children's Services
- **Standard 4: Access, Facility and Program Controls**
  - All visitors to YMCA buildings are required to sign-in with valid photo ID or YMCA membership card ensuring we have a full account of every person who is in our building at any given time
  - Coded magnetic door locks on our Child Care Centre doors so only parents and staff/volunteers can access the building
  - All unused rooms kept locked when not-in-use
  - Duty Managers complete building checks in all facilities at regular intervals each day, scanning to ensure that all child protection measures are being followed.
  - All staff trained to respond appropriately to any incident they may encounter in our buildings or programs

## **18. What Does Child Protection Look Like in Before & After School Care?**

- Qualified Educators who have had the highest level of screening possible during the recruitment and selection process
- Educators trained in how to recognize all forms of abuse and respond to indicators and/or disclosures
- Educators who have the utmost respect for Licensing and work cooperatively and collaboratively with Children's Services
- Educators fully trained in First Aid and emergency procedures
- Direct contact with parents/guardians regarding their child's schedule and program attendance
- Facility/access controls to ensure that children are signed in/out and are always accounted for. This includes ensuring children are escorted to/from their classrooms and Before & After School Care
- Facility/access controls to ensure that only parents of participating students can enter the school when the building is not open
- Program Directors on staff at each location with cell phones enabled with 2-way radio capabilities, ensuring they are reachable and in contact with the main YMCA branch and senior leadership team at all times
- Additional radios available for larger programs or programs spread out over more than one area