



Sunflower Program Statement

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This statement sets forth our Program Goals and Approaches to plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences that support the learning and development of the children attending our programs. We are confident in the quality of our programs and our ability to ensure high quality experiences that lead to positive outcomes in relation to your children's learning, development, health and well-being. Our program is structured to be responsive to each individual child's development. We view each child as being competent, curious and capable of complex thinking. We provide a supportive environment that encourages positive social interactions and an understanding of each child's uniqueness.

Our program promotes inquiry-based learning by reflecting on the interests and ideas of the children as well as the Educators. Our Early Childhood Educators plan the environment to guide the children's learning, enhance their knowledge and meet their individual developmental needs, ensuring that children and families have a sense of;

- Belonging
- Well-being
- Engagement
- Expression

These are the four Foundations identified in '*How Does Learning Happen?*', Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. For more information regarding '*How Does Learning Happen?*' please visit the following website;

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/pedagogy.html>

Program Goals

1. To promote the health, safety, and well-being of the children.

All employees are responsible for maintaining the expectations of the Child Care and Early Years Act, the City of Ottawa Public Health requirements, Canada Food Guide, Canadian Standards Association Group and the Ontario Disabilities Act, as well the standards of Andrew Fleck Children's Services and the College of Early Childhood Educators to insure the safety and well-being of each child. Staff will ensure on-going daily communication with our families, in order for both staff and parents to share any concerns about the child's health and well-being including any sleep, diet, toileting, illness, or other changes in routine at home or day care that may impact on the child's well-being.

Understanding that children's present and future well-being is influenced by their ability to self-regulate, our programs focus on supporting children's development of self-regulation capacities. We arrange our environments to reduce the factors that may be causing stress for children and encourage children to engage in activities that enhance calmness and involve an element of manageable risk (appropriate for children's varied capabilities).

We emphasize exploration and play that engages the body, mind and senses by being active and engaged participants in the child's explorations and learning. We have established strong partnerships with various stakeholders to better support the mental health and well-being of families and children.

2. To promote responsibility for self and others by encouraging the children to interact and communicate in a positive manner and support their ability to self-regulate and support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents and staff.

The emotional and physical well-being of children in our care is a priority of Andrew Fleck Children's Services. Developing relationships of mutual respect and trust that are positive, responsive, and nurturing is of paramount importance. Understanding that not all communication is verbal, we support the children to communicate in different forms and create and maintain a language rich environment by providing opportunities for children to explore literacy, music and other symbolic languages to support self-expression.

Educators get down to the children's level, use active listening skills and recognize the children's attempts to communicate, valuing their input. We identify what the children are feeling and let them know that they are being heard and assist with expression by labelling emotions and/or expressions. Educators refrain from using 'directive' language, and instead consciously use joint dialogue.

The use of visuals within our programs assists the children in understanding the routines and expectations of the program. When needed we will include the use of PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).

Only forms of positive behaviour guidance with emphasis on discussion, encouragement and positive reinforcement are used by all staff. The intention must always be in partnership with parents if we are to assist children in being successful in all interactions. We support all children in developing skills for self-regulation, self-confidence and ultimately, self-discipline and sensitivity in their interactions with others. Educators respond empathetically to all children and try to identify and decrease the stressors that a child may be feeling. We use a collaborative approach with the children to identify the children's emotions and solve problems. The desired behaviour will be stated clearly and positively, and open communication will be encouraged and supported. If a child continues to experience difficulty, the educators may redirect him/her to another area of play. If the child is still requiring support, he/she may be encouraged to use the calm down area with staff support to regain self-control. Our calm down area is an area where children may go to have a quiet moment to read a book or use self-regulating equipment such as squeeze balls, noise reduction head phones or any other items that support the child's ability to self-regulate.

All staff work within the Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics as put forth by the College of ECE and the AFCS' Statements of Practice and Guiding Principles. Staff interact with colleagues and other professionals in ways that demonstrate respect, trust and integrity. Through their conduct, Early Childhood Educators strive to enhance the status of the profession in their workplaces and in the wider community.

3. To create environments that foster the children's exploration, play and inquiry and plan for positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported ensuring that both child-initiated and adult-supported experiences are available.

When designing our environments, educators are co-planners with the children; supporting decision making and inquiry-based learning, curiosity and risk taking. Educators are actively engaged in play with the children and facilitate opportunities for the children to ask questions, solve problems, test, revise and communicate their theories. We are purposefully curious rather than acting as the expert and we focus on what the children are 'doing', rather than the object they are using, to determine what it is they are trying to understand and/or what they are investigating. We use thought provoking questions, how and why, to explore cause and effect with children. We support and encourage the children's choice, follow their lead/interest and we value their voice. We support the children's inquiries by providing sufficient program materials. This ensures that there are resources for all children and that these resources can be rotated and easily accessible. The children can move freely from one play area to another. Materials are open ended 'loose parts' and support the children's investigation and support the learning and development of each child.

Educators and children work together to expand on investigations. We complete and post pedagogical documentation (pictures, videos, and written observations) identifying the ongoing learning that is occurring. These are shared with the children and families.

We have developed daily schedules that have a minimum of transitions and interruptions and our schedules allow for long periods of uninterrupted play. We understand that the environment is the 'third teacher' and we develop environments for children to thrive in: environments that invite them to investigate, imagine, think, create, solve problems and make meaning from their experiences and to support the children's growing autonomy and independence.

At different times throughout the year there may be interests /inquiries in which children may want to share their own items from home. We encourage and support items being brought into the Centre so long as they are supporting the learning and inquiry that is occurring. Please note, however, that we cannot be held responsible for lost or damaged items and items must be restricted to non-violent, cooperative type toys. War toys, weapons, etc. are strictly prohibited.

4. To offer flexible, responsive programming which incorporates indoor and outdoor play, as well as active play, rest and quiet time, into the day, and to consider the individual needs of the children receiving child care.

Respecting that all children will have their own unique skills and attributes, our Early Childhood Educators nurture and foster the growth of maturity and independence by providing opportunities for each child to contribute to his/her learning and an appreciation of and respect for our natural environment.

We are committed to establishing natural outdoor play spaces that support the development of sensory, motor and cognitive skills in all children and are active outdoor participants with the children in exploring the environment. We encourage the children to explore and take risks, ensuring that we are assessing all risks, by group discussions. As described in *How Does Learning Happen?* research suggests that allowing children to actively explore and investigate what they are naturally curious about, to test their limits, take manageable risks appropriate for their age and abilities, and engage in creative problem-solving is critical for children's physical and mental health and well-being.

As per the *Child Care and Early Years Act* children who are in care for 6 hours or longer must have at least 2 hours (AM & PM) of outdoor play daily weather permitting. We strive to provide as many opportunities as possible for children to experience nature and the outdoors to enhance their sense of wonder and joy in the world around them. We consider the humidex, wind chill temperatures, UV Index and the Air Quality when planning for outdoor play and follow all Ottawa Public Health or Environment Canada weather advisories or recommendations.

Quiet rest time is important for children's health and ability to develop self-regulation skills. For children who are in care for more than 6 hours per day, a 1-hour rest period is required. The children may sleep up to 2 hours if needed. Each child will be assigned their own cot and it will be labelled with a number which corresponds to a "bed chart" posted on the bulletin board in the Sleep Room. All cots are disinfected weekly when the sheets are laundered. Employees perform visual checks on all children 4 times throughout rest time and these are documented on the visual sleep check chart located on the bulletin board. Any changes in the child's sleeping patterns or behaviours will be communicated with parents. Any sleep preferences that are identified at intake or communicated by parents will be documented in the daily log book. Children can bring in a blanket and/or a cuddly toy from home for this period if they wish. Understanding that some of the children do not require an actual nap, we encourage 'quiet time', where children can rest quietly on their cots and be provided with books or other quiet activities. There is also an Early Risers' program for the children.

To ensure the safety of the children, ratios are maintained at all times during outdoor play and during the day, excluding sleep time for a duration of 2 hours, 90 minutes at the beginning of the day and 1 hour before the end of the day. During these hours we are permitted to use 2/3 ratios.

5. To build supportive partnerships with children and families; fostering the engagement of ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children.

Families play an integral part in their child's learning and one of the guiding principles at Andrew Fleck Children's Services is engaging families as partners in their child's early learning. Our program has an open-door approach for parents and they are welcome to visit at any time during program hours.

We provide a positive and engaged orientation period for all new children and families. The first couple of days should only be half days for your child so that he/she may have a slow integration.

It is recommended that the parent(s) stay with their child on the first day and leave the program for a short while on the second. This is also a time for you to touch base with your child's educators to review your child and family history.

Children will adapt at their own speed and some children may need their parents to stay for a little while each day to offer encouragement and security. Please plan on spending a few minutes in the morning to settle your child before leaving for the day. Always check in with a staff member and sign the "sign-in" book when you arrive in the morning. Please remember to say goodbye to your child and reassure him/her that you will be back. During your child's integration, educators will provide regular verbal updates regarding your child. Please feel free to discuss any concerns you may have with a staff member at any time.

The program coordinator will provide families with a set of intake forms and the educators will organize ongoing meetings throughout the year to share your child's learning. We value that parents/guardians are the child's primary caregivers and we are committed to a mutually respectful relationship with all families and welcome your questions at any time. Please do not hesitate to approach us to schedule a mutually convenient time to discuss your questions or concerns.

To easily record and document your child's learning, and to provide you with the opportunity to experience and engage more in your child's day, we utilize an online tool called StoryPark. StoryPark provides an overview of the children's learning that invites families to enjoy in the events of the day encourages interactions and engages families in their child's learning. All parents will sign an agreement of understanding for the use of StoryPark. To learn more, we welcome you to visit www.storypark.com. We urge parents/guardians to keep informed of Centre activities and news by reading the Centre newsletters as well as notices posted on our bulletin boards and the StoryPark Community page.

6. To involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff.

Encouraging and developing community partnerships strengthens our ability to meet the needs of all children and families. Our Program supports any needed collaboration with community partners for the benefit of all children. Children with special needs are supported through Children's Inclusion Support Services (CISS). A Resource Consultant provides consultative support on an ongoing basis to our programs by suggesting strategies for adapting activities and providing training to ensure a positive inclusion experience for everyone. Using a team approach, the Resource Consultant facilitates the development of a functional Team Service Plan which is used to meet the expectations as set forth by the Program.

We support our families to connect with other community resources as well, such as Ottawa Children's Treatment Centre, First Words and others as needed. We post information on our parent bulletin boards for easy access. We have an ongoing partnership with the local library and continue to build community knowledge by actively participating in community walks. These walks are important as they provide the children with an opportunity to engage with their community and to build relationships with, and an understanding of those around them. This provides the children with a sense of belonging. Our Preschool and Toddler programs use a 'walking rope' which has handles that the children hold onto. To ensure safety, there are always 2 or more staff off site with the children at all times and ratios are always maintained.

We accept students from various community colleges (Algonquin, La Cité and Heritage) and we maintain a close and professional relationship with Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) as we are a workplace childcare centre housed in the CMHC building.

7. To support continuous professional learning.

Our Early Childhood Educators value lifelong learning and commit themselves to engaging in continuous professional learning to enhance their practice. The Group Care Staff meet quarterly for professional learning opportunities and each team meets on a weekly basis to review how their program implementation is meeting the children's needs. The staff continually take advantage of workshops, courses and other opportunities to upgrade their skills and develop new areas of expertise. Internal Module Trainings have been developed to support employees in their professional development and can serve to complement their personal Continuous Professional Learning Plan as required by the College of ECE. Our team is very committed to the welfare and development of children, and is always available for consultation, information, and resources.

As per the regulations set forth in the *Child Care and Early Years Act* we must document and review our strategies, to ensure that we are meeting the needs of the children and families within our care.

To meet this requirement, we will;

- Develop and circulate an annual parent survey, to all parents whose children are enrolled in our program.
- Solicit feedback at parent/guardians and teacher meetings held twice per year by the RECEs.
- Review strategies and document findings bi-annually at Program Team meetings

All employees, supply staff, students and volunteers are expected to review the program statement prior to interacting with the children and implement the approaches set out in the statement. All employees will review the Program Statement annually and at any time when the program statement is modified. All Andrew Fleck Children's Services programs share a philosophy that supports the right of every child and family to expect and receive the highest quality of child care that we can offer. We are committed to providing a high quality, diverse and inclusive early learning program for all children. On behalf of Andrew Fleck Children's Services, we would like to welcome you and your child to the Sunflower program.