

Play Works Youth Friendly Community Application

How are youth, play and community defined?

Who are youth?

For the purpose of the Youth Friendly Community Recognition Program, youth are defined as anyone age 13 to 19 years.

The lower end of the age group is often the age at which youth participation in play programs begins to drop. Statistics say that up to 70% of children drop out of sports programs by age 13. While some say school, jobs, or family responsibilities take them out of the game, others say they leave because the programs no longer meet their needs.

Programming for youth differs from programming for children. Children enjoy structure, adult leadership and routine. Youth enjoy challenge, peer-led activities and diversity. Communities that “get” that difference intentionally program in a way that is attractive to youth and is better designed to meet their developmental needs.

The upper age limit could have been 17 or 18, but was extended to 19 in recognition of the fact that youth can be going through great change during those three years:

- Leaving high school
- Doing a victory lap at high school
- Looking for work
- Starting a job
- Going to college or university

Because play is voluntary and leads to satisfaction and enjoyment, it can be a significant source of support and connection in a young person’s life during times of change.

What is play?

Play Works defines play as anything a young person does in his/her free time that has elements of choice, leads to satisfaction, and encourages positive learning and enjoyment. Play is something a youth does voluntarily, for which they are not paid or earn a required school credit.

Play can include any of the following:

- Recreation
- Sport
- Arts & Culture
- Drama, Dance & Music
- Volunteering
- Leadership Development

What is community?

In the Youth Friendly program, a community can be a geographically specific neighbourhood, a small township such as Brooke-Alvinston, a First Nations community such as Wikwemikong, a defined community such as a Canadian Forces Base or a larger urban centre like the City of Hamilton. Second-tier governments, such as some counties and regions, are considered groups of communities; the individual communities that make up those governments would apply to be recognized as Youth Friendly Communities. Any community in Ontario can apply.

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What is documentation?

Throughout the application, communities are asked to provide tangible documentation, or examples, to support how they meet various criteria. Documentation may be provided in hard copy, provided as a PDF or shared as a URL link. Here is a sample of list of documentation that could be used:

- Newspapers
- Brochures
- YouTube videos
- Meeting minutes
- Magazines
- Interviews
- Event reports
- Flyers
- Websites
- Manuals
- Calendars
- Videos
- Terms of reference
- Program statistics and summaries

What are community agencies or community groups?

In this program, a community agency is considered the same as a community group. Both are not for profit entities. They may have staff (e.g., Boys and Girls Club) or be volunteer-driven (e.g., 4-H). Possibilities include sport groups and leadership groups (e.g., Cadets). They can be part of larger organizations (e.g., Scouts/Guides) or exist only in your community.

Each community has a unique mix of groups or agencies in its midst. The goal is to engage as many of them as possible in the application process.