

Play Works Youth Friendly Community Application

What are the Youth Friendly Community Criteria?

Youth Friendly Community Criteria

Communities that meet a minimum of 7 of the following 10 criteria will be recognized as Youth Friendly. A community must meet criteria 2 to be recognized as a Gold or Platinum Youth Friendly Community.

Each criteria links to at least one of the themes and outcomes of *Stepping Up*, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' strategic framework to help Ontario's youth succeed.

Criteria 1: Youth have options for play

Play is any activity that has elements of choice, leads to satisfaction and encourages progressive learning.

A Youth Friendly Community offers a variety of play opportunities for youth ages 13 to 19.

Play opportunities exist in recreation, sports, arts/culture, drama/dance/music, volunteerism, and leadership development.

Play is offered by multiple service providers, such as local governments/governing bodies, community agencies, the faith community, local businesses and other independent organizations.

Criteria 2: Youth are formally connected community-wide

Note: This criteria must be met to achieve Gold or Platinum Youth Friendly Community recognition.

Connecting youth to the community creates opportunities for the youth voice to be heard in a continuous, formal and public way.

The community encourages engagement and activism by youth ages 13 to 19 and supports them in speaking out about their need for play.

Youth are connected to the community through youth advisory committees that are attached to local government and other leadership groups. Youth also participate on boards/committees and other civic engagement structures and host and participate in youth forums and summits.

The voice of youth is evident in many areas, including local government/governing bodies, not for profit agencies, schools and school boards, faith communities, local businesses and other independent service providers.

There is evidence that the youth voice advocating for play is being heard.

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Criteria 3: It is easy for youth to find information about play activities in the community

Information is publicized through a variety of media and communication outlets, making it easy for youth ages 13 to 19, to find out about play activities.

Organizations seeking to reach youth use youth friendly media and communication outlets, including social media portals (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, text, IM), websites and print sources, radio, TV, posters, brochures and leisure guides.

There is evidence youth are using these vehicles to access information.

Information for youth is provided by the local government/governing bodies, community agencies, the faith community, local businesses, other independent service providers, and audio/print/visual media groups.

Criteria 4: The community recognizes and celebrates youth

A Youth Friendly Community recognizes and celebrates youth ages 13 to 19 in a variety of ways.

A variety of players in the community host events where youth are recognized, such as the local government/governing body, community agencies, faith communities, local businesses, agricultural fair boards, schools, service clubs and sports groups.

Media or print businesses cover large scale public youth-related events and events where youth receive awards and/or scholarships.

Youth are aware of these opportunities and are often involved in various aspects of the events (e.g., planning, delivery, evaluation).

Criteria 5: The community formally commits funding for youth play

A Youth Friendly Community has a variety of funding sources that support play for youth ages 13-19.

The local government/governing body has some formal funding designated for youth play.

Youth play funding opportunities is also supported by community agencies, faith communities, local businesses, other independent service providers, not for profit agencies and service clubs.

Funds are available to pay for program staff, programs and services, facilities, special events and youth advisory councils.

To expand program access, agencies offer fee subsidies and build awareness of subsidy programs such as Canadian Tire Jump Start.

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Criteria 6: The community supports Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a formal process that engages youth along with their families, communities and governments in empowering youth to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.

A Youth Friendly Community uses Positive Youth Development (PYD) approaches to empower youth to reach their full potential.

Service providers have department/agency policies, procedures and practices that promote PYD.

PYD's 40 Developmental Assets, 7 Developmental Needs and 5Cs (competence, confidence, character, connection and caring) are embedded in all programs and services.

Community staff and volunteers receive PYD training.

The PYD approach is reflected in promotional materials and other information publicized throughout the community,

PYD is supported and applied by local governments, community agencies, faith communities, local businesses, other independent service providers and community partners.

Criteria 7: Youth feel valued by their community

A Youth Friendly Community listens to and acts on the needs expressed by youth ages 13 to 19.

Youth are valued by various sectors in the community, including the local government, community agencies, independent service providers, faith communities, local businesses, not for profit agencies, community groups, adults and adult-youth coalitions.

Youth are actively engaged by and encouraged to be present in businesses, recreation centres, malls, theatres and elsewhere. Service providers in such venues adopt a youth friendly approach in plans, strategies and programs.

Youth regularly give feedback and point to specific evidence that they are heard.

A cross-section of youth sees the community as youth friendly and confidently testifies that they feel respected as valid contributors.

Youth identify adult champions of youth play. Those champions are present and advocate for positive youth play, publicly support the needs of youth in the community and ensure that the community is involved in youth events.

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Criteria 8: Schools and school boards support the Youth Friendly approach

In a Youth Friendly Community, schools and school boards actively support and promote play for youth ages 13 to 19 outside of regular school hours, both inside and outside of the school facility.

Youth play opportunities occur outside school hours/the curriculum, and youth groups use school resources.

Schools and school boards may have reciprocal agreements with others in the community that support youth play during and after school hours.

Community Use of Schools Agreements favour youth groups through dedicated youth programming hours and discounted rates.

Schools and their staff support youth play in the community through work on committees and focus groups.

School communications (announcements/bulletins) connect with youth and are presented in a youth friendly manner.

The school board may have flexible transportation programs to facilitate youth play, with early and late buses for extracurricular activities.

Schools and school boards support the Youth Friendly approach both separately and in their partnerships with local governments, community agencies, faith communities, local businesses and other independent service providers.

Criteria 9: Play is accessible to youth

A Youth Friendly Community supports play that is physically, geographically and financially accessible to youth ages 13 to 19 and works to reduce barriers to participation.

Facilities used for play are physically accessible, so that youth with physical and/or developmental disabilities have equal opportunity to play.

Play activities are located in geographically accessible areas, where there is a concentration of youth; where youth regularly convene; or where youth can access public transportation, lighted bike/walking trails, taxis and/or car pools.

Youth play is financially accessible, with programs available free and/or at low cost.

Local facilities offer dedicated space to youth play at program times that reflect sensitivity to youth needs for play.

Accessible play opportunities are provided by local governments, community agencies, faith communities, local businesses and other independent service providers.

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Criteria 10: Play is socially inclusive

Play is socially inclusive and considerate of and sensitive to the needs of all youth ages 13 to 19.

Inclusion is facilitated through clear and intentional policies, procedures and practices that align with provincial and federal human rights protections by acknowledging youth intersectionality, preventing discrimination and promoting inclusion and engagement of youth who experience racialization, lower socio-economic status, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, gender-based discrimination, mental health issues, diverse physical and developmental needs, and other forms of exclusion or harassment based on their diverse lived experience.

Social inclusion training is offered for staff/volunteers to enhance awareness of and sensitivity to all youth.

Groups reach out to youth, who may not participate in formally offered programs and services, to ensure their need for play is being met.

Socially inclusive play is supported by many service providers, such as local governments, community agencies, faith communities, local businesses and independent service providers.