

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

YOUTH HANDBOOK

QWYC is the operating name of the
Committee for Innovative Thinking for Youth Inc.

2 Wooler Road, Trenton ON, K8V4J4
quintewestyouth@gmail.com
613-392-6946

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Welcome Message

Thank you for becoming a member of the Quinte West Youth Centre!

This handbook contains the things you need to know to help us keep the youth centre, a safe, fun, and inclusive environment for everyone to enjoy.

Our Mission Statement

To be a safe, inclusive, and welcoming space dedicated to empowering the youth of Quinte West while providing opportunities for growth within each youth through need-based programming.

Vision

All youth are happy, healthy, contributing members of our community.

Values

Youth Focused and Inclusive – We take our lead from the young people who fill our centre; all youth are welcome.

Caring and Compassionate – We treat everyone with respect, dignity, and acceptance. Programs and services are conducted in a safe, caring, and non-judgmental manner.

Accountable and Transparent – The staff and board manage the organization efficiently and effectively to foster the community's confidence and trust.

Innovative and Proactive – We work collaboratively with a variety of partners to positively impact young people and the Quinte West community.

Membership

We welcome youth ages 10-18 to become a member of the youth centre by completing a new form each year in January.

Purpose:

- To ensure the safety, security, and appropriate supervision of all those using the facility
- To provide a sense of ownership, value and involvement in the program and facility

Membership Requirements

1. Youth fill out a general information membership form that will be recorded on a database and kept at the Youth Centre for emergency information and contact purposes. A parent signature is required for those under 18.
2. Upon completion of the information form a staff member will review the information with the youth verbally, including the code of conduct, and natural consequences of not following the code of conduct.
3. Once the information has been explained, the youth may sign the form to indicate their clear understanding.
4. Membership cost is $5.00 per year, payable annually upon joining, and again each January first. No youth will be turned away due to lack of payment.

Sign-In Procedures

5. Upon entering the Youth Centre, youth will sign-in with the computer located at the front entrance of the building.
6. All adult visitors and parents/guardians must be accompanied by staff during their visit to the Centre if during youth program hours. No adult or parent can be present with youth without an approved vulnerable sector police check, and approved through the volunteer screening process.
7. If a youth or a visitor refuses to sign-in upon entrance to the facility with the required information, they will be asked to leave.

Permission Forms

Purpose:

- To ensure age appropriate consent and permission for all activities offered.

Procedure:

1. Some field trips and special events offered at or through the Youth Centre may require parent/guardian permission for participation. In such cases, youth who are under the age of 18 years old will be given a permission form to take home.
2. Permission forms will be available and program-specific to inform parents/guardians of what is involved.
3. For youth to participate in an off-site outing, they must have a permission form completed and signed by a parent/guardian.
4. Once returned, the permission forms will be kept on record in a permission form binder.
5. Staff will take the first aid kit and permission form binder with the group on any outing.

Age Requirement

Purpose:

- To offer inclusive, comprehensive, and age-appropriate youth programming that will broaden and enhance recreation opportunities for youth in Quinte West.

Procedure:

1. The Youth Centre will work collaboratively with Community Partners to ensure quality skill building, resources and recreational programs that focus on ages 10-18.
2. The Youth Centre drop-in resource and recreation programs and all other activities will be available to youth 10-18 years of age inclusively.
3. Youth of all ages and their families may have access to other relevant resources.
4. The Youth Centre may offer special events programming to include ages under or over the drop-in program limit. In such cases, advertising will specify the ages for which the program will include.
5. Programs will be offered for youth 19 years old and older to continue involvement as trained volunteers and/or peer mentors.

QWYC

Code of Conduct

Purpose

- To ensure the safety of everyone involved with the youth centre.

Policy

1. All staff, youth and participants must abide by the expectations of conduct within the Youth Centre property, and while attending events where they are representing the Youth Centre.
2. There are no exceptions to these policies and procedures.
3. Failure to follow Code of Conduct will restrict membership for youth.

Youth Boundaries

- This program is built on respect
- Respect other people's opinions
- Respect other people's property
- Respect everyone and each other with your actions and language
- Respect the property and equipment
- No hands on, including but not limited to, sitting on one another, hugs, etc.
- No alcohol
- No discrimination
- No smoking inside
- No drugs
- No weapons
- No violence

Please refer to the following policies and procedures:

1. Disruptive Behavior
2. Behaviour Management
3. Offensive Language
4. Smoking
5. Drugs and Alcohol
6. Weapons
7. Harassment
8. Three-Strikes Policy for Youth Discipline

Disruptive Behavior

Youth and staff are expected to maintain a professional relationship characterized by courtesy and mutual respect and to refrain from actions disruptive to such a relationship. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the staff to maintain an appropriate atmosphere in the Youth Centre and the responsibility of the youth to cooperate in that endeavor. Further, the staff is the best person to decide whether such an atmosphere is present in the Youth Centre.

Procedure:

1. If, in the opinion of the staff, the Centre is disrupted by a youth, the staff should first indicate to the youth that the behaviour is disruptive and shall normally provide an opportunity for the individual to conform to the displayed boundaries and expected standards in the Youth Centre. It is presumed that, in the great majority of instances, the matter would be resolved in this initial, informal manner.
2. Where the disruption continues in the Youth Centre, the staff shall normally ask the youth to leave the Centre. Where a youth refuses to leave on request, the staff may direct the youth to leave and, if refusal continues, additional staff or the police shall be called to assist in removing the youth.
3. If a youth is asked to leave without refusal it will be at staff discretion when the youth can return.
4. If the youth refuses and action is needed to remove the youth from the Centre, the staff together with the Executive Director will review the incident and decide when the youth can return to the Centre.
5. When a youth has been asked to leave the Centre, the staff responsible for the notice will provide a short-detailed report to be filed to the Executive Director and kept in records for future awareness.
6. Any youth who has been repeatedly removed from the Youth Centre will be suspended by the discretion of the Executive Director upon review with staff. The events caused by the youth will be reviewed by the Executive Director and a disciplinary action will be put into place. The youth will be required to abide by the guidelines set if the youth wishes to return as a participant to the Youth Centre.
7. Staff should be aware of the situation with great observance. It is important for staff to be aware of the seriousness and appropriateness of the behaviour. Other mediations may be necessary.

Behaviour Management

Purpose:

- To ensure the safety and comfort of all Youth Centre participants.
- The Youth Centre will promote the best interest of the youth and their peers with an emphasis on respect.

Procedure:

1. The Youth Centre will focus on discipline and natural consequences – not punishment. Reconciliation shall prevail and not punitive reaction. Staff are expected to encourage youth to understand why a consequence is taking place and how to right the wrong they have done. Empathy should be a focus. Whenever possible, employing a “restorative” approach will be taken.
2. No one at the youth centre should be subjected to inappropriate behaviour.
3. When a youth is misbehaving for the first time, they will receive a verbal warning and an explanation of the impact of their behavior.
4. The second time they misbehave, they will meet with a staff member to review the outlined Boundaries and the natural consequences for not adhering to these.
5. If the misbehavior continues, they will be asked to leave the Youth Centre premises for the remainder of the day. Any warnings or incident reports will be completed by the staff and all staff on that shift should be notified, to be consistent with the consequence.
6. If it is a concern that the incident justifies the youth being away from the facility for an extended period of time, this must first be addressed together with the staff person and the Executive Director. In such a case the parent/guardian must also be informed. A reintegration meeting may be scheduled upon returning to ensure a complete understanding of Youth Centre Boundaries (Code of Conduct).
7. If a youth continues a pattern of inappropriate behaviour, staff may consider a behaviour contract with that youth. The contract will be drawn up and signed by the staff person and/or the Executive Director, the staff involved, and the youth. In some cases, it may also involve a peer mentor, parent/guardian, or volunteer.
8. Behaviour contracts are to be kept confidential.

Offensive Language

Purpose:

- To offer a positive space that respects human diversity by fostering an environment where every person feels included, welcome, safe, and secure.
- To ensure youth are respectful of others.

Procedure:

- Swearing — refers to minor incidents of "swearing" within the context of general conversation.
    - There will be limited but flexible tolerance of this type of language with a verbal warning delivered by staff when needed.
    - A continued use of such language after several warnings may result in dismissal from the premises – “3 strikes, you’re out” guideline.
    - The youth may be eligible to return to the Centre only after meeting with staff.

- Verbal abuse — refers to specific incidents of directing verbal assaults, name calling, or verbal threats toward another person or group of people.
    - There will be NO tolerance for this behaviour.
    - This behaviour will result in immediate dismissal from the premises.
    - Parent/guardian will be notified of the dismissal (information, pick up, etc.)
    - In warranted cases the police may be notified.
    - The youth may be eligible to return to the Youth Centre following a reasonable probationary period and a meeting staff and/or the Executive Director.
    - Appropriate resources will be made available to the youth and the parent/ guardian regarding anger management, etc.
    - A youth justice circle may be offered to the individuals involved.
    - Support to the victim of the verbal abuse will be offered.

- Racial, cultural, religious, sexual orientation, or gender slurs.
    - There will be NO tolerance for this behavior.
    - This behaviour will result in immediate dismissal from the premises.
    - Parent/guardian will be notified of the dismissal (information, pick up, etc.).
    - In warranted cases the police may be notified.
    - The youth may be eligible to return to the Youth Centre following a reasonable probationary period and a meeting with staff and/or Executive Director.
    - Appropriate resources will be made available to the youth and the parent/ guardian regarding racial, cultural, religious, sexual orientation and/or gender sensitive issues.
    - A youth justice circle may be offered to the individuals involved.
    - Support will be offered to the victim of this behaviour.

Smoking & Vaping

Purpose:

- To adhere to the Provincial by-laws related to smoking.
- To encourage a Harm Reduction model of behaviour.
- To ensure that youth are supervised during an activity that they may already engage in.

Procedure:

1. For those legally able to smoke/vape, smoking/vaping will be permitted in an outdoor designated smoking area ONLY.
2. The designated smoking/vaping area will be in a clearly indicated, supervised section of the outdoor property.
3. Complaints from residents with regard to youth loitering off-premises may result in the involvement of police.
4. Anyone who uses the designated smoking/vaping area will be expected to assist in keeping that area clean and tidy.
5. The designated smoking area will be available for smoking e-cigarettes, regular tobacco cigarettes, and vaping ONLY.
6. Smoking/vaping inside the facility is strictly prohibited and will result in the individual being asked to leave the facility/premises.
7. The Youth Centre staff will in no way encourage the habit of smoking or vaping and will provide literature and resources to educate youth on the harmful effects of smoking tobacco and other controlled substances.

Drugs and Alcohol

Purpose

- To adhere to current related legislation and encourage a Harm Reduction model of behaviour.
- To ensure the safety and security of all persons using the facility.

Guidelines

Anyone under the influence of drugs or alcohol on the job can pose serious health and safety risks to both themselves and others. To help ensure a safe and healthy environment, Quinte West Youth Centre reserves the right to prohibit certain items and substances from being brought on to, or present on, the premises.

Whether inside the youth centre or outside on the property, the use, possession, distribution, or sale of drugs, drug paraphernalia, or alcohol is strictly prohibited; and will result in dismissal.

1. The possession and/or consumption of alcohol, marijuana, and all other controlled substances for recreational use or distribution are prohibited.
2. Use of illegal drugs or alcohol on premises or on person may result in the involvement of Police Services.

Definitions

Drug: any substance which can change or adversely affect the way a person thinks or feels, whether obtained legally or illegally. This could include recreational cannabis, cocaine, opiates, and amphetamines.

Drug paraphernalia: material or equipment used or intended for use in injecting, ingesting, inhaling, or otherwise introducing a drug, illegal or controlled, into the human body.

Medication: includes a drug obtained legally, either over the counter, or through a prescription of authorization issued by a medical practitioner.

Alcohol: any beverage containing any quantity of alcohol, including beer, wine, and/or distilled spirits.

Weapons

Purpose:

- To ensure a physically and emotionally safe environment.

Procedure:

1. Weapons are defined as any physical item that is intended to, or may be used as, a weapon to harm an individual including, but not limited to, firearms, knives, blades, chains, bats, tasers, and/or homemade items intended to harm.
2. It is up to the discretion of the staff to determine what may be perceived as a weapon. Always assume the weapon is real.
3. The staff reserve the right to perform limited personal searches, i.e. requesting a person empty pockets, remove shoes, roll socks, or open jackets. The staff should not touch the youth or be confrontational in any way.
4. If the youth does not cooperate and there is a concern that a weapon is being hidden on the person but it is not in plain view, they may be asked to leave the premises and police will be notified to follow-up.
5. If the youth has already entered the facility and there is a concern that they have a weapon, the staff or other participants should never enter a situation where they may put themselves at risk of injury. They will then employ the Emergency Action Plan.
6. One staff will phone the police without drawing attention to themselves, while the other staff members will stay in the general vicinity of the youth suspected of carrying the weapon and discreetly draw away other youth. Youth will be directed outdoors or to the Lounge where there are alternate exits in case of emergency.
7. If the person in question leaves before police arrive, staff will stay at a safe distance and observe. Note the direction the youth left in and what they were wearing. DO NOT FOLLOW THE INDIVIDUAL. Contact the police to relay the information.
8. If a weapon is in plain view or is being used to pose an imminent threat to another person or persons, the following will take place:
    a. The building will be evacuated to the best of staff's ability and police will be notified immediately to take appropriate action.
    b. The parent/guardian of the youth will be notified.
    c. The youth may not be eligible to return to the facility unless determined unanimously by the Executive Director and “In Charge” staff.
    d. Follow-up support will be offered for witnesses or victims to this threat.

Harassment

Purpose:

- To provide a safe environment free of harassment and discrimination.

Procedure:

1. Any unwanted touch, look or sexual comment is sexual harassment.
2. Staff will model appropriate and respectful personal space.
3. Each person is responsible for their own actions and should act appropriately towards all those who attend the Youth Centre.
4. Dating relationships between staff and youth members are strictly prohibited. Staff are in a position of trust and power. Staff will be subject to dismissal in such cases.
5. If a dating relationship develops between a staff and participant, the staff will be subject to dismissal and the parent/guardian of the youth will be notified and invited to meet with the Executive Director and staff at the Youth Centre together with the youth for follow-up.

“Three-Strikes” Policy for Youth Discipline

Purpose:

- To provide a positive experience for all youth members and staff

Procedure:

1. “Three Strikes, You’re Out”
    - Strike 1: Verbal Warning – in a positive manner, staff will encourage youth to change their behaviour.
    - Strike 2: Staff will take the youth aside from the activity and give them alternative solutions to deal with whatever caused their behaviour. Staff will teach and guide as to why the rules are in place, and will outline the consequences if the behaviour is to continue.
    - Strike 3: Ask to leave – youth will be asked to leave the centre, until they attend a re-integration meeting with staff, depending on the reason for 3 strikes. Parents/ guardians must be notified.
2. Staff and youth re-integration meeting, with parent/guardian in attendance.
3. Restorative justice.