

# Play Works Youth Friendly Community Application

## What are the Youth Friendly Community Criteria?

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### Youth Friendly Community Criteria

A community that meets 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 Ontario governments' strategic framework to help Ontario's youth succeed.

A community meets this criteria through services, programs and support provided by local government (parks and recreation departments), health, police services, education, clubs, youth agencies, non-profit and charitable organizations, service clubs, local businesses, the faith community, and any other groups operating that offer 'play' (as defined in Criteria 1).

### 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 Works defines 'play' as recreation, sports, arts/culture, drama/dance/music, volunteerism, and leadership development.

### 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 a formal youth advisory committee or action group that is attached to and recognized by local government.

The youth voice is heard through such vehicles as presentations or through officially recorded reports to the local governing body.

There is clear evidence that youth have a way to advocate for play and that changes are made because the youth voice is heard.

Youth also participate on community agency boards/committees and other civic engagement structures, and may host and/or participate in youth forums and summits.

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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.***

A variety of media and communication tools are used to reach youth, including social media portals (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, text, IM), websites as well as more traditional routes of print sources, radio, TV, posters, brochures and leisure guides.

There is tangible evidence youth are using these outlets to access information (e.g. evidence through web analytics, liking, retweeting, sharing, etc.).

### 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.***

Youth are recognized for their accomplishments through vehicles such as: local media coverage (print, radio, television, web-based); dinners and awards ceremonies; agency websites; and scholarship and bursary programs that recognize their contribution to the community.

Organizations and businesses value their youth and are keen on celebrating their successes.

There is evidence youth are aware of these opportunities, are taking advantage of them, 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 and committed funding line designated for youth play. Funds may cover costs for program staff, programs and services, facilities, special events and/or youth advisory councils.

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

Where one-time grant funding supports youth play, plans are in place to sustain needed programs and services.

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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 young people to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.***

Staff and volunteers are trained in PYD approaches, such as the 40 Developmental Assets, 7 Developmental Needs and 6 C's (competence, confidence, character, connection, caring, and contribution), and the use of these approaches are reflected in programs and marketing tools.

Service providers have clearly defined policies, procedures and practices that promote PYD.

### 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 know they are valued by their community.

They provide testimonials confirming there are play opportunities that meet their needs in both formalized ways (registered programs) and informal ones (access to parks, community space, etc.).

Community organizations and businesses have adopted youth friendly approaches in their interactions with young people and, as a result, youth from a variety of walks in the community see it as youth friendly.

Youth confidently affirm they feel respected within the community.

Youth themselves can identify who the adult champions of youth play are in their community.

### 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.***

The Community Use of Schools favours youth groups through dedicated youth programming hours and discounted rates.

School Boards have reciprocal agreements with other service providers to share their physical resources and maximize the use of space during non-school hours.

Schools and their staff support youth by sitting on community committees.

School announcements/bulletins connect are presented in a youth friendly manner.

Flexible bus programs are offered to support before/after school activities.

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### 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 on reducing barriers to participation.***

Facilities used for play are physically accessible for those with physical and/or developmental disabilities.

Facilities are intentionally accessible during the times that youth are able to participate (after school, evenings, weekends).

Play is geographically accessible, available 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 and/or where community groups fund, offset or provide program subsidies (e.g. Canadian Tire Jump Start).

### 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 has clear and intentional policies, procedures and practices that align with provincial and federal human rights protections.

These protections acknowledge youth intersectionality, prevent discrimination and promote 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.

Staff/volunteers are regularly trained in social inclusion approaches.

Staff are aware of agency policies and procedures that promote social inclusion.

Groups reach out to all manner of unengaged youth to create opportunities for inclusion.