

YMCA Before and After School Programs

Parent Handbook

For ages 4 to 12



Building healthy communities

Last Issue Date: December 1, 2017

Welcome to YMCA Before and After School Programs

Welcome to YMCA of Greater Toronto Before and After School Programs. Each year thousands of families trust the YMCA to be a place where their children are safe and supported while they grow and develop into their full potential. The YMCA Mission, Vision, and Core Values are the driving principles that guide us to create environments that are welcoming, respectful, and provide positive experiences for children and their families.

The Parent Handbook outlines important information that will provide you with what you need to know while your child is in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your child and to embarking on a partnership that supports you to be informed, consulted, and involved in your child's YMCA Before and After School Program.

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Our History

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charitable organization that has been providing high quality licensed child care and education for children 0-12 years of age for over 40 years. Today the YMCA operates programs in more than 290 locations, 96 of which are full day child care centres.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto has its own well-established, research based approach to early learning. Our curriculum *YMCA Playing to Learn™* has been successfully implemented in our child care programs for children 0-6 years old since 2000. In 2006, *YMCA Playing to Learn™* was adopted by the YMCA of Canada as a national curriculum and is now implemented in over 300 child care programs across Canada.

YMCA Playing to Learn™ 2nd Edition was published in 2015. This expanded edition builds on the original curriculum and includes the most current research on the social and emotional development of young children, and additional learnings for YMCA Early Childhood Educators to increase their knowledge for caring for infants and toddlers.

In 2009, *YMCA A Place to Connect™* curriculum for 5-12 year olds was launched and fully implemented in the YMCA GTA early learning and before and after school programs.

The goals and approaches of both YMCA curricula align in philosophy, standards and recommendations from the Ontario Ministry of Education framework including; [Minister of Education's Policy Statement on Programming and Pedagogy](#), ["How Does learning Happen?" Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) and [Early Learning for Every Child Today](#). For more information about the YMCA Child Care goals and approaches to supporting children and their families please visit our [website](#) or request a copy of the YMCA Child Care Program Statement from your YMCA program supervisor.

Our Staff

YMCA Early Childhood Educators come with a wide background of education and experience. Our staff must go through a rigorous screening process that includes demonstrating their values and skills, providing a police reference check that is renewed every 3 years, and holding a valid Standard First Aid and Infant and Child CPR certification. Once selected, new YMCA staff participate in orientation and training on YMCA policies and procedures, Ministry of Education regulations, and YMCA curriculum.

Our Early Childhood Educators are trained to:

- Communicate regularly to families about their child's progress
- Plan classroom activities based on their knowledge of early childhood development
- Practice the YMCA's high standards of child safety and protection

At the YMCA we recognize the importance of continued professional learning and have developed an extensive series of learning modules that support YMCA Early Childhood Educators to gain a deeper understanding of child development, play, play partnership, program planning, extension of play and scaffolding of learning, effective communication, and providing positive learning environments.

College of Early Childhood Educators

The [College of Early Childhood Educators](#) is the professional self-regulatory body for registered early childhood educators (RECE) in Ontario. The College's role is to protect the public interest by setting requirements for registration to practice as a RECE, setting ethical and professional standards and holding RECEs accountable for their practice. RECEs are trained in child development and the planning and delivery of play-based learning in child care programs. YMCA staff with an early childhood education diploma or equivalent qualifications degree must be current members of the College in good standing. RECEs must renew their membership with the College on an annual basis.

Our Volunteers and Students on Placement

YMCA child care programs are enhanced by the involvement of volunteers and placement students. Volunteers and placement students are always under the supervision of a YMCA staff member and never left alone with children. All volunteers and placement students must provide a police reference check before interacting with children and are required to adhere to all YMCA policies and procedures and Ministry of Education regulations.

Self-regulation and Positive Behaviour

The YMCA believes that it is the role of the adult in a child's life to support them to learn how to interact successfully with the world around them including other children, adults and the environment. Self-regulation is a skill children develop over time and involves learning how to respond efficiently and effectively to one's bodily functions, impulses, emotions, and to

maintain focus or attention so they can learn. Calm, caring, and consistent YMCA Early Childhood Educators and a child's family provide external supports that serve as the basis for a child developing self-regulation.

YMCA Early Childhood Educators set the stage for positive behaviour by implementing the following approaches:

- Building dependable, positive and nurturing relationships with children and their families
- Fostering healthy social connections with other children
- Responding to each child's individual developmental needs through observation and reaction to cues
- Providing small group experiences which allow for more individualized adult attention
- Role modelling inclusive, respectful and collaborative interactions with children and other adults
- Ensuring the learning environment is flexible and materials are plentiful and available to children at all times
- Providing children with the freedom to make choices
- Engaging as a play partner with children , to demonstrate pro-social skills including promoting discussion, problem solving when conflict arises and understanding how our actions affect others
- Attending trainings that address developing self-regulation and resilience in children

Prohibited Practices

A prohibited practice is any behaviour that puts children at risk or inhibits their growth, self-esteem and healthy development. The following practices are unacceptable and may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment of a YMCA educator

- Corporal punishment
- Physical restraint of a child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purpose of discipline in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting themselves or others. Is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Any form of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect)
- Depriving a child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.
- Leaving children unsupervised.

- Deliberately using harsh or degrading measures or threats, use of derogatory language directed at, or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect dignity or self-worth.
- Locking the exits of the child care centre for the purpose of confining a child or confining a child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child when separating them from other children.
- Interacting or relating to children or vulnerable person outside of a YMCA program activity. (E.g. Weekend home visits, baby-sitting, on line chatting etc.)

Our Families our Partners

At the YMCA we understand that the most important people in a child's life are their family. YMCA Early Childhood Educators play a supporting role while parents go to work or school. Involving, consulting with, and informing family members about the YMCA program helps a child feel a greater sense of belonging.

Diversity and Social Inclusion

The YMCA is committed to creating and sustaining an environment that celebrates diversity and appreciates the dignity and worth of all members of the community. We are committed to pursuing equality and to creating an environment free from discrimination, harassment and barriers to equal opportunity.

YMCA programs are designed to develop children in spirit, mind and body. We believe every child is a unique individual and adds value to our programs. YMCA staff strive to ensure the environment and programs are adapted to meet the needs of all children and will seek our community partners to enhance our ability to support children.

Resolving Concerns and Issues

YMCA staff are committed to connecting, partnering and engaging parents to provide the best possible care for each child. Daily conversations benefit the child, family, and the staff. They help provide consistency for the child, support staff to understand the child and therefore plan for their success, and give families the opportunity to be part of their child's day.

In situations where issues and concerns arise, YMCA staff educators and supervisors together with the family and YMCA Management will work as a team to reach a resolution in a timely, confidential, fair and consistent manner. It is expected that concerns and issues will be resolved in a respectful manner in keeping with the YMCA Values (Caring, Health, Honesty, Inclusiveness, Respect and Responsibility). Click [here](#) for a complete copy of our YMCA Working with Families to Resolve Concerns and Issues Procedure.

Child Protection

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children share a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm.¹ The YMCA recognizes its responsibility to promote safe environments and practices to protect children and vulnerable persons.

YMCA educators are trained to recognize the indicators of neglect and abuse and are legally required to report any suspicions that a child may require protection. The role of the child protection agency is to investigate and determine if there is any proof of abuse or neglect and

¹ **Duty to Report** is defined under section 72(1) of the Ontario Child and Family Services Act and sets out what must be reported to a child protection agency (e.g. Children's Aid Society - CAS).

implement supports for the child and their family. It is important that YMCA educators ensure all reports are kept confidential, including only discussing with the family that a report has been made if the child protection agency authorizes them to do so.

Our Before and After School Programs

Hours of Operation

At the YMCA our standard hours of operation are 7:30 a.m. until the school bell rings and after school until 6:00 p.m. Some locations are open for extended hours to accommodate the needs of families who commute a long distance to work or school. Visit our [website](#) for the hours of operation of the centres closest to you.

Communication with Families

At the YMCA we know how important it is to you as a parent to have all the details of your child's day at the YMCA. YMCA Early Childhood Educators keep parents/guardians informed through:

- Daily face to face communication with families upon arrival and departure times.
- Kindergarten Programs -weekly program documentation highlighting learning that occurred during a play experience.
- School Age Program – program newsletters

Kindergarten (4-6 years old)

Ratio is 1:13

The program includes opportunities to continue learning as an extension of kindergarten topics, exploring the indoors and outdoors, creating with the arts(visual, dramatic and music), discovering science, engaging in mathematics and literacy activities, developing social skills , gross and fine motor skills and problem solving.

School Age (6-12 years old) or Ratio 1:15 (6-9 year olds)

The program provides a club like atmosphere that includes opportunities for creating performances, works of art, science projects, and tournaments. A key component of the program involves spending 45 minutes outdoors or inside participating in physical activity.

Program Procedures:

Nutrition

YMCA Before and After School Programs offer a variety of nutritious morning and afternoon snacks prepared by a caterer or on-site cook. Our snack menus follow the Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. The current and following week's menus are posted for your information. Due to children with allergies and food restrictions the YMCA discourages sending any food from home.

Bagged Lunches

Children who attend the YMCA program on PA Days, School Breaks or Summer Club Programs are required to bring a peanut/nut free, nutritious lunch following the guidelines listed below:

- Lunch and snacks are nutritious and follows Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide
- The lunch bag and containers are labelled with your child's full name and an ice pack is provided
- Foods provided do not contain any of the known allergens posted on the notice in the main entrance way and do not contain or have possibly come into contact with nuts
- A refillable plastic bottle labeled with your child's full name is provided

Life-Threatening Allergies (Anaphylaxis)

The YMCA strives to protect the children in our care who have life-threatening allergies by reducing as much as possible exposure to their known allergens. A list of allergens to be avoided in the program is included in your registration package and a notice is posted for all families near the entrance to the program. Families are advised to check frequently as the notice is updated monthly.

Any parent/guardian of a child with a life-threatening injury is responsible for providing the YMCA with detailed information about their child's known allergens, signs and symptoms of an allergic response and the steps to take in an emergency prior to their child starting care. Children enrolled in school are permitted to carry their own emergency medications (e.g. epi pen, puffers). It is also very important that parent's/guardian's inform YMCA staff anytime there is a change to a child's allergies.

Health and Illness

Young children do not have a fully developed immune system, therefore your child experiencing some illness while in child care should be expected. The local Public Health unit sets out and monitors a comprehensive cleaning and sanitation routine and personal health care practices including frequent hand washing for YMCA staff to follow. These routine practices are designed to minimize the spread of illness.

You can help the YMCA prevent the spread of illness by keeping your child home from the program anytime they have the following signs and symptoms of communicable illness until symptoms have stopped for at least 24 hours or a doctor has determined your child is or is not experiencing a communicable illness.

- A temperature above 38 degrees Celsius (100 degrees Fahrenheit)
- Difficult or rapid breathing or a severe cough
- Vomiting more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Unexplained (i.e. not due to diet, or medication) diarrhea more than twice in the last 24 hours
- Sore throat especially if accompanied by a fever
- Undiagnosed skin rash
- Persistent scratching of body or head
- Eyes are red or yellow, bowel movement is gray or white, or urine is dark or tea coloured

If your child experiences any of the signs and symptoms of communicable illness listed above while at the child care program, the YMCA staff will contact you or one of your authorized pick-up people to take your child home. While your child waits for you or your designate to arrive, they will be separated from the other children until it is determined they do not have a communicable illness.

Medication

Whenever possible, parents/guardians should administer drugs and medication to their children at home, if this can be done without affecting the treatment schedule. When a child is ill, it is in their best interest to remain at home where they are comfortable and able to rest and get better.

The YMCA is required to administer only drugs and medications either prescribed by a doctor, nurse practitioner or other licensed health provider with a prescription label on the original container on the medication or accompanied by a doctor's note that outlines the following:

- Date note was written.
- Time to be administered or detailed reason for administering including signs and symptoms (e.g. fever above 38°C, wheezing or coughing, itchy and watery eyes, sneezing, etc.).
- Expiry date of the note (i.e. is it for a specific time period? or on going until further notice?)
- Child's legal first and last name.
- Name of drug or medication.
- Dosage to be administered.

Anytime you bring drugs or medications to be administered to your child at the child care centre YMCA staff will provide you with a Medication Administration Authorization form to complete that details the dosage, times of administration and permission for the YMCA to give your child the drug or medication.

Advil, Tylenol, Motrin (Pain Relievers, Fever Reducers, and Anti-inflammatory Medications)

It is not the YMCA's practice to administer medications such as Advil, Tylenol, or Motrin to control cold or flu symptoms. It is in the best interest of the child experiencing these symptoms to remain home, to rest, and get better. If the child has a chronic illness (e.g. headache, migraine, seizures) or is teething the YMCA may administer medications like Advil or Tylenol with a doctor's note. The doctor's note must be updated annually or as the child's age, weight, or medical condition changes.

Incident/Accident Reporting

Children are active and curious. It is not uncommon for young children to experience cuts, scrapes, and bruises while running, jumping, and playing. All YMCA staff hold valid certification in Standard First Aid and Infant and Child CPR and have been trained in emergency procedures.

Anytime your child has an accident, YMCA staff will record the details on the YMCA Incident Notification for Parent form and provide you with a copy.

In the event a more serious incident involving your child occurs, YMCA staff have been trained to respond based on the severity of the injury. YMCA staff will either call emergency support services (911), parent/guardian or your designated emergency contacts to take your child for medical evaluation.

Serious Occurrence incidents are reportable by the YMCA to the Ministry of Education Child Care Quality, Assurance and Licensing Unit within 24 hours of the supervisor becoming aware of the incident. Details regarding the serious occurrence will be posted near the entrance of the program for 10 days. A serious occurrence incident is defined as; a life-threatening injury or illness of a child, an allegation of abuse by a staff, student, or placement volunteer, a missing or unsupervised child, a disaster on premises, or the death of a child.

Emergency Response

The YMCA is committed to being prepared and keeping all staff, volunteers and families safe and the Association functioning in the event of an emergency or natural disaster. We understand that YMCA families, staff, volunteers and students on placements rely on our ability to deliver uninterrupted programs and services in safe environments. The YMCA trains all staff, volunteers, and students on placement before interacting with children and annually on emergency procedures including how to respond to personal injuries and medical emergencies,

building emergencies (power failure, flood), fire drills and evacuation, inclement weather, threats from criminal activity (lockdown) and natural disasters.

In the event your child is involved in an emergency you will be contacted directly by the YMCA. If the YMCA is unable to reach you directly they will call the emergency contacts you have identified in your child's registration package. The YMCA will also endeavor to post information on our website, and or Twitter and Facebook accounts. Depending on the nature of the emergency, the YMCA staff and children may have to re-locate to an evacuation site until you can pick up your child. The YMCA evacuation site address is posted in the entrance way of the program.

Safe Schools Act

The [Safe Schools Act, 2000](#) requires all schools in Ontario provide a safe and welcoming school, develop a code of conduct and consequences for infractions, and implement a program of bullying and harassment prevention.

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a partner with school boards and is required to report to the school principal any student involved in an incident of bullying, harassment, violence, suspected child abuse or neglect or infraction of the code of conduct.

In the event that your child receives a 'mandatory' suspension or expulsion from school then your child cannot attend the YMCA Before and After School Program for the duration. If your child is receives a 'discretionary' suspension, then the principal will determine if your child can continue to attend the YMCA during the period of the suspension.

Smoke Free

YMCA Child Care programs are required to be smoke free environments under the [Smoke Free Ontario Act 2005](#). Smoking or handling a cigarette or tobacco on the premises where a YMCA child care program is located, including all in-door and outdoor areas is prohibited. This includes playgrounds, school property and surrounding areas. Failure to comply could result in a penalty of up to \$5,000.00.

Outdoor Play

All children in before and after school programs are required to play outdoors for a minimum of 30 minutes each day, weather permitting. During inclement weather, alternate active play must be provided indoors. Weather can change quickly. A rainy cool morning can rapidly become a humid, sunny afternoon. We ask that you always prepare your child for any type of weather so that your child can participate comfortably outdoors.

Field Trips and Community Walks

Field trips and community walks provide valuable experiences for children and allow staff the opportunity to extend program activities outside of the classroom. When these opportunities arise, parents/guardians will be required to complete a permission form giving consent for their child to participate in the activity. Community walks may be part of the regular program and as such do not require a permission form.

Extreme Weather

During extreme weather conditions, advisories or alerts, (heat, smog or wind chill) the YMCA follows the guidelines of the local health department. Our first priority is to keep children safe from serious adverse health effects such as frostbite and sunburn. YMCA Educators will adjust the amount of time spent outdoors or provide an alternative indoor plan.

Program Information:

Part time programs are available at limited locations that are not full to capacity. Families can choose from 2 day (Tuesday & Thursday) or 3 day (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) options. You will be asked to sign a part time program agreement form. In the event that a program location reaches its maximum capacity, families will be offered the opportunity to change from part-time to full-time or be given two weeks withdrawal notice.

Arrival and Departure

The safety and well-being of all children participating in YMCA child care programs is of utmost importance to us. Parents/guardians or their designate are required to personally escort their child into the program and to pick up their child at the end of the day. Please ensure the YMCA staff is aware you have arrived or that you are departing with your child. Arrival and Departure times are recorded by a YMCA Educator prior to parents/guardians leaving the centre.

Authorized Drop off/Pick up and Emergency Contacts

At the time of enrollment you will be asked to provide the names and contact information including telephone numbers and addresses of any adults 16 years of age or older that you authorize to drop off/pick up your child or come to the centre in the event that you cannot be contacted when your child is ill or has been involved in an emergency. The YMCA does not permit children 15 years of age or younger to escort younger children home. If you require an alternate person to pick up your child who is not on the list please provide this information in writing (email) to the YMCA staff. Any new visitors to the YMCA who come to pick up a child will be asked to provide photo identification.

Late Pick up

YMCA Early Childhood Educators are counting on you to be on time to pick up your child at the end of the day so that they can meet their personal and family obligations. We do understand that that weather and traffic accidents happen, however we appreciate you calling the program to let us know you will be late or making arrangements for an alternate adult to pick up your child. Child care arrangements may be withdrawn by the YMCA for parents/guardians who frequently pick up their child late.

Space Limitations

The YMCA has the right to manage enrolment which may result in the YMCA not being able to accommodate your child care needs for the next school year. Priority will be given to the younger children and children who attend the school the child care centre is located in. In situations where capacity is limited and expansion of space is unavailable, the YMCA will provide families with written notice.

Program Closures

YMCA Child Care Programs are closed on all statutory holidays during the year. Please note when a statutory holiday falls on a weekend the YMCA will recognize this closure date on the following business day. Fee payment is required for all statutory holidays.

New Year's Day

Family Day

Good Friday

Victoria Day

Canada Day

Civic Holiday

Labour Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

Boxing Day

Easter Monday – all YMCA Before and After School Programs will be closed for Staff
Professional Development Day

Inclement Weather Program Closures

Severe weather conditions can result in school boards closing schools. In this case all YMCA child care programs will also be closed. Please listen to local radio/television stations or check local school board websites for information. The YMCA will make every effort to inform families of centre closures due to inclement weather through our [website](http://ymcagta.org) ymcagta.org, YGTA Twitter and Facebook accounts. Refunds will not be offered for these closures.

Program Cancellations

The YMCA will endeavor to keep programs operating which meet the needs of the community. The YMCA reserves the right to limit program components and/or locations based on enrolment.

Registration Information:

Child care payments

Child care payments are processed on a monthly basis by pre-authorized payment/debit authorization or by credit card. Families have the option to choose from one of the three monthly draw dates for their child care fees to be processed on 2nd, 16th or 20th of each month. If families require payment arrangements outside of our current terms and conditions please email the Child and Family Development Administration Office at csac@ymcagta.org.

Deposit Fee

A one-time non-refundable deposit fee of 50% of your first month's child care fees will be charged once your child's start date has been confirmed by the YMCA program supervisor.

Waitlist

The YMCA strives to accommodate all registration requests, however there may be times when space is unavailable in our programs and you may be offered to place your child on a waitlist. To address this issue the YMCA has created a waiting list procedure. Please note there is no fee to place your child on a waiting list. Click [here](#) for a complete copy of our Waiting List Procedure or you can obtain a copy from your program supervisor.

Absence from Care

Refunds for child care fees **will not be** processed for the following; missed days, vacation, sick days or inclement weather closures as operating costs are based on the number of children enrolled.

Registration Changes

If you require changes to your current program registration these requests can be made on line using the [Registration Change Request Form](#).

Changes could consist of; family/child contact information, emergency contact information, and changes to program type (part time to full time). Registration changes and updates can take up to 10 days to be completed.

Payment Changes

Any changes to pre-authorized billing can be submitted on line using the [Registration Change Request Form](#). If a new pre-authorized payment form is required to make the change requested this form can be obtained from your program supervisor. Payment changes can take up to 10 business days for the changes to take effect.

Withdrawal Notification

Should you choose to withdraw your child from a YMCA Child Care program you will be required to submit one month notice on-line using the [Registration Change Request Form](#). Payments will be adjusted upon receipt of the withdrawal notification. Withdrawal notifications received with less than one-month notice, will be charged for the one month period.

*Please note for families receiving municipal child care subsidy 10 day notice of withdrawal is required. *

Government Child Care Subsidy

YMCA licensed child care programs hold a purchase of service agreement with regional municipal offices. Families can apply for child care fee subsidy by contacting your local municipal office or visiting their website by clicking below:

[City of Toronto](#)

[Region of Peel](#)

[Region of York](#)

[Region of Halton](#)

[Region of Durham](#)

[County of Simcoe](#)

[County of Dufferin](#)

YMCA Financial Assistance

As a charity that serves all segments of our community, the YMCA of Greater Toronto provides financial assistance in times of need. This is a short term support made possible due to the generosity of our donors, members, volunteers, staff, corporate and community partners. For more information on how to apply please speak to the program supervisor.

YMCA Kids Challenge

The YMCA Kids Challenge, is a weeklong event held every spring that aims to teach our children about philanthropy and living an active and healthy life. Funds raised will support vital programs and services or provide financial assistance so more children and families can access our health and fitness centres, child care and camps. Be a healthy role model and support the YMCA Kids Challenge. [Donate Today](#). We count on the generous donations of the community, members, staff and volunteers. A charitable receipt suitable for tax purposes will be provided for all donations of \$10.00 or more.

Withdrawal of YMCA Services

The YMCA strives to meet the individual needs of all children and families enrolled in our YMCA child care programs. However, situations do arise from time to time where it may be necessary for the YMCA of Greater Toronto to withdraw child care services for a child and/or their family.

The YMCA does not take these decisions lightly and takes reasonable care to ensure a thorough assessment of the child's needs, community supports available, and the YMCA programs ability to support the child have been undertaken before withdrawing services.

Examples leading to withdrawal of services may include:

- Non-payment of program fees
- Frequent late pick up
- Parents/guardians or children who exhibit violent or harassing behaviour towards staff, volunteers, students on placement, other children or families
- Community resources for children with special needs are unavailable or have been exhausted
- Refusal by parent/guardian to meet with YMCA staff and/or consent to the use of support services for children.

Privacy of Information

All YMCA staff, volunteers and placement students understand the importance of keeping all personal information in the strictest of confidence. The YMCA will not share any personal information with outside agencies including school boards, and resource consultants for children with special needs without written parental consent. For a full version of the YMCA Privacy Policy please click [here](#).

Our Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is a charity offering opportunities for personal growth, community involvement and leadership.

Vision

Our communities will be home to the healthiest children, teens and young adults.

Values

The YMCA of Greater Toronto is guided by values that influence our actions and the decisions we make: Caring, Health, Honesty, Inclusiveness, Respect and Responsibility.