

# Policies and Procedures Handbook



*"Building Skills. Building Friendships. Building Confidence"*

## Mission Statement

Out and About Adventures is an urban out-door, early learning program based on the philosophies of Forest School but modified to work in an urban park setting. Children will be given the opportunity to connect with nature and each other through repeated visits to the same natural space. This allows the children to play in an ever changing playground that always presents new opportunities for play and exploration. We are a child-directed, play based program where children are viewed as capable, curious individuals. We believe that when children are given the time and space to play in the outdoors, truly amazing learning can happen.

## Our Vision

The natural world provides us with a calm amidst our busy urban lives; a place to breathe, room to move, and freedom to explore at one's own pace. Through participating in 'Out and About Adventures', children are given the chance to get to know the natural places in their city and form a relationship with the natural world through repeated visits to the same outdoor spaces. Our hope is, that as these children grow they will come to value and care for the natural world as an important part of their life experience.

## **Our Programs**

### ***Trout Lake Program***

This program is run through the Trout Lake Community Center out of John Hendry Park (Trout Lake). This program is 2 hours long and participating children can attend independently, without a caregiver. Each class is led by two facilitator's and has space for 10 children.

This program is predominately run at the beach, supported by the big Cedar and Willow trees and at the small playground on the south side of the lake.

### ***Stanley Park Program***

This program is run in cooperation with the Stanley Park Ecology Society out of the famous Stanley Park in downtown Vancouver.

Our "Parent and Tot" program is for two-year olds and children must attend with a caregiver. This program is 2 hours long and is led by one facilitator. Each class has space for 10 children. Wednesdays, 10am-12pm.

Our "Young Adventurer" program is for children ages 3-6. This program is 2.5 hours long and participating children can attend independently, without a caregiver. Each class is led by two facilitators and has space for 10 children. Wednesdays, 1-3pm.

This program is predominately run in forested areas of the park (close to the Ecology Society), at the beach in the ocean air and at the castle playground. See information below for registration details.

## **What We Do**

At 'Out and About Adventures', children are at the center of our program development. We practice an emergent, experiential, inquiry-based, play and place-based curriculum. The activities from week to week depend on the interests of the current group and are planned to further deepen their knowledge/experience with different topics, practices, materials or ideas. Respect for the natural world, communication, emotional/social learning and community building are major aspects of our program. This is an inclusive program with facilitators who are motivated to provide a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of each unique group as a whole.

We play in all kinds of weather. Children will be required to dress to be comfortable outdoors in the rain/cold and mud/muck for the duration of the program and to bring a small backpack with a nut-free snack, water and mug for tea. A list of recommended clothing will be provided.

## Registration Information

**Trout Lake Program:** registration is done through Trout Lake Community Center. See “Trout Lake Program” page for current and upcoming registration links.

**Stanley Park Program:**

- 1) Fill out the *registration form* available online on the “Stanley Park Program” page of our website. Send to [cara@outandaboutadventures.org](mailto:cara@outandaboutadventures.org)
- 2) Receive confirmation of your spot. Spots will be given on a first come, first serve basis.
- 3) Send in deposit via cheque or e-transfer. Deposits are the cost of one month’s tuition.
- 4) Once your deposit is received, you will receive the *registration package*. Your spot is guaranteed once we receive your completed registration package.

## Role of the Facilitators

- To ensure that all safety measures are adhered to properly. (Including daily visual site/activity risk assessments and seasonal written site risk assessments)
- To ensure that all children are cared for and treated with respect, empathy and compassion.
- To promote the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of children in the program.
- To work with families to provide an open and supportive environment for our students.
- To strive to provide a flexible, inclusive curriculum to meet the needs of all children whenever possible.
- To provide engaging activities and offerings based of the interests of the group as a whole.

## **Communication**

Out and About Adventures works on an 'open door' policy. We strive to be a support for each family as well as each child enrolled in our programs. Please feel free to contact your facilitator at any time to discuss your child's experience in the program, their overall developmental progress, any questions about challenging behaviour or any concerns that may arise. You can contact Cara at [cara@outandaboutadventures.org](mailto:cara@outandaboutadventures.org).

## **Attendance**

If your child is going to be absent or late, please call our facilitators' phone line prior to the start of class. This number will be made available to you once you are fully registered.

If you are going to be late for pick up (more than 5 mins) please contact the program facilitator as soon as possible. It is important that caregivers are able to drop off and pick up their children in a timely matter.

At the start of each class, you must sign-in your child. Please notify the facilitator if a different person will be picking up your child at the end of the class. Only people listed as "other people authorized for pick-up" in your registration package are able to pick up your child. If there is an emergency and someone who is not listed needs to pick up a child, verbal confirmation in person, or by phone is required before we can release your child into their care.

## **Extreme Weather**

Out and About Adventures may be cancelled or ended early on occasion due to extreme weather. If the weather is too hazardous for families travelling to the program or for the children playing outdoors. If this occurs, the facilitators will call to inform the parents. Every effort will be made to send out an e-mail announcement of the cancellation as soon as possible. If the local school district has a snow day, "Out and About Adventures" will not operate.

## Child Sickness

Parents will be required to pick up their child(ren) early or keep them home in the following circumstance:

- Temperature over 38 degrees C (101 degrees F)
- Vomiting and/or Diarrhea

In the case of communicable diseases such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, strep throat, viral pneumonia, head lice, etc., the child in ill health may not return to the program without permission from their health care provider such as a doctor, nurse, or Naturopath.

**Please Note:** Any outbreak of communicable disease will be communicated to parents in writing.

## Nut Policy

“Out and About Adventures” is a nut-free zone. This is to accommodate the health needs of all of the children in all of our programs who will sometimes be using the same tools and materials. Please do not pack nuts or nut products in your child’s snack.

## Safety / First Aid Policy

Our facilitators are trained in first aid. A first aid kit will be carried by the assistant facilitator at all times. All staff and community volunteers are required to have a criminal record check with a vulnerable sector check.

If your child is injured or involved in any serious conflict during the program, your facilitator will let you know at the end of class. Please be aware that sometimes, small injuries that a child did not react to will go unnoticed in the busyness of play. We assure you that you will be informed of any injuries that your child reacts to, including but not limited to anything requiring first aid or any injuries to the head or neck.

In the case of a medical emergency that requires more intervention, we will attempt to contact a caregiver. If we cannot contact the caregiver, we will contact someone on your emergency contact list. In the case of unexpected early dismissal due to unsafe conditions or illness, we will follow the same procedure.

## **Substitute Facilitators**

In the event that a facilitator is sick, we will attempt to contact a substitute facilitator to provide coverage for the day. If a substitute is unavailable, class may be cancelled for that day. If class is cancelled due to a teacher illness, we will offer a make-up class later in the term or offer a refund if rescheduling is not possible.

In the case of a long-term illness or absence of over 3 months, we will look for a temporary facilitator.

## **ESL Support Policy**

At “Out and About Adventures” we aim to create a supportive environment for all students. Children with very little or no English are welcome in our program. If your child is unable (or uncomfortable) to speak English, we ask that an adult who can translate attend with your child until they are able to become familiar with our routines, expectations and form a relationship with their facilitators. The time that this can take will vary from child to child and will be determined by the facilitators in cooperation with the caregiver(s) of the child.

If you have any questions about this policy or would like to set a time to discuss a support plan with your facilitator, please contact Cara at [cara@outandaboutadventures.org](mailto:cara@outandaboutadventures.org)

## **Child Support Policy**

“Out and About Adventures” strives to provide social, emotional, cognitive, and physical support for all children enrolled in our program. Children requiring extra support are welcome in our program. We are an inclusive program that strives to provide a flexible program that can meet the needs of each unique child and group. We would like to work with you to determine how to best care for you child.

Each child who attends our program must be physically able to take part in the program activities or have a support person who is capable of helping them participate. All children must be able to respond to a request of “stop”. If you think that this might be a challenge for your child, please contact us to discuss your child’s needs before you register for the program.

If we find that an individual child's need for support is greater than the facilitators can provide, we will work with you to look at additional care options for your child. These may include:

- Hiring a support person to attend the program with your child.
- Attending yourself, or have a friend or family member attend. Any adult who attends the program regularly must submit a criminal record check.
- Creating an agreement and support plan between the facilitators, caregivers and child.

## **Disclosure of Special Needs**

It is important to provide volunteers, substitutes and other support workers with information on how to best support your child and the other children in our program. At the beginning of the session, our facilitators will meet with you to craft a short statement that outlines how to best to work with your child. This statement will be communicated verbally to the program volunteers and other adults in the program.

Ongoing communication is valuable to us. Feel free to connect with your facilitator if you have any questions about your child's participation in the program. If the facilitator has questions about your child's behaviour and need for support, they will contact you as well.

## **Inclusive Environment**

Out and About Adventures strives to create an environment of respect. This includes respect for all cultures, ages, genders, interests and abilities. This also includes respect for all living things. We aim to speak and act with kindness and compassion toward each other.

## **Transitions and Separation**

We understand that children who are new to the program may need some time to transition into the program. Parents/caregivers are welcome to stay with their child as long as is needed by the child.

## **Siblings**

Siblings are welcome at opening and closing circle times, but due to insurance limitations they may not accompany us during the program. Please find alternate care for siblings if you are planning to attend the program with your child. The exception to this rule is a “babe in arms” who can stay in a front or back carrier for the duration of the program.

## **Guidance Strategies**

Discipline methods used by facilitators and volunteers will focus on gentle discipline. Kind and compassionate, but firm. Whenever possible, we will try to redirect and/or encourage discussion of any differences so that the children can work on communicating their needs and emotions to one another.

Our guidance strategies are influenced by empathy logic, non-violent communication and attachment theory.

## **Physical Play**

At Out and About Adventures, we understand physical play as an important part of child development. This may include building, running, “rough housing” and working together in imaginative play. We encourage the children to engage in imaginative play in nature.

Sticks can have many different uses, including becoming weapons. We do not ban weapon play. We honor a child’s instinct for play and welcome this type of play as an opportunity to talk about different comfort levels, consent and empathy. If any children are particularly uncomfortable with this type of play, we may decide on rules as a group so that we can play in a way so that everyone feels comfortable and safe.

Climbing is also a big part of our program. Children are allowed to climb as high as they can climb themselves as long as conditions remain safe. If a child would like to climb higher than the height of their own body, a facilitator (or volunteer) will be close by to spot them and keep an eye on active risk assessment during their explorations. Facilitators do not lift or guide children onto anything. It is safer and more beneficial for a child’s development if they work to figure out how to do it themselves.

## Phones

If you are attending the program with your child, please avoid using your phone or other technological devices during program. We want everyone in the program to be present and engaged with the environment. If you need to use your phone, please step away from the group so that you do not interrupt the children's play.

Please do not take pictures of the children at play unless you have permission from the facilitator to do so. Please be respectful of other people's choices to not have their children in pictures.

## Bathrooms

Trout Lake:

- We use the bathroom located on the South side of the lake.

Stanley Park:

- We will sometimes be within walking distance of a toilet but we will not always be able to return to an indoor bathroom. Children must be comfortable using the bathroom outdoors.

## Snacks

Please provide your child with a nut-free snack and a mug for herbal tea. We will provide simple herbal tea (often made with local plants) for the children each day. Please let us know of any allergies so that we can make the appropriate accommodations. We will wash our hands with soap and water before snack.

## Bringing Toys

Please avoid bringing toys from home to our program. We want to make sure that they do not get lost/dirty/broken. We also want the children to be interacting with the environment and toys can distract from the richness and open-ended nature of the environment. The exception for this would be any comfort item that your child NEEDS to feel comfortable and open to play (special bear, blanket, etc.).

## **Contacting Us**

### **Address**

Out and About Adventures Inc.  
203-233 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Ave.,  
Vancouver, B.C.,  
V5T 2H1

**Phone:** 778-847-1345

**Email:** [cara@outandaboutadventures.org](mailto:cara@outandaboutadventures.org)

**Questions or Concerns:** If you have a question or concern, please bring it up with your program facilitator or the Director of Out and About Adventures (Cara Agro). All questions and concerns are confidential.

***Thank you for reading the Out and About Adventures "Policies and Procedures Handbook". If you require any further information regarding programming, please contact [cara@outandaboutadventures.org](mailto:cara@outandaboutadventures.org)***