

Hamilton's Charter of Rights of Children and Youth

And Participatory Responsibilities

This Charter was created by the Children and Youth of Hamilton, in their words, through extensive community engagement. While families are responsible for raising their children, governments, schools, communities, parents and individuals have a duty to respect children's rights. The Charter is not only about **Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child**, but also about **Making Hamilton the Best Place to BE a Child**.

I have the right to be heard.

- To have a say in decisions that affect me
- To express an opinion and have it be heard by the people around me

Children are responsible for listening to others and respecting their opinions. Adults are responsible for asking children for their opinions on all matters that affect them, and seriously considering their views.

I have the right to live in a home, in a neighbourhood.

- To live in a house with a bird house, grass, and trees
- For my neighbourhood to accept and respect children's rights
- To live in a house that is mold free and bug free and asbestos free

Children are responsible for helping to take care of the place where they live. Adults are responsible for making sure our community is providing good quality affordable housing, in neighbourhoods that have access to green space and that support our citizens.

I have the right to live with and be cared for by family.

- To make something with my mom
- To have an adult hug me and take care of me
- To have someone who cares about me and is patient with me
- Be reminded of how important I am

Children are responsible for respecting and caring for their family. Adults are responsible for respecting and caring for children and families in their diverse forms, and responding to children's right to feel loved in their family.

I have the right to have friends.

- To have a best friend
- To argue with my friend and then make up again
- To have fun and laugh
- To play with blocks with my friends

Children are responsible for caring for, respecting, and including others. Adults are responsible for making it possible for friends to feel welcome and included, and to respect children's ability to settle their own disagreements.

I have the right to good food, and warm, clean clothes.

- To have breakfast before I go anywhere
- To make cupcakes
- To more, and better school and club snacks

Children are responsible for learning about and eating healthy food, and helping to care for their clothing. Adults are responsible for ensuring that children are aware of healthy and ethical food choices, of where and how food and clothing are produced, and that healthy food and suitable clothing are available to all children and their families.

I have the right to a healthy earth to live on.

- To have free fresh clean water
- To have clean air
- To play with leaves
- To dig in the dirt
- To be in nature

Children are responsible for caring for their environment and reducing waste. Adults are responsible for supporting and nurturing children's relationship with the natural environment and working to provide a healthy environment through fixing what is wrong, protecting what is right, and making good decisions for the future of our environment, to build capacity to think in terms of "forever".

I have the right to play.

- To have toys
- Race cars
- To play on a swing at the park
- To play on the big slide
- To ride my bike
- Get messy
- Be able to go to the playground with my parents
- To test out my own body
- To climb on branches
- Jump
- To play in bigger parks
- Play sports
- Go to camps
- To play games on my computer
- Exercise
- To have extra-curricular activities: drama, dance, clubs, and sports

Children are responsible for including all children in active exploration, enjoyment of movement, and imaginative play at appropriate times. Adults are responsible for providing both structured and unstructured time and environments for children to play with friends and trust children to take some risks.

I have the right to learn more things.

- To learn in fun ways
- Have more books
- To go to school and have a safe learning environment
- To graduate from university
- Have opportunities, to reach goals
- To do my best work
- Notice what is important to me

Children are responsible for being curious and thoughtful about what is around them, making the most of learning opportunities and respecting the abilities of others. Adults are responsible for nurturing children's curiosity, supporting their learning by respecting their interests and ways of learning in all contexts, thoughtfully reflecting on their own interventions in children's explorations, actively removing / reducing barriers to full participation in learning, providing stimulating materials and experiences for learning, and building communities that recognize children's competence and intelligence.

I have the right to express myself, my personality and thoughts without judgement.

- To tell other people what I am thinking and feeling
- Dance
- To express myself through creative experiences
- To have art supplies
- To make art, and have art teachers
- To think
- To have my concerns treated with respect
- Be imaginative

- To be free to show who I am or what I think
- To feel loved or mad...feel confused
- Not to understand life or meaning to everything

Children are responsible for communicating respectfully, and appreciating the ways others express themselves. Adults are responsible for providing children with opportunities to express themselves fully, to engage in creative activities, and to stay silent if they choose.

I have the right to be proud of who I am.

- To be proud of my work and accomplishments

Children are responsible for working to the best of their ability. Adults are responsible for recognizing children's efforts without comparing them to others, and cultivate spaces where children are able to demonstrate their particular competence.

I have the right to make choices.

- To choose my friends
- To choose my girlfriend or boyfriend
- To have my favourite colour
- To be silly if I feel like it
- To have the chance to learn by making mistakes
- To have a part-time job

Children are responsible for considering their decisions carefully. Adults are responsible for seeking out and seriously considering children's views on all matters that concern them, to help them to make informed decisions, and to recognize the importance of relationships and making a meaningful contribution to their own financial security and independence.

I have the right to special help like a wheelchair if I ever need it.

- To be helped and have hope
- To help people
- To have supports available so I can develop

Children are responsible for including and helping children who need support. Adults are responsible for working with children to define what meaningful participation is for them, and to accommodate and reduce barriers to full participation for all children.

I have the right to know about and practice my culture.

- To learn about my culture
- To speak and sing in my own language
- To know my family and my grandmother
- To have a birthday party with balloons

Children are responsible for respecting other people's language and celebrations. Adults are responsible for modelling respect for people of all backgrounds, supporting learning about diverse cultures and learning how to listen in many ways.

I have the right to care for living things.

- To have a pet
- To have a birdhouse and food for the birds
- To care for plants

Children are responsible for caring for animals and contributing to community gardens. Adults are responsible for supporting children's empathy and care for all living beings and making meaningful contributions to gardens using sustainable methods.

I have the right to be safe, secure, and healthy.

- For all parents getting their child's baby bonus every month
- Less people getting in fights
- Hold my mom's hand
- Go to the dentist
- Be protected from toxins
- Live in a smoke-free neighbourhood, in a world with no more cigarettes
- Have a safe environment to go home to, where there is no violence, no drug abuse, no ignorance, no neglect
- Hide from the lies and the life they hate to live
- Help people in poverty
- Have seat belts on the bus
- Feel safe walking down the street
- Have more food banks
- Have medicine and doctors

Children are responsible for caring for themselves and others by taking steps to reduce hazards and by avoiding dangerous situations. Adults are responsible for supporting children's assessment of risk, refusing to inflict pain or emotional harm on children, protecting and strengthening our social safety net, and building communities that are safe for all citizens.

I have the right to be free from discrimination.

- Equal opportunities regardless of how much money my parents make
- Not be picked on because of my height and size and to be able to do more activities
- Not be judged on how I look
- Have equal treatment and be included regardless of race, religion, sex

Children are responsible for respecting and being empathetic to others. Adults are responsible for building inclusive communities that welcome and support all people.

I have the right to rest.

- Have a comfy bed to sleep in
- Have a stuffed toy, blankets

Children are responsible for learning about and taking care of their bodies. Adults are responsible for ensuring a child's time is not over-scheduled, and that they have a place to rest.

I have the right to privacy.

- To be in my home and be private in my room so my cat won't bother me
- To have a place where I can be by myself or maybe with a friend, like a fort or a tent

Children are responsible for respecting the privacy of others. Adults are responsible for respecting children's belongings, spaces, and need for time alone.

These rights and responsibilities shall apply to all children and youth under the age of 18, without discrimination according to race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, ability/disability, ethnic origin, religion, neighbourhood, economic status. This Charter of Rights for Children and Youth does not replace the law.