

Safety and Well-being of Children and Youth Policy

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Policy Category:	Public Service
Approved by:	OPL Board
Accountability:	CEO or Designate
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Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the rights of children and youth in Ontario public libraries are protected, and that parents/guardians or caregivers understand their responsibility to provide supervision and care for their children while accessing library programs, collections, services and spaces.

~~Oakville Public Library (OPL) is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for customers of all ages to enjoy the library's programs, collections, services and spaces.~~ Library staff work to engage children, families and teens in positive ways, and provide support while in library spaces and while attending library events or programs both in-person and virtually. All customers are expected to abide by the library's Customer Code of Conduct.

~~The OPL endorses the Ontario Library Association's position statements on Children's Rights in the Library (1998) and Teens' Rights (June 2010).~~

~~This policy provides clarity regarding parent / guardian responsibilities and OPL's responsibility for the safety of children in library spaces and while attending library events or programs both in-person and virtually.~~

Scope:

This policy applies to children and youth under the age of 18 ~~while they are in a library space or while attending a library program or event in-person or virtually~~ anywhere the library conducts business, whether on library or Town property, in other community spaces and virtually through our website, digital platforms or social media channels.

Policy Statement:

Oakville Public Library (OPL) is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for customers of all ages to enjoy the library's programs, collections, services and spaces.

This policy aligns with the principles of universal and equitable access and is supported by OPL's Intellectual Freedom Policy and Inclusion Policy.

Rights of Children and Youth

The OPL endorses the Ontario Library Association's position statements on Children's Rights in the Library (1998) and Teens' Rights (June 2010).

Children in Ontario public libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom, that is, an environment that supports intellectual curiosity and enquiry and champions intellectual freedom as the prerequisite for an informed, democratic society.
2. Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
3. A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
4. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
7. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
8. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of children's services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

Teens ("Youth") in Ontario public libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom, that is, free access to library resources and information sources, and respect for the right to select materials appropriate to their needs without censorship.
2. Equal access to the full range of materials, services, and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their unique needs.
3. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
4. Collections that specifically meet the needs of teens.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service at every service point.
7. Library programs and services appropriate for teens.
8. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in teen services.

9. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of teen services.

10. Library policies written to include the needs of the youth.

Responsibility for Supervision and Care

Parents/guardians and caregivers are responsible for the supervision and care of their children when accessing library programs, collections, services and spaces.

Children requiring supervision must not be left unattended on library premises.

The Child, Youth and Family Services Act specifies:

“No person having charge of a child younger than 16 shall leave the child without making provision for the child’s supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.” Section 136(3)

In accordance with Children’s Aid Society (CAS) recommendations, children under the age of 10 should not be left alone, and should be accompanied by an adult or caregiver while accessing library programs, collections, services, and spaces.

Library staff can assist children and youth, but staff cannot assume responsibility for the supervision or care of children and youth, or for enforcing any restrictions a parent/guardian and caregiver may place on a child’s use of library programs, collections, services, and spaces, including the use of technology and equipment.

Customers of all ages must follow the Customer Code of Conduct. Library staff will address concerns regarding children directly with the parent/guardian or caregiver. **For concerns related to unattended children, if the parent/guardian or caregiver cannot be located or contacted, the library may contact the Halton Regional Police Service.**

~~Parents or guardians are responsible for the behaviour and safety of their children who use the library, its collections, equipment and services. Library staff are trained to assist children but cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the library.~~

~~The library recognizes the terms as stipulated by the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA) with respect to the supervision of children. Specifically, Duty to Report, Section 125.~~

Children in the Library

In-person:

~~Children younger than 10 years of age must be directly supervised by a parent or responsible caregiver and may not be left alone in the library. Parents and caregivers are responsible for ensuring that children abide by the library’s Customer Code of~~

~~Conduct. During library programs, the parent or caregiver of a child under the age of 10 must remain in the library and return to the programming area by the end of the program. For some programs, parents / caregivers are required to attend with their children.~~

~~Virtual:~~

~~Adult permission is mandatory for children under the age of 13 participating in the library's virtual programs. The library cannot and does not act in place of, or absence of, a parent or legal guardian and is not responsible for enforcing restrictions which a parent or guardian may place upon a minor's use of technology. While all virtual programs encourage the use of cameras during programs for social interaction, virtual programs for children, under the age of 13 require cameras to be on for attendance and security purposes.~~

~~Children over the Age of 10~~

~~Children 10 years of age and up to 18 may use the library independently, but parents / caregivers are responsible for the actions and well-being of their children while in the library and/or library programs in-person or virtually. Library staff are entitled to assess the behaviour of a child left alone in the library and address any concerns with the caregiver.~~

~~Unattended Children in the Library~~

~~Library staff will intervene when they become aware that a child in the library is in these or similar situations:~~

- ~~• A child is alone and visibly upset or ill;~~
- ~~• A child under the age of 12 is left alone with younger children;~~
- ~~• A child is left alone and doing something dangerous or appears to be at risk;~~
- ~~• A child is alone and is not following library behaviour expectations after reasonable reminders;~~
- ~~• A child is left alone at closing time or before opening outside the library doors;~~
- ~~• A child is spending a considerable amount of time in the library alone.~~

~~If a child is left alone and a parent or caregiver cannot be located, the library will contact the Halton Regional Police Service or Halton Children's Aid Society.~~

Duty to Report

The **CYFSA-Child, Youth and Family Services Act** recognizes outlines that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. It clearly states that members of the public including professionals who work with children have an obligation to report promptly to **a Children's Aid Society (CAS)** if they suspect a child or youth under the age of 18 is or may be in need of protection.

The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 18 years **old**.

When library staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child **or youth** is, or may be, in need of protection, they have the authority to report the concern to the local CAS as stated in **Child, Youth and Family Services Act CYFSA (Sections: 125) (1)**. ~~If in doubt, staff should contact the local CAS.~~

Requests for Information Regarding Children

As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its customers of any age unless there is an issue with their conduct. OPL respects the privacy of all its customers **in accordance with the Customer Privacy Policy**.

Staff will not give information to any person over the phone as to whether a child is currently in the library or has been in the library recently. Information will be shared with law enforcement agencies as required.

Definitions:

Child (or Children) refers to all persons **age 12 or younger** ~~who are below the age of 18.~~

Parent refers to a person who is either the natural, adoptive or foster parent of a child.

Guardian refers to a person with legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child.

Caregiver is anyone **(commonly age 12 or older)** to whom the parent/-guardian has given responsibility for the **supervision and** care of the child.

Unattended child refers to a child left without visible supervision by a parent, guardian or caregiver. Visible supervision is defined as the parent, guardian or caregiver being in the library and aware of the child's whereabouts **and actions** ~~in the space.~~

~~**Staff** refers to library employees, volunteers and community partners in shared facilities or when delivering joint programs~~

Youth (or Teen) refers to all persons who are between the ages of 13 and 17.

References / Related Documents:

- Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, C. 14, Sched. 1
- OLA's Position on Children's Rights in the Library
- OLA's Position on Teens' Rights in the Public Library
- Customer Code of Conduct Policy
- Customer Privacy Policy
- Intellectual Freedom Policy
- Inclusion Policy