

THOROLD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

Policy Manual

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Child and Young Adult Safety Policy

The Thorold Public Library staff recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the library.

Parents and guardians should be aware that the library is a public place that is open to all members of the community. Furthermore, as in all public facilities, emergencies can occur.

Responsibility for the welfare and behaviour of children using the Library, however, rests with the parent, guardian or responsible caregiver. Although staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within the Library.

It is also emphasized that library staff are unable to prevent a child who wishes to leave the library from doing so. As a public place, the library does not monitor the activities of its users unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is left unattended. The library cannot act in the role of either parent or police.

The following policy establishes the conditions needed to maintain the well-being of children and Young Adult and the responsibilities of their caregivers.

Section 1: Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver

1. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
2. The library is governed by the terms in the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) with regards to supervision of children.

Specifically:

Section 79(3) “No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.”

Section 79(4) “Where a person is charged with contravening Subsection (3) and the child is less than 10 years of age, the onus of establishing that the person made provision for the child’s supervision and care that was reasonable in the circumstances rests with the person.”

3. The library expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:
 - a) not leave children requiring supervision unattended in or about library premises
 - b) monitor the use of services and collections by children under their care
 - c) be responsible for borrowed materials and fines incurred by children under their care
 - d) be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care
4. Children nine (9) years old and younger must be accompanied by an adult while in the Library. Older children, able to maintain proper library behaviour, may use the library unattended; otherwise they should be adequately supervised by a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver.
5. Children under the age of five (5) attending programs, may be supervised by the library staff only during the scheduled time of the program; their caregivers must always remain in the library building.

Section 2: Responsibility of Staff

1. The library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations, where
 - a) an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library
 - b) an unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself
 - c) another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
 - d) an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
 - e) an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time
 - f) a child is consistently left on his or her own in the library for long periods of time
2. Staff may, as needed, notify parents, guardians or responsible caregivers whose children need additional supervision, and require that children who are in chronic violation of library rules be accompanied by a parent/guardian/caregiver during library visits.
3. Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, library staff will:
 - a) not leave a child unattended at closing time
 - b) not give the child a ride home
 - c) contact local police or Children’s Aid Society (CAS)
 - d) two staff members will remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

- e) complete an Incident Report documenting attempts to contact caregiver, parent or guardian and steps taken

Section 3: Duty to Report

Under the age of 16:

1. The CFSA recognizes 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 CAS if they suspect that a child or Young Adult under the age of 16 is or may be in need of protection.
2. The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 16 years. It also applies to children subject to a child protection order who are 16 and 17 years old.
3. When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will advise the Chief Executive Officer and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as stated in the CFSA s.72 (1).

Age of 16 or 17:

- a) Library staff who are concerned that a 16-or 17-year old is, or may be, in need of protection **may** make a report to Children's Aid Society (CAS) and the CAS is required to assess the reported information
- b) When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or Young Adult is, or may be, in need of protection, they will advise the Library CEO and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as required in CYFSA s.136 (1).

Section 4: Specific Situation

1. **Truancy** – If a school-age child is noticed to be spending considerable time in the library during the school day, staff may check with the individual and ask that a parent confirm with the library that he/she is aware of the children's whereabouts. This applies to those up to the age of 16.
2. **Missing Persons** - Library staff will not give information to any person over the telephone as to whether a person is currently in the library or has been in the library recently. Library staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. In the case of a missing person, library staff will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

Related Documents

1. Ontario's Child and Family Services Act. R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER C.11, s.72 (1).
2. Thorold Public Library. **Internet Access Policy**
3. Thorold Public Library. **Library Membership and Registration Policy**