



Hastings Highlands Public Library

Area: Operational
Policy Title: Child Safety in the Library
Policy Number: OP-11

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The Hastings Highlands Public Library welcomes children. Library staff recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the library. However, the library is a busy public place and library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facility.

This policy provides library staff with guidelines when confronted with a situation where a child's conduct is unacceptable or a child's security is at risk. The following policy establishes the conditions needed to maintain the well-being of children and the responsibilities of their caregivers.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

- a child means a person under sixteen years of age, unless otherwise specified.
- a parent is any person who is either the natural, adoptive or foster parent of the child.
- a caregiver is anyone over 12 years of age to whom the parent has given responsibility for the care of the younger child.

PRINCIPLES

Child Conduct in the Library

- Parents must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the library with a responsible caregiver.
- Children under 10 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity, unless they are participating in a library program where the parent's presence is not requested or required.
- Parents or caregivers who do not attend a program with the child under 10 years of age must remain on the premises.
- Children 10 to 11 years may use the library unattended for an amount of time that is appropriate for their age and maturity.
- Teenagers, age 12 and up, may use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behaviour of any children under the age of 16 while in the library.

- The library may require children, 12 and under, who are in chronic violation of library rules in spite of repeated warnings to be accompanied by a parent or caregiver during library visits for a period to be determined by management.
- The library may ban teenagers who repeatedly violate library rules for a period to be determined by management.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION REGARDING TRUANT CHILDREN

As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its clients unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above. If a school child is noticed spending considerable time in the branch during a school day, staff may check with the child to ask that a parent confirm with the library that he/she is aware of the child's whereabouts.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION REGARDING MISSING CHILDREN/ RUNAWAYS

Staff will not give information to any person over the phone as to whether a minor is currently in the library or has been in recently. If the situation seems to be serious, staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. If there is an active police investigation, library staff will cooperate with the police in helping to locate a missing minor.

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.

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. 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) remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

Section 3: Duty to Report

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 youth 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).

Related Documents

1. Ontario's Child and Family Services Act. R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER C.11, s.72 (1).
2. Hastings Highlands Public Library. **OP 12 - Circulation Policy**
3. Hastings Highlands Public Library. **OP 07 - Internet Access Policy**