

UNATTENDED CHILD POLICY

Policy level: Operational

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Preamble:

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County (SDG) 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 facilities.

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 sixteen (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 ten (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.”

The following Policy establishes the conditions needed to maintain the well-being of children 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 and responsible caregiver.
2. 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; and
 - d) be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care.
3. Children nine (9) years old and younger must be accompanied by an adult or responsible caregiver while in the Library unless participating in a library program.
 4. Children under the age of five (5) attending a program must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver at all times.

Section 2: Responsibility of Staff

1. 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 Director of Library Services 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. SDG Library. **2011-14 - Circulation Policy**
3. SDG Library. **2009-2 - Internet Use Policy**
4. SDG Library. **2011-13 - Rules of Conduct Policy**
5. Ontario Library Association's ***Children's Rights in the Public Library***