

<b>Title:</b>	Children's Services Policy	<b>Policy Number:</b> 300-14
<b>Policy Type:</b>	Operations	
<b>Approval By:</b>		
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**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Library's services specific to children and youth, including topics of unattended children and rights and responsibilities of parents. This policy provides a framework for how the Library achieves its core purpose in serving children while also outlining parental responsibilities.

**DEFINITIONS**

**CYFSA** - Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched. 1

**Child / Children** - includes all persons who are under 12 years of age.

**Parent** - includes parents, guardians and caregivers responsible for the care and wellbeing of the child, while in the Library.

**Unattended** - is a child left without visible supervision by a parent on Library premises.

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Library locations and children under the age of 16, including their parents and caregivers.

**POLICY STATEMENT**

The Library recognizes that the needs of young people are important in their own right: that their intellectual growth, their cultural appreciation and recreational activities should be fostered through quality library services, delivered with consideration and respect. The Library therefore endeavours to provide a welcoming and safe environment for children of all ages with programs and services to meet their needs.

The Library fully endorses the Children's Rights in the Public Library statement adopted at the Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting, November 1998 (Appendix A).

**MEMBERSHIP**

A parent or guardian, by signing the child's library card (library membership), recognizes that a library card will be issued to their child and that the parent or guardian is responsible for the materials borrowed on that library card.



A parent or guardian also accepts responsibility for any loss incurred through the use of that library card. They also accept that the applicant will obey all rules and regulations of the Library.

While staff will assist young people with finding materials or attending programs, parents/guardians are responsible for their children's use of the library and the materials they view/borrow.

## **CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

### **Collections**

The Library will maintain a comprehensive collection of materials for and about children, based on the 300-03 Collection Development Policy. The collections for children will meet high standards of quality and reflect the changing educational needs and personal interests of children and teens as well as trends in society.

### **Programs**

The Library will provide programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, to develop literacy skills, to stimulate creative potential and to encourage and facilitate the habit of reading, independent learning and use of the library.

The number of participants for all programs will be restricted based on space limitations and staff supervision available.

Some programs may limit the ages of children who can participate. This limit may be enforced by the staff for maximum benefit of the children, based on their developmental stages, who are participating in the programs. Other participant restrictions may be enforced for specialized children's programs based on the content and scope of those programs.

### **Technology**

The Library prioritizes providing access to technology and the internet to children because it fosters a rich learning environment. The Library will provide computers, as well as other technologies deemed appropriate for youth, and filtered internet access designated for children ages 14 years and younger at all of its locations.

## **LIBRARY SPACE**

The library will provide well-planned areas for children that are distinct from the adult areas with signage that is clear and age appropriate. These areas should be visually stimulating so that children are able to readily distinguish their own space from the rest of the library. These areas will have furniture, shelves and equipment that are designed for and accessible to children.

These areas for children are interactive learning environments where controlled noise levels are tolerated and where young people are invited to explore the library materials and services in their own way.

The Library employs qualified staff to deliver and manage children's services and supports their professional growth to develop services, collections, and programs. The Library will ensure that all staff members assigned to children's services receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library service.

Library staff will advocate for children's services in the community by:

- i) collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy, love of reading, lifelong learning and children's well-being;
- ii) seeking support for children's services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, etc.;
- iii) networking with other agencies who provide service to children in the community, region and province;
- iv) communicating with principals, teacher librarians and teachers in the community promoting the children's services and collections to groups who could benefit from them (schools, daycares, etc.).

At no time may staff be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed and/or interrupted by others.

### **INDEPENDENT USE AND UNATTENDED CHILDREN**

Library staff can neither care for, nor take responsibility for children left unattended at the Library. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.

Staff will not give information to any person over the telephone as to whether a child is currently in the library or has been in the library recently. Staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back.

Children ages 10 and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behavior of any children under the age of 16 while they are in the Library. Children younger than 10 must be accompanied by an adult while in the Library.

Children under the age of 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.

When children are left without adequate supervision, the Library will take the appropriate action, including contacting the child's family, Sault Ste. Marie Police Services or the Children's Aid Society/ Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services.

## **DUTY TO REPORT**

The Child, Youth and Family Services Act (Section 125) 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 a legislated obligation to report promptly to a Children's Aid Society if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 is, or may be, in need of protection. Additionally, though it is not required, it is advisable to still make a report for youth ages 16 to 18 years of age who are in need of protection.

When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the Children's Aid Society or Nogdawindamin Family and Community Services, as required in CYFSA, then advise the Library CEO.

## **MISSING CHILDREN/RUNAWAYS**

In the case of a missing child, Library staff will share any available information with law enforcement and the CEO.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

300-02 Records Management and Protection of Privacy Policy  
300-03 Collection Development Policy  
300-05 Membership Policy  
300-07 Exclusion, Reinstatement and Appeals Policy  
300-09 Rules of Conduct  
300-20 Information Services Policy  
300-21 Programming Policy  
300-23 Accessible Customer Service Policy  
300-26 Computer & Internet Use Policy

## **APPENDIX A**



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### **Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library**

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom
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.

*Adopted at the Ontario Library Association  
Annual General Meeting  
November 1998*

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