



# Unattended Children Policy

## Statement of Purpose

The Perth East Public Library (Library) is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for patrons of all ages. The Library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to enjoy the Library's programs, collections, services and spaces.

Library staff cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the Library.

This policy aims to ensure the safety of children while in the Library and to clarify the responsibilities of parents, guardians, caregivers, and Library staff regarding children in the Library. All patrons are expected to abide by the Library's Code of Conduct Policy.

## 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 guided by the terms in the Ontario *Child, Youth and Family Service Act* (CYFSA) with regards to unattended children:
  - Section 136 (3) "*Leaving child unattended* (3) 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."
3. To this end, the Library expects parent/guardian or assigned caregivers:
  - a) not to leave children under sixteen (16) years old requiring supervision unattended on the library premises, or at off-site venues;
  - b) to take responsibility for the appropriate behaviour of children in their care.
  - c) to monitor the use of services and collections by children in their care. The Library is not responsible for enforcing any restrictions the parent/guardian or caregiver may place on a minor's use of library resources, internet/Wi-Fi.
  - d) To take responsibility for borrowed materials and fines incurred by children under their care.
4. In this Library:
  - Children under the age of 12 shall not be left unattended at any time in the Library or at off-site venues.

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- During scheduled programs, caregivers must remain with the child unless otherwise stated.
- Children under the age of 12 cannot be left in charge of other children in the Library or at off-site venues.
- Any person age 12 or older who is providing supervision to someone under the age of 12 must remain with the child and be aware and responsive to their needs at all times.

### Responsibilities 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 exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
  - c. An unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself
  - d. Another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
  - 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 parent/guardian or caregiver 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 *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (Section 125) recognizes that all adults have 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 the Children's Aid Society (CAS) if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of sixteen (16) years old is, or may be, in need of protection. The CYFSA defines the phrase "child in need of protection" as physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and at risk of harm.
2. Library staff who are concerned that a sixteen (16) or seventeen (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.
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 CEO (or senior staff) and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as stated in the CYFSA s. 125

### Phone Numbers

- Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society: 1-800-668-5094

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- Ontario Provincial Police Perth Detachment – Sebringville Office: 519-393-6123 or 1-888-310-1122 (non-emergency lines)

Related Documents:

- Perth East Public Library Policy, *Code of Conduct*
- Perth East Public Library Policy, *Children's Services*
- Perth East Public Library Policy, *Internet Access Policy*

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