



## Collingwood Public Library

Policy Type: **Operational**

Policy Number: **OP – 11**

Policy Title: **Unattended Children**

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The Collingwood Public Library welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. Library staff members are trained to assist children in using the library, but cannot assume responsibility for their supervision and safety. Our library is a public building with all the inherent dangers of such a setting, and caregivers need to exercise caution as they would in any other public space. The following policy has been adopted in the effort to ensure the well-being of children and to outline the responsibilities of caregivers and library staff.

### Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

- a “child” means a person under sixteen (16) years of age unless otherwise specified;
- a “caregiver” is any person who is either the natural, adoptive, or foster parent of the child; or anyone over twelve (12) years of age who has given responsibility for the care of the younger child.

### Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver

1. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the assigned caregiver.
2. The library is guided by the terms in the Ontario *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (CYFSA) with regards to unattended children. Specifically, Section 136(3) “No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for the child’s supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.”

This legislation does not specify an age at which a child can be left alone, rather the legislation sets out to protect young people from any type of abuse or neglect and requires that all parents and caregivers must make reasonable plans (which will vary according to a child’s age, maturity and circumstances) for the supervision of young people under 16 in their care.

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, including public computers and Internet;
  - c) be responsible for borrowed materials and fees incurred by children under their care;
  - d) be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care;
  - e) ensure children adhere to the Library Code of Conduct, including safe use of Library space (running, climbing, etc.);
  - f) remain on the premises if a child under the age of twelve (12) years is attending a library program.
4. In this library:
- a) children ages twelve and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but caregivers are still responsible for the behaviour of any children to the age of sixteen (16) while they are in the library;
  - b) children younger than twelve (12) years should be accompanied by an adult while in the library;
  - c) children under the age of five (5) attending programs, must remain in the eyesight of their parent/caregiver at all times.
5. Truancy is an issue between the child, their caregiver, and their school. Only if a child breaches the library's Code of Conduct will library staff attempt to contact a caregiver, and if they are not available, the OPP.

### **Responsibility of Staff**

1. The library staff 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 themselves or others;
  - c) another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child;
  - d) an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behavior;
  - e) an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time;
  - f) a child is consistently left on their 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 (Collingwood OPP: 705-445-4321) or Children's Aid Society (Collingwood: 705-444-9160; Simcoe County: 1-800-461-4236);
  - d) remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection.

### **Duty to Report**

1. The CYFSA (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 CAS if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of sixteen (16) is or may be in need of protection. The CYFSA defines the phrase "child in need of protection" as including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm.

2. The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of sixteen (16) years. It also applies to children subject to a child protection order who are sixteen (16) and seventeen (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 CYFSA s.136 (1).

## **Related Documents**

Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. S.O. 2017, CHAPTER C.14, sections 74, 84(1), 125, 136(3).

Collingwood Public Library **OP-07 – Internet Access Policy**

Collingwood Public Library **OP-10 – Children's and Teens' Services**

Collingwood Public Library **OP-06 – Programming Policy**

Collingwood Public Library **OP-01.3 – Code of Conduct**