

Stirling-Rawdon Public Library



Policy Type:	Operational	Policy Number:	OP294/10E
Policy Title:	Unattended Children	Initial Policy Approval Date:	2010
		Last Review/Revision Date:	Jan 2024
		Year of Next Review:	2028

The Stirling-Rawdon Public Library staff recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the Library.

The Library is a busy place and Library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facility. The following policy establishes the conditions needed to maintain the well-being of children and the responsibilities of their caregivers.

For the purposes of this policy:

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

Section 1: Guidelines

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 acknowledges the following terms as stipulated in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA) with regards to supervision of children. Section 136 (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." 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. In this Library, children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult or caregiver while in the library.

Section 2: Children in the Library

Parents are responsible for the conduct of their children in the Library as outlined below:

1. Children ages 10 and over may use the Library independently on a regular basis, but parents or guardians remain responsible for the behaviour of their children while in the Library.
2. Parents must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the Library with a responsible caregiver.
3. Parents or caregivers are responsible for monitoring and supervising their child's access to all library resources including print materials, the Internet and other technologies.
4. Children under the age of 10 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity unless they are participating in a library program.
5. Parents or caregivers who do not attend a program with the child under the age of 10 must remain within the branch.

Section 3: Responsibilities of Staff

1. In most circumstances, the health and safety of children, particularly older children and teens, is not an issue. However, library staff may intervene when they become aware that a child in the Library is in these, or similar situations:

- A child is alone, visibly upset or ill;
- A child under the age of 12 is left alone with younger siblings;
- A child is alone and doing something dangerous or another person in the Library seems to be a danger to the child;
- A child is alone, and is not following library rules after reasonable warnings;

- A child is consistently left on his or her own in the Library for long periods of time; or
- A child is left alone at the Library at closing time.

2. If a child is left at the Library at closing time or in the event of an emergency situation or closure the staff person in charge will attempt to contact the parents or caregivers. If the parent or adult caregivers cannot be contacted within 15 minutes of closing hour, staff will notify the police. Staff will remain with the child until the parent and/or police arrive. Under no circumstances will library staff transport or take the child away from the library building.

3. Section 125 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA) 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 the Children's Aid Society (CAS) if they suspect that a child or a teen under the age of 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. The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 16 years. Library staff who are concerned that a 16 or 17-year old is, or may be, in need of protection may opt to make a report to CAS, who is required to assess the reported information. 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 or Manager on Call and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as required in the CYFSA.

Related Documents:

Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c.14, Sched. 1
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14>