

Purpose

The Huron County Library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to enjoy the Library's programs, collections, services and spaces. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/legal guardian or an assigned caregiver who is no less than 12 years of age. Library staff are not responsible for the supervision or security of children on library premises.

Policy

1. Unattended Children in the Library

- 1.1. Children ages 10 to 11 may use the library on their own; however, parents are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their child(ren). Children demonstrating inappropriate behaviour may be asked to leave the library. If a child in this age group is not able to leave the library without an adult, he/she should not be in the library alone. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.
- 1.2. Children ages 12 to 17 are treated as adult users within library spaces. However, they are still the legal responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

2. Responsibility of the Parent, Guardian or Caregiver

- 2.1. It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to monitor the whereabouts and behaviour of their children while on library property. The Library expects parents/guardians/caregivers/teachers to:
 - 2.1.1. Not leave children requiring supervision unattended in or about library property
 - 2.1.2. Monitor the use of services and collections by children under their care
 - 2.1.3. Be responsible for borrowed materials and fees incurred by children under their care
 - 2.1.4. Be responsible for the appropriate behavior of children under their care.
- 2.2. Young children attending programs may be supervised by library staff during the scheduled time of the program; caregivers must be available to reassume supervision of the child at the conclusion of the program.

2.3. Parents/guardians/caregivers may be required to attend programs with children depending on the nature of the program. Such requirements will be clearly stated in program promotion and registration.

3. Responsibility of Library Staff

3.1. The Library recognizes the following terms as stipulated in the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA) with regard to the supervision of children:

3.1.1. Section 79(4) "Where a person is charged with contravening Subsection (3) and the child is less than 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."

3.1.2. Library staff are obligated by CYFSA to call the Police or the Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society (CAS) if they have any concerns about the safety and well-being of a child.

3.2. Library staff should intervene when they become aware that a child in the Library is in these, or similar situations:

3.2.1. A child is alone and visibly upset or ill

3.2.2. A child under the age of 12 is left alone with younger siblings

3.2.3. A child is alone and doing something dangerous or another person in the library seems to be a danger to the child

3.2.4. A child is alone and is not following library rules after reasonable warnings

3.2.5. A child is left alone at the library at closing time

3.3. If staff are unable to contact/locate the responsible parent/caregiver, they should:

3.3.1. not leave a child unattended at closing time;

3.3.2. not give a child a ride home;

3.3.3. contact local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS);

3.3.4. remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection.

4. Duty to Report

4.1. The CYFSA (Section 125) clearly states that all 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 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.

4.2. It is not necessary to be certain a child is, or may be, in need of protection to make a report to a society. "Reasonable grounds" refers to the information that an average person, using normal and honest judgement would need in order to decide to report. 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 local CAS, as is required in CYFSA s. 136 (1).

4.3. A person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must make the report directly to a Children's Aid Society and must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf.

4.4. A staff person making a report as an employee of the library shall inform the County Librarian and complete an incident report as soon as possible.

4.5. **Phone Numbers**

4.5.1. **Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society:** 519-271-5290 or 519-524-7356 or 1-800-668-5094

4.5.2. **Police:** 1-888-310-1122 (non-emergency line)

5. **Requests for information regarding Truant Children**

5.1. As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its members unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above.

5.2. If a school age child is noticed to be spending considerable time in the library during the school day, staff may check with the child and connect with CAS for guidance if there are concerns about a child's well-being or if the child discloses abuse.

6. **Requests for Information regarding Missing Children/Runaways**

6.1. 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. In the case of a missing child, staff should contact the County Librarian and/or Deputy County Librarian to share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

7. Staff Screening and Training

- 7.1. The Library requires staff and volunteers working with vulnerable populations to have Criminal and Vulnerable Sector Checks.
- 7.2. The Library further supports staff and volunteers by encouraging professional development and training related to child protection and advocacy.
- 7.3. See Also County of Huron. Hiring Policies: Criminal, Police and Vulnerable Sector Checks.

Citations

Ontario. Child, Youth and Family Services Act. R.S.O 2017, c.14, sections 74, 84(1), 125, 136 (3).

Related Documents

Internet Services Policy LIB-OP-84
Code of Patron Conduct Policy LIB-OP-80
Children's and Young Adult's Services Statement LIB-FS-4
Children and Young Adult Services Policy LIB-OP-40
County of Huron. Hiring Policies: Criminal, Police and Vulnerable Sector Checks
County of Huron. Incident Report Form
Hamilton Public Library. Safety of Children in the Library Policy
Milton Public Library. Child Safety Policy

Replacement Statement

This policy replaces all previous versions of this policy and comes into effect on the date approved.