

Title	Rights and Safety of Children and Teens in the Library	
Policy Number	CPL-16-08	
Policy Type	Operational	
Approval Date	March 21, 2022	
Review Date	March 2024	
Notes	Originally approved March 21, 2016; Revised March 2018 and March 2020.	

Purpose

The Caledon Public Library provides library services for children and teens to assist in developing their full potential and fostering a lifelong love of reading, learning and creativity. The Caledon Public Library Board endorses the **Children’s Rights in the Public Library** ([Appendix A](#)) adopted at the Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting, November 1998 and the **Teen Rights in the Public Library** ([Appendix B](#)) adopted at the Ontario Library Association General Meeting, June 2010. In keeping with these rights, the Caledon Public Library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to use its facilities and services.

The Caledon Public Library also recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the Library. Library staff are trained to assist children and teens in using the Library but cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the branch. Parents and caregivers are reminded that the Library is a public building with all the inherent dangers of such a setting. Library policies and services are designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for clients of all ages but parents need to use the same caution with their children at the Library as they would in any other public setting.

In an effort to ensure their safety and well-being within a public facility and to maintain an atmosphere of appropriate library use, the following policy has been adopted.

Definitions

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 of 12 years of age or over to whom the parent has given responsibility for the care of a younger child.

Guidelines

- Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the Library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
- 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.

- In this Library, children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult or caregiver while in the library.
- 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.

Conduct of Children in the Library

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

- 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.
- Parents must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the Library with a responsible caregiver.
- 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.
- Children under the age of 10 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity unless they are participating in a library program.
- Parents or caregivers who do not attend a program with the child under the age of 10 must remain within the branch.
- Library staff may request that a parent or caregiver be present to sign a child in and out of a program.

Unattended Children in the Library

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.

Duty to Report

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.

Privacy of Children and Teens

In keeping with the *Caledon Public Library Privacy Policy (CPL-15-01)* and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56*, a child's personal information held by the Library, including customer borrowing and electronic use records, will only be divulged to the child or their custodial parent or guardian. In cases where the individual is 16 years of age or greater, personal and account information will only be released to the individual to whom the information relates.

Requests for Information Regarding Truant Children

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

If a school age child, up to the age of 16, is noticed to be spending considerable time in the library during the school day, staff may check with the child and ask that a parent confirm with the Library that he/she is aware of the child's whereabouts.

Requests for Information Regarding Missing Children/Runaways

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. If a subpoena, warrant or court order is presented in person, staff must cooperate with police or other authorities in helping to locate a missing child. In the case of a missing child, library staff may share information with "a law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information, where the request is supported by a formal warrant or otherwise required by the law" or as indicated in the *Caledon Public Library Privacy Policy (CPL-15-01)*. All such requests must be documented on the Caledon Public Library's Disclosure of Personal Information form created for this purpose.

Contravention of Policy

A child's failure to comply with this or other Library policies may result in consequences deemed by library staff to be appropriate to the behaviour. The Library may require children who are in chronic violation of library rules to be accompanied by a parent / caregiver during library visits for a period to be determined by the CEO/Chief Librarian.

The Caledon Public Library Board reserves the right to remove the privileges of any library user found in contravention of the Caledon Public Library Board's policies. Consequences may include: a warning; a directive to vacate the premises; suspension of library privileges; prohibition from the library building and premises by way of issuing a Notice of Trespass; and/or laying criminal charges.

Appeal Process

An appeal or application for re-instatement may be submitted, in writing, to the CEO and Chief Librarian. Library privileges are not automatically re-instated. Only one appeal will be considered during the term of the suspension.

Office of the CEO and Chief Librarian
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Related Documents:

- [Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#), R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56
- [Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#), 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched. 1
- [Public Libraries Act](#), R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44
- Caledon Public Library Privacy Policy (CPL-15-01)

Appendix A

Ontario Library Association's Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library

Adopted at the Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting

November 1998

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.

Appendix B

Ontario Library Association's Position on Teen's Rights in the Public Library

Adopted at the Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting

June 2010

Teens in Ontario Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom

The Library establishes clear policy statements concerning the right to free access by young adults to Library resources and information sources; and respect for the rights of young adults to select materials appropriate to their needs without censorship. The Library's teen collection, policies and services should be consistent with the concepts of intellectual freedom defined by the CLA, OLA and Ontario Human Rights code.

2. Equal access to the full range of materials, services, and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their unique needs.

The Library integrates Library service to teens into the overall plan, budget and service program for the Library. Library service to teens is integrated with those offered to other user groups.

3. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.

The Library incorporates funding for materials and services for teens in the Library operating budget and ensures there is equitable distribution of resources to support programs and services for young adults.

4. Collections that specifically meet the needs of teens

The Library provides a wide spectrum of current materials of interest to young adults to encourage lifelong learning, literacy, reading motivation, and reader development.

The Library endeavors to develop collections that encourage leisure reading, support homework and school success and responds to gender and cultural diversity. The Library provides unfettered access to technology including social networking, licensed databases, and other online Library resources for teens.

5. A Library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.

The Library provides identifiable spaces for teens that are separate from children's spaces where possible, reflects their lifestyle and allows for teens to use this Library space for leisure or study, either independently or in groups.

6. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service at every service point.

The Library promotes friendly, positive, non-biased customer interactions with teens, providing staff development and training and ensures that services for teens embrace cultural and gender diversity and economic differences. Library staff will endeavor to respect the teen's need for privacy and nonjudgmental service and assist young adults in acquiring the skills to effectively access all Library resources and become information literate.

7. Library Programs and Services appropriate for Teens

The Library fosters youth development by providing programs for teens that contribute to literacy, life-long learning and healthy youth development. The Library endeavors to provide volunteer opportunities for helping others through community service hours including participating on Library Advisory Boards, and other projects that help develop a sense of responsibility and community involvement. The Library's teen services initiatives are effectively managed according to best practices in the field of Youth Services.

8. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in teen services.

Library staff is knowledgeable about adolescent development and age appropriate resources for young adults inclusive of those with special needs. The Library provides services by teen specialists as well as by others who are trained to serve teens.)

9. 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 teen services.

The Library works in partnership with other community agencies and organizations to support all aspects of healthy, successful youth development.

10. Library policies are written to include the needs of the youth.