

Safety of Children in the Library Policy

Policy Level:	Library Board
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POLICY PURPOSE

The Hamilton Public 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.

KEY POINTS SUMMARY

Library staff are obligated by the [Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched. 1](#) to call the Police or the Hamilton Children's Aid Society if they have any concerns about the safety and well-being of a child.

Children under the age of 10 should be accompanied by an adult or caregiver while in the Library.

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.

Custodial guardians must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the library with a responsible caregiver.

Parents or caregivers are responsible for supervising their child's access to all library resources including the Internet and Digital Media Lab technologies.

Children ages 10 and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behaviour of any children while in the library.

DEFINITIONS

Parent the person or persons who have lawful custody of the child.

Guardian a person who has lawful custody of a child, other than the parent of the child.

Community Caregiver any one providing care to child out side the home.

POLICY DETAILS

The Hamilton Public Library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to enjoy the Library's programs, collections, services and spaces. Library staff work to engage children, families and teens in positive ways, and provide support while they are in the Library. All members are expected to abide by the library's [Member and Service Commitment](#) [1]. Staff and members share a commitment to maintain a pleasant, safe and respectful environment for learning and leisure, together we will create the opportunity for everyone to use the Library.

The Hamilton Public Library Board endorses the Ontario Library Association's statements on Children's and Teens' Rights in the Public Library. Library staff are trained to assist children in using the Library but cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the building. Library policies and services are designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for customers 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.

Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/legal guardian or an assigned caregiver. The Library recognizes the following terms as stipulated in the [Ontario Child and Family Services Act \(CFSA\)](#) [2] with regard to the supervision of children:

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."

Library staff are obligated by the [Ontario Child and Family Services Act](#) [3] to call the Police or the Hamilton Children's Aid Society if they have any concerns about the safety and well-being of a child.

General Guidelines

Children under the age of 10 should 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 10 minutes after closing, staff will notify the police.

Custodial guardians must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the library with a responsible caregiver. Parents or caregivers are responsible for supervising their child's access to all library resources including the Internet and Digital Media Lab 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. We ask that parents or caregivers who do not attend a program with the child under the age

of 10 must remain on the premises. Library staff may request that a parent or caregiver be present to sign a child in and out of a program.

Children ages 10 and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behaviour of any children while in the library.

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 will intervene when they become aware that a child in the Library is in these, or similar situations:

- A child is alone and 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 left alone at the library at closing time.

Requests for information regarding Truant Children

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.

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.

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. In the case of a missing child, Library staff connect with the library's Senior Leadership Team to share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

Phone Numbers

Children's Aid Society: 905-522-1121 or 905-522-8053 (after hours)

Catholic Children's Aid Society: 905-525-2012 or 905-522-8053 (after hours)
Hamilton Police Service: 905-546-4925 (non-emergency line)

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [1] <https://www.hpl.ca/articles/member-service-commitment>
- [2] <http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90c11#BK132>
- [3] http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90c11_e.htm

APPROVAL HISTORY

Replaced the Unattended Children Policy – June 1995; April 2001; September 2015