

UNATTENDED AND MISSING CHILD POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the responsibilities of Library staff as well as of parents/caregivers for the safety and supervision of children under the age of 16 in the Library.

Policy statement

In accordance with the *Ontario Child and Family Services Act, RSO 1990*, parents or legal guardians are responsible for providing supervision that is reasonable in the circumstances.

Primary responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the Library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with Library personnel.

Responsibilities of parents:

1. Children under the age of 10 must remain in the company of a parent or a responsible caregiver while in the library. If the child is attending a library program, a parent/caregiver must remain in the building and be available to greet the child as he/she leaves the program.
2. Children ages 10 to 15 must be provided with supervision that is reasonable in the circumstances, **taking into consideration the age and needs of the child, the length of time the child is left unattended, and provision for the child and parent to remain in contact independent of Library staff intervention.**

Responsibilities of staff:

1. If staff become aware of a concern related to an unattended child under the age of 16, they shall take the following steps:
 - a. **Make inquiries of the child and/or parents to explain this policy and to determine if supervision is reasonable in the circumstances. (if the public address system is used, the child's name should be avoided if possible).**
 - b. **If there is still a concern or doubt, make a report to the York Region Children's Aid Society.**
 - c. If the child is in immediate need of protection, contact police;
 - d. **If necessary, remain with the child until he/she is safe.**
2. If a child is discovered unattended at closing time and does not have a safe way to return home, staff must inquire about arrangements for safe travel home, contacting police if the wait is longer than 15 minutes.
3. **If staff are informed by a parent/caregiver that a child is missing and is thought to be in the library, staff shall take steps to assist in locating the child. These steps may include:**
 - a. **Assisting the parent/caregiver in searching for the child on library property only;**
 - b. **Using the public address system, refraining from using the child's full name if possible;**
 - c. **Assisting the parent/caregiver in contacting police;**
 - d. **Consulting library security video to investigate the whereabouts of the child. Under no circumstances shall any person other than authorized staff or police view security video.**
4. Under no circumstances shall staff provide transportation to any child, parent, or caregiver.
5. Staff must document any incident related to an unattended or missing child.