

Niagara Falls Public Library	Date Effected June 20, 2018	Child and Youth Safety Policy

Purpose

The Niagara Falls Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for children. This policy explains the expectations for caregiver supervision while visiting the Library. This policy also contains guidelines for Library staff to follow when they are confronted with a situation where a child's security is at risk or a child's conduct is unacceptable.

Definitions

Caregiver means parent, guardian or other individual, 12 years old or older, to whom the parent has given responsibility for the care of the younger child while at the Niagara Falls Public Library.

Competency means the ability of the child to accept social cues, be responsible for their own functions and behaviour, and accept the direction of staff.

Unattended means a child left without visible supervision by a caregiver within the Niagara Falls Public Library.

Responsibility of Caregivers

1. It is the responsibility of the caregiver to monitor both the whereabouts and behaviour of children in their care on Library premises.

The Library is governed by the terms of the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act 2017, S.O. 2017, c 14, Sched. 1 with regard to the supervision of children, specifically:

Section 136 (3) "No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances."

2. Children who are 7 years of age or under must be accompanied by a caregiver while on Library premises. A caregiver for a child 7 years or younger must be 12 years of age or older.

3. Children who are 7 years of age or under attending Library programs or events must have a caregiver present in the Library. Where Library programs or events are held outside of the Library building, the caregiver must remain within visual range of children.

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4. Children who are 8 to 11 years of age may use the library unattended for an amount of time that is appropriate for their age and maturity. They will be assessed by Library staff for their competency related to being unsupervised in the Library.

Some signs that indicate that a child might not be competent to be on their own are:

- Crying or acting frightened
- Acting in a manner that may be harmful to themselves or others
- Unwillingness to change their behaviour
- Inability to follow direction from staff
- Seeking ongoing attention from Library staff due to loneliness

Staff will advise caregivers if their child appears to need assistance while on the premises.

5. Teens, 12 years of age and older, may use the library independently, but parents are still responsible for the behaviour of any children under the age of 16 while in the Library.

6. The Library may require children who are in chronic violation of the Library's Code of Conduct and procedures, in spite of repeated warnings, to be accompanied by a parent or caregiver during library visits for a period to be determined by management.

7. The Library may ban 10 to 16 year olds who repeatedly violate the Library's Code of Conduct for a period to be determined by management, and their caregivers will be informed.

Responsibility of Library Staff

Unattended Children

Library staff will implement the procedure for dealing with unattended children in these and similar situations:

- A child under 7 is unattended in the Library.
- An unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library.
- An unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself.
- Another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child.
- An unattended child is not following the Library Code of Conduct and procedures after reasonable warnings.
- An unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time.
- A child is consistently left on his or her own in the library for long periods of time.

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Where a caregiver cannot be contacted, Library staff will:

- Not leave a child unattended at closing time
- Not give the child a ride home
- Contact Niagara Regional Police or Family and Children’s Services Niagara (FACS)
- Remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection.

Requests for Information Regarding Truant Children

As a public building, the Library does not monitor the activities of its clients unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above. If a school child is noticed spending considerable time in the Library during a school day, staff may check with the child to ask that a parent confirm with the Library that the parent is aware of the child’s whereabouts.

Requests for Information Regarding Missing Children/Runaways

Staff will not give information to any person over the phone as to whether a minor is currently in the Library or has been in recently. If the situation seems to be serious, staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. If there is an active police investigation, staff will cooperate with the police in helping to locate a missing minor.

Duty to Report

The Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act 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 an obligation to report promptly to FACS if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 is or may be in need of protection.

The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 16 years. Someone who is concerned that a 16 or 17 year old is, or may be in need of protection, may make a report to FACS, but are not required to do so. In turn, FACS must assess the reported information.

When staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will advise Library management and together they will promptly report the suspicion, and the information upon which it is based, to FACS, as stated in the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, s.125(1).