Unattended Children Policy

Policy Number: 18-14
Policy Approval Date: February 8, 2022
Policy Review Date: February 2026

Definitions

Library: Huntsville Public Library

Parents: parents, legal guardians and caregivers.

Policy

The Huntsville 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, teens and families in positive ways, and provide support while they are in the Library. All users are expected to abide by the Huntsville Public Library's Code of Conduct. Staff and users 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 Huntsville 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 space for users 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) with regard to the supervision of children:

Section 79(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."

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 to call the Police or the Huntsville office of Simcoe Muskoka Family Connections if they have any concerns about the safety and well-being of a child.

General Guidelines

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 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.

Parents 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 Creativity & Exploration Hub technologies. 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 users unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above.

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 will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

Phone Numbers

Simcoe Muskoka Family Connections:

Huntsville Office: (705) 789-8866

Muskoka: 1-800-680-4426

Huntsville OPP: 1-888-310-1122

Related Documents

Children & Youth Services Policy
Library Code of Conduct
Membership Policy
OLA's Position on Children's Rights in the Library
OLA's Position on Teens' Rights
Ontario Child and Family Services Act
Privacy Policy
Procedures | Unattended Children
Programming & Outreach Policy
Simcoe Muskoka Family Connections – Leaving Your Child Home Alone
Technology @ HPL Policy

History

Approved by the Huntsville Public Library February 12, 2018 | Motion 18-14.
Motion 15-35 | April 13, 2015.
Motion11-54 | November 16, 2011.