

NORTH PERTH PUBLIC LIBRARY

Operational Policy

OP-07 Unattended Children



POLICY PURPOSE

The North Perth Public Library (NPPL) staff does not assume responsibility for children left unattended within our facilities. The NPPL upholds the *Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, S.O. 2017 c14 Section 136(3)*, which requires that a person responsible for a child of less than sixteen years of age must provide for supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.

This policy outlines the responsibilities caregivers have over children and the responsibilities NPPL staff maintain so that children will be safe in the public spaces the library creates.

KEY POINTS SUMMARY

- Caregivers are accountable for supervising children up to 16 years of age within the library premises.
- Library staff refer to this policy when dealing with unattended children who may be at risk and will take appropriate steps via internal reporting procedures.
- This policy reinforces the legal obligation under the CYFSA for all individuals, including library staff, to report any suspicions of a child under 16 in need of protection to ensure the child's safety.

DEFINITIONS

“Caregiver” refers to any person that cares for a child including: parents, relatives, babysitters, legal guardians, etc.

“Reasonable grounds” refers to the information that the average person, using normal and honest judgment, would need in order to decide to report.

“Child in need of protection” includes physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm as defined by the CYSA.

POLICY DETAILS

Responsibilities of Caregiver(s)

Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the Library ultimately rests with the caregiver(s).

- The library expects the caregiver(s):
 - to supervise children under their care while on library premises.
 - to be responsible for borrowed materials and fees/fines incurred by children up to the age of 16 under their care.
 - monitor the use of the internet by children under their care as per *OP-06 Acceptable Use Policy*.
- In this Library:
 - Children ages ten (10) and over are welcome to use the Library independently on a regular basis, but caregiver(s) are responsible for the behavior of any children up to the age of 16;
 - Children younger than ten (10) must be accompanied by an adult while in the Library;
 - Caregiver(s) must remain in the library building if child(ren) aged 10 and under are in a program supervised by staff.

Responsibilities of Staff

- The Library staff members will look to this policy when:
 - an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library;
 - an unattended child is perceived to be endangering themselves or others;
 - another person in the Library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child;
 - an unattended child exhibits specifically inappropriate behaviour;
 - an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time;
 - a child is consistently left on their own in the Library for long periods of time.
 - To report according to the Duty to Report and to follow internal reporting structure.
- If cases where staff confirm that reasonable care has not been provided for a child, staff will attempt to contact the caregiver(s).
- 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 local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS);
 - remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection;
 - report this occurrence to the CEO.

Duty to Report

- The *Child, Youth and Family Services Act (Section 125)* recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children.
- **Who has a duty to report:** 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 youth under the age of 16 is, or may be, in need of protection.

- Library staff who are concerned that a 16-or 17-year-old is, or may be, in need of protection may make a report to Children's Aid Society (CAS) and the CAS 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 will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS as required in *CYFSA s.136 (1)*. Staff will follow internal standard operating procedures to communicate to the appropriate parties (CEO, Manager of Branch Experience).

Resources

- Huron-Perth Children's Aid Society: 1-800-668-5094
- Ontario Provincial Police Perth
- Detachment – Listowel Office: 519-291-1414 or 1-888-310-1122 (non-emergency lines)

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- OP-04 Confidentiality and the Protection of Privacy
- OP-05 Code of Conduct

SCOPE

This policy applies and affects the NPPL Board, staff, patrons and volunteers.

Approved by the Library Board: October 10, 2024

Revised: Sept 2013, June 2018, Aug 2021, May 2025, September 2025