



Woodstock Public Library Policy

Policy Name: **Safety of Children in the Library**

Category: **Library Services**

Version: **11 March 2025**

POLICY STATEMENT

The Woodstock Public Library recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive, and safe environment when they visit the library. As a public facility, the Library does not monitor the activities of its patrons unless there is a problem with conduct as outlined in the Public Code of Conduct, or a child is left unattended as outlined in this policy.

POLICY, PROCEDURE AND IMPLEMENTATION

1.0 Responsibility of the Parent or Caregiver

- 1.1 Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
- 1.2 The Library staff cannot assume responsibility for the safety, care, or supervision of children of any age, at any time, whether in the library or on library premises.
- 1.3 The Library is guided by the terms in the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA) with regards to unattended children.
 - a) Section 136 (3) “**Leaving child unattended** (3) No person having charge of a child younger than 16 shall leave the child without making provision for the child’s supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.”

This legislation does not specify an age at which a child can be left alone, rather the legislation sets out to protect young people from any type of abuse or neglect and requires that all parents and caregivers must make reasonable plans (which will vary according to a child’s age, maturity, and circumstances) for the supervision of young people under 16 in their care.

- 1.4 To this end, the Library expects parents, caregivers, and teachers to:

- a) not leave children under 16, requiring supervision, to be unattended in or about library premises,
- b) monitor the use of services by children under their care,
- c) be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care.

1.5 In the Library:

- a) Children aged twelve and older are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents or caregivers are still responsible for the behaviour of any child up to age 16 while they are in the library.
- b) Children younger than 12 should be accompanied by an adult while in the library.

2.0 Responsibilities of Staff

2.1 Library staff will be guided by this policy in situations where:

- a) an unattended child is alone, visibly upset, or ill,
- b) an unattended child under the age of 12 is left alone with younger siblings,
- c) an unattended child is perceived to be endangering themselves or others,
- d) another person in the library poses a perceived threat to an unattended child,
- e) an unattended child exhibits inappropriate behaviour,
- f) an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time,
- g) a child is consistently left on their own in the library for long periods of time.

2.2 Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, Library staff will:

- a) not leave a child unattended at closing time,
- b) not give the child a ride home,
- c) contact local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS),
- d) remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection.

3.0 Requests for Information Regarding Children

3.1 Library staff will cooperate with police or other authorities in helping to locate a missing child, or in an AMBER ALERT situation.

- 3.2 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. Staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back.

4.0 Duty to Report

- 4.1 The **Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA)** (Section 125) 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 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. The CYFSA defines the phrase "child in need of protection" as including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm.
- 4.2 As outlined in the CYFSA (Section 125 (4)), 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.
- 4.3 When Library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection, they will advise the Library CEO or designate, and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as required in CYFSA s.136 (1).

RELATED DOCUMENTS AND POLICIES

Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act, S.O. 2017, CHAPTER C.14, sections 74, 84 (1), 125, 136 (3).

Woodstock Public Library – Patron Code of Conduct Policy

Woodstock Public Library – Internet Services and Technology Policy

Woodstock Public Library – Procedure – Safety of Children in the Library

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