

Safety and Wellbeing of Children and Youth Policy

Policy Number:	PS-007
Policy Category:	Public Service
Approved by:	OPL Board
Accountability:	CEO or Designate
Approval Date:	June 19, 2025
Effective date:	June 20, 2025
Next Review Date:	2028
Supersedes:	

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the rights of children and youth in Ontario public libraries are protected, and that parents/guardians or caregivers understand their responsibility to provide supervision and care for their children while accessing library programs, collections, services and spaces.

Library staff work to engage children, families and teens in positive ways, and to provide support while in library spaces and while attending library events or programs both in-person and virtually. All customers are expected to abide by the library's [Customer Code of Conduct](#).

Scope:

This policy applies to children and youth under the age of 18 anywhere the library conducts business, whether on library or Town property, in other community spaces and virtually through our website, digital platforms or social media channels.

Policy Statement:

Oakville Public Library (OPL) is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for customers of all ages to enjoy the library's programs, collections, services and spaces.

This policy aligns with the principles of universal and equitable access and is supported by OPL's [Intellectual Freedom Policy](#) and [Inclusion Policy](#).

Rights of Children and Youth

OPL endorses the Ontario Library Association's position statements on [Children's Rights in the Library \(1998\)](#) and [Teens' Rights \(June 2010\)](#).

Children in Ontario public libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom, that is, an environment that supports intellectual curiosity and enquiry and champions intellectual freedom as the prerequisite for an informed, democratic society.
2. Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
3. A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
4. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
7. Welcoming, respectful, and supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
8. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of children's services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

Teens ("Youth") in Ontario public libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom, that is, free access to library resources and information sources, and respect for the right to select materials appropriate to their needs without censorship.
2. Equal access to the full range of materials, services, and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their unique needs.
3. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
4. Collections that specifically meet the needs of teens.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service at every service point.
7. Library programs and services appropriate for teens.
8. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in teen services.
9. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of teen services.
10. Library policies written to include the needs of the youth.

Responsibility for Supervision and Care

Parents/guardians and caregivers are responsible for the supervision and care of their children when accessing library programs, collections, services and spaces.

In accordance with the [Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#), parents/guardians or caregivers must provide supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances.

Library staff will promptly respond to all concerns or issues regarding children and will endeavour to address those concerns directly with the parent/guardian or caregiver. Children requiring direct supervision should not be left unattended on library premises. If there are serious concerns and the parent/guardian or caregiver cannot be located or contacted, the library may contact the Halton Regional Police Service.

Library staff can assist children and youth, but staff cannot assume responsibility for their supervision or care, or for enforcing any restrictions a parent/guardian and caregiver may place on a child's use of library programs, collections, services, and spaces, including the use of technology and equipment.

Duty to Report

The [Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#) outlines 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 legal obligation to report promptly to a Children's Aid Society (CAS) if they suspect a child or youth under the age of 18 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 18 years old.

When library staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or youth is, or may be, in need of protection, they have the authority to report the concern to the local CAS as stated in [Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#) (Section 125).

Requests for Information Regarding Children

As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its customers of any age unless there is an issue with their conduct. OPL respects the privacy of all its customers in accordance with the [Customer Privacy Policy](#).

Staff will not give information to any person over the phone as to whether a child is currently in the library or has been in the library recently. Information will be shared with law enforcement agencies as required.

Definitions:

Child (or Children) refers to all persons age 12 or younger.

Parent refers to a person who is either the natural, adoptive or foster parent of a child.

Guardian refers to a person with legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child.

Caregiver is anyone (commonly age 12 or older) to whom the parent/guardian has given responsibility for the supervision and care of the child.

Unattended child refers to a child left without visible supervision by a parent, guardian or caregiver. Visible supervision is defined as the parent, guardian or caregiver being in the library and aware of the child's whereabouts and actions.

Youth (or Teen) refers to all persons who are between the ages of 13 and 17.

Related Documents:

- [Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, C. 14, Sched. 1](#)
- [OLA's Position on Children's Rights in the Library](#)
- [OLA's Position on Teens' Rights in the Public Library](#)
- [Customer Code of Conduct Policy](#)
- [Internet Access and Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- [Customer Privacy Policy](#)
- [Intellectual Freedom Policy](#)
- [Inclusion Policy](#)