

Trent Lakes Public Library



Policy Type:	Operational	Policy Number:	OP-10
Policy Title:	Children in the Library Policy	Initial Policy Approval Date:	October 2019
		Last Review/Revision Date:	
		Year of Next Review:	2024

The Trent Lakes Public Library recognizes that the needs of children are important in their own right: that their intellectual growth, their cultural appreciation, and recreational activities should be fostered through quality library service, delivered with consideration and respect. This policy sets out the services to be offered for children and their caregivers in the library. This policy also sets out the responsibilities for the safety and supervision of children in the library.

The Trent Lakes Public Library endeavours to provide this service based on the principles stated in the Ontario Library Association's *Children's Rights in the Public Library, 1998*. See Appendix A.

Section 1: Services

1. Collections:

- a) The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will ensure the maintenance and organization of a comprehensive collection of materials for and about children, based on the Collection Development Policy OP-04.
- b) The collections for children will meet high standards of quality and reflect the changing educational needs and personal interests of children and teens as well as trends in society.
- c) The staff will develop profiles of the collections to define the scope and to address the issues of:
 - i. Canadian authors and content
 - ii. award-winning titles
 - iii. non-fiction material that complement the local school curriculum
 - iv. age appropriate formats
 - v. diversity and inclusion
- d) Access to teen and adult materials in the library will not be restricted by library staff but will be the responsibility of caregivers to determine suitability for their child.

2. Reference and Readers Advisory

- a) Library staff will utilize the full range of library collections, technology, and resources to answer all users' requests for advice on selecting books and for information, regardless of age and without judgment, with confidentiality and respect.
- b) Library staff should engage in meaningful and age-appropriate conversation to better understand what each child wants and needs.
- c) Library staff will point out the variety of resources available in all areas of the library as appropriate.

OP-10 Children in the Library Policy (continued)

3. Programs and Partnerships

- a) The library will provide programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, to stimulate creative potential and to encourage and facilitate the habit of reading, independent learning and use of the library.
- b) The library will provide educational, entertaining and literature related programs and support for children, such as:
 - i. programs for parents/guardians, adults, caregivers that will educate them on the importance of early literacy, the role of the library in their children's lives, and the support the library can offer them.
 - ii. programs for classes, children's groups, daycares, etc., depending on age, that will emphasize early literacy and library orientation, and that encourage reading for leisure, or highlight various aspects of the collection.
 - iii. programs for summer, school breaks and professional development days that will be primarily book based and will highlight various aspects of our collection while encouraging reading for pleasure or leisure activities.
- a) The number of participants for all programs will be restricted based on size of the facility, fire department limits, staff capacity and resources, etc. and may result in requirements to pre-register for a program.
- b) Some programs may limit the age of children and the number of children per accompanying adult. This limit may be enforced by the staff as the program is designed for maximum benefit to the child/caregiver through one on one interaction. Leniency is given to parents of more than one child.

Section 2: Library Space

1. The library will provide a well-planned area for children that is distinct from the adult area with signage that is clear and age-appropriate
2. These areas should be visually stimulating so that children are able to readily distinguish their own space from the rest of the library.
3. These areas will have furniture, shelves and equipment that are designed for and accessible to all children.
4. The area for children is an interactive learning environment where controlled noise levels are tolerated and where young users are invited to explore the library materials and services in their own way.

Section 3: Staffing

1. The board will support a program of ongoing staff training and professional development in children's services.
2. The CEO will ensure that all staff members assigned to children's services receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library service.
3. The library staff will advocate for children's services in the community by:
 - a) collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy, love of reading, life long learning and children's well-being
 - b) seeking support for children's services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, etc.
 - c) networking with other agencies who provide service to children in the community, region and province
 - d) communicating with principals, teacher librarians and teachers in the community
 - e) promoting the children's services and collections to groups who could benefit from them (schools, daycares, etc.)
4. While library staff will assist children with finding materials, using the Internet or attending programs, caregivers are responsible for their children's use of the library and suitability of materials borrowed.

OP-10 Children in the Library Policy (continued)

Section 4: Safety of Children in the Library

The Trent Lakes Public Library recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the library. However, the library is a busy public place and library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facility. As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its patrons unless there is a problem with conduct as outlined in OP-03 *Code of Conduct*, or a child is left unattended as outlined in OP-10 *Children in the Library*.

1. Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver

- a) Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
- b) The library is guided by the terms in the Ontario *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (CYFSA) with regards to unattended children.
 - 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.

- c) To this end, the library expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:
 - i. not leave children under 16, requiring supervision, to be unattended in or about library premises.
 - ii. monitor the use of services by children under their care.
 - iii. be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care.
- d) In this library:
 - I. Children ages twelve and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents or caregivers are still responsible for the behavior of any children to 16 while they are in the Library.
 - II. Children younger than 12 should be accompanied by an adult while in the Library.

2: Responsibility of Staff

- a) The library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations, where:
 - i. an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library.
 - ii. an unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself or others.
 - iii. another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child.
 - iv. an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour.
 - v. an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time.
 - vi. a child is consistently left on his or her own in the library for long periods of time.
- b) Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, library staff will:
 - i. not leave a child unattended at closing time.
 - ii. not give the child a ride home.
 - iii. contact local police or Children’s Aid Society (CAS).
 - iv. remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection.

OP-10 Children in the Library Policy (continued)

Section 4: Safety of Children in the Library (continued)

3: Duty to Report

- a) The *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (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.
- b) 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
- c) 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 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

Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. S.O. 2017, CHAPTER C.14, sections 74, 84 (1), 125, 136 (3).
Trent Lakes Public Library **OP – 03 Code of Conduct**
Trent Lakes Public Library **OP – 04 Collection Development Policy**
Trent Lakes Public Library **OP – 07 Internet Services Policy**
Trent Lakes Public Library **OP – 12 Circulation Policy**

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Appendix A – Ontario Library Association - Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library

OLA Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom
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, 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.