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Latest Revision May 5, 2016	Reviewed Annually in January	Point of Contact Kathy Williams, Director of Public Services

Child Conduct and Safety in the Library

Policy Statement

The Pickering Public Library welcomes children. Library staff are trained to assist children in using the library but they cannot accept responsibility for their safety and supervision. Each of our library branches are public buildings with all the inherent dangers of such a setting. Library policies and services are designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for clients 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.

This policy also contains guidelines for Library staff to follow when they are confronted with a situation where a child's conduct is unacceptable or a child's security is at risk.

Definitions

In this policy:

- a child means a person under sixteen years of age, unless otherwise specified.
- a parent is any person who is either the natural, adoptive or foster parent of the child.
- a caregiver is anyone over 12 years of age, to whom the parent has given responsibility for the care of the younger child.

Policy Principles

Parents must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the library with a responsible caregiver who is present at all times.

Children under 10 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity, unless they are participating in a library program where the parent's presence is not requested or required.

Parents or caregivers who do not attend a program with the child under 10 years of age must remain on the premises.

Children 10 to 11 years may use the library unattended for an amount of time that is appropriate for their age and maturity.

Teenagers, age 12 and up, may use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behaviour of any children under the age of 16 while in the library.

The library may require children, 12 and under, who are in chronic violation of library rules in spite of repeated warnings to be accompanied by a parent or caregiver during library visits for a period to be determined by management.

The library may ban 10 to 16 year olds who repeatedly violate library rules for a period to be determined by management, and their parents/caregivers will be informed.

UNATTENDED CHILDREN

Library staff will implement the procedure for dealing with unattended children in these and similar situations:

- a child is alone or frightened or crying in the library.
- a child under 10 is alone or unattended in the library.
- 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 the library rules after reasonable warnings.
- a child is left alone at the library closing time.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION REGARDING TRUANT CHILDREN

As a public facility, the Library does not monitor the activities of its clients unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above. If a school child is noticed spending considerable time in the branch during a school day, staff may check with the child to ask that a parent confirm with the library that the parent is aware of the child's whereabouts.

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION REGARDING MISSING CHILDREN/ RUNAWAYS

Staff will not give information to any person over the phone as to whether a minor is currently in the library or has been in recently. If the situation seems to be serious, staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. If there is an active police investigation, library staff will cooperate with the police in helping to locate a missing minor.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

The library is governed by the terms in the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) with regards to supervision of children. Specifically:

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.”

The library staff will be guided by this policy in situations, where:

- an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library
- an unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself
- another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
- an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
- an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time
- a child is consistently left on his or her own in the library for long periods of time.

Where a responsible adult 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

For further information please contact Kathy Williams at kathyw@picnet.org or 905-831-6265 extension 6251.

Alternate formats available upon request. Please talk to Library staff.