



POICY PURPOSE

The North Perth Public Library recognizes that the needs of children and teens/young adults are important in their own right; that their intellectual growth, 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 teens/young adults in the library, as well as related responsibilities for the safety of minors in the library.

The library endeavours to provide this service based on the principles stated in the Ontario Library Association's (OLA) *Children's Right in the Public Library*, 1998 (Appendix A), and *Teen Rights in the Public Library* (as adopted at the OLA Annual General Meeting June 2010).

DEFINITIONS

Library is defined as the North Perth Public Library.

Branch/Branches are defined as one or more of the North Perth Public Library branches.

Board is defined as the governing board for the North Perth Public Library.

CEO is defined as the Chief Executive Officer for the North Perth Public Library.

Child/Children is defined as any person under the age of 12.

Teen/Young Adult is defined as any person between the ages of 12 and 18.

Minor is defined as any person under the age of 18.

SERVICES

1. Collections:

1. The CEO will ensure the maintenance and organization of a comprehensive collection of materials for and about children, and for and about teens/young adults, based on *OP-04 Collection Development Policy*.
2. The collections for children and teens/young adults will meet the best standards of quality and reflect the changing educational needs and personal interests of children and teens/young adults.
3. Collection development for children's materials will focus on, but not be limited to:
 1. Canadian authors and content,
 2. Award-winning titles,
 3. Non-fiction materials that complement the local school curriculum,
 4. Age-appropriate formats, and
 5. Diversity and inclusion.
4. Access to teen/young adult and adult materials in the library will not be restricted by library staff but will be the responsibility of the caregivers to determine suitability for their child.

2. Reference and Reader's Advisory:

1. Library staff will utilize a 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.
2. Library staff should engage in meaningful and age-appropriate conversation to better understand what each child or teen/young adult wants and needs.
3. Library staff will point out the variety of resources available in all areas of the library as appropriate to the users' request.

3. Programs and Partnerships:

1. The library will provide programming for children and caregivers, and teens/young adults, both in and out of the library, to stimulate creative potential and to encourage and facilitate the habit of reading, independent learning, and lifelong use of the library. Programs will adhere to the guidelines set out in *OP-11 Programming*.
2. The library will provide educational, entertaining, and literacy related programs and support for children and teens/young adults, such as:
 1. Programs for parents/guardians, adults, and 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.
 2. Programs for elementary and high school classes, children's groups, youth groups, daycares, camps, etc., depending on age, that will emphasize early literacy and library orientation,

and encourage reading for leisure, or highlighting various aspects of the collection.

3. Programs for summer, school breaks, and professional development days will be primarily literacy based and will highlight various aspects of the collection while encouraging reading for pleasure or leisure activities.
3. The number of participants for all programs will be restricted based on size of the facility, the fire department limits, staff capacity, and resources, etc., and may result in requirements to pre-register for a program.
4. Some programs may limit the age of minors and the number of children per accompanying adult. This limit may be enforced by staff as the program is designed for maximum benefit of the program participants through one-on-one interaction.

LIBRARY SPACE

1. The library should provide a well-planned area for children and teen/young adult area that is distinct from the adult area with signage that is clear and age appropriate.
2. The children's area should be visually stimulating so that children are able to readily distinguish their own space from the rest of the library. The teen/young adult area should have furniture, shelves, and equipment that are designed for teens/young adults, and which are fully accessible.
3. These areas will have furniture, shelves, and equipment that are designed for and accessible to all minors.

4. The area for children and teens/young adults is an interactive learning environment where controlled noise levels are tolerated and where minors are invited to explore the library's materials and services in their own way.

STAFFING

1. The Board will support ongoing staff training and professional development in children's and youth services.
2. The CEO will ensure that all staff members assigned to children's and youth services receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library services.
3. The library staff will advocate for children's and youth services in the community by:
 1. Collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy, love of reading, lifelong learning, and children's wellbeing.
 2. Collaborating with agencies to promote the love of reading, lifelong learning, and teen/young adult health and wellbeing.
 3. Seeking support for children's and teen/young adult services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, etc.
 4. Networking with other agencies who provide services to children and teen/young adults in the community, region, and province.
 5. Communicating with educators in the community.
 6. Promoting the children's and teen/young adult services and collections to groups who could benefit from them (elementary and high schools, daycares, youth groups, etc.).

4. While the library staff will assist minors with finding materials, using the internet, or attending programs, caregivers are responsible for their children's or teen's/young adult's use of the library and suitability of the borrowed materials.

SAFETY OF MINORS IN THE LIBRARY

The North Perth Public Library recognizes that people of all ages have a right to 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 *OP-05 Code of Conduct*, or a child is left unattended as outlined in *OP-07 Unattended Children*. There are specific situations which require specific guidance.

1. Missing Persons

1. Library staff will not give information to any person as to whether a person is currently in the library or has been in the library recently. Library staff may offer to take a message and ask the teen/young adult to call the person back. In the case of a missing person, library staff will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

2. Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver

1. Responsibility for the welfare and behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent, guardian, or an assigned caregiver.
2. The library is guided by the terms in the Ontario *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (CYFSA) with regard to unattended children. This legislation does not specify an age at which a child can be left alone, rather the legislation sets out to protect minors from any type of abuse or neglect and requires that all parents and caregivers must take

reasonable plans (which will vary according to the child's age, maturity, and circumstances) for the supervision of minors under 16 in their care.

1. Section 136 (3) "**Leaving child unattended** (3) No person having charge of a child younger than 16 shall leave the child alone without making provisions for the child's supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances."

3. To this end, the library expects parents, caregivers, and teachers to:

1. Not leave children under 16, requiring supervision, to be unattended in or about the library premises.
2. Monitor the use of services by children under their care.
3. Be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care.

4. In the library:

1. Children aged twelve (12) and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents or caregivers are still responsible for the behaviour of any children to 16 while they are in the library.
2. Children younger than 12 should be accompanied by an adult while in the library.

3. Responsibilities of Staff

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

1. An unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library.
2. An unattended child is perceived to be endangering themselves or others.
3. Another person in the library poses a perceived threat to an unattended child.
4. An unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour.
5. An unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time.
6. A child is consistently left on their own in the library for long periods of time.

2. Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, the library staff will:

1. Not leave a child unattended at closing time.
2. Not give the child a ride home.
3. Contact local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS).
4. Remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection.

4. Duty to Report

1. 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 teen/young adult 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, or risk of harm.

2. The 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.
3. When the 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

- OP-01 Collection Development Policy
- OP-02 Circulation
- OP-05 Code of Conduct
- OP-06 Acceptable Internet Use
- OP-07 Unattended Children
- OP-11 Programming
- Child, Youth and Family Services Act
- Children's Rights in the Public Library, 1998, Ontario Library Association

SCOPE

This policy applies to the North Perth Public Library Board, staff, patrons, and volunteers.

Approved by the Library Board:

Revised: June 2018, September 2021, October 2023, May 2026