

# Peterborough Public Library

## Unattended Children Policy



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**Approval:** Library Board

**Use:** Public

### 1. Purpose

The Peterborough Public Library provides a welcoming environment for children to enjoy Library programs, collections, services, and spaces. While the Library strives to offer a safe environment for everyone, parents/guardians or caregivers are responsible for the supervision of children in their care while on Library premises. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended at the Library.

This policy is guided by the terms outlined in Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act and informed by the Kawartha Haliburton Children's Aid Society.

### 2. Policy Objectives

The Peterborough Public Library's Unattended Children Policy aims to ensure the safety of children on Library premises and to clarify the responsibilities of staff, parents/guardians, and caregivers while enforcing the Library's Code of Conduct for all members and visitors, including children.

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1. **City:** Corporation of the City of Peterborough
- 3.2. **Caregiver:** Anyone twelve (12) years of age or older to whom the parent/guardian has given responsibility for the care of their child.
- 3.3. **Child/Children:** All persons aged zero to eleven (0 to 11) years.
- 3.4. **CYFSA:** Ontario's Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Schedule 1.
- 3.5. **Employee/ Staff:** Any full-time and part-time individuals hired by the City to work in the Library, including all contract, temporary, student, secondment, or co-operative placement persons.
- 3.6. **Library:** Peterborough Public Library
- 3.7. **Member:** A general member of the public, or visitor, who uses the Library's services. A member may or may not have a registered Library card.

3.8. **Parent/Guardian:** The person who has legal responsibility for a child.

3.9. **Unattended Child:** A child left without the supervision of a parent/guardian or caregiver.

#### **4. Scope**

This policy applies to all Library employees and members.

#### **5. Policy Principles**

As per the CYFSA, section 136, “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.”

The CYFSA does not specify an age at which a child can be left alone, rather it aims to protect young people from abuse and neglect and requires all parents/guardians and caregivers to make appropriate efforts for the supervision of young people in their care. This policy acknowledges that “appropriate efforts” vary according to the child’s age, maturity, and circumstances.

To this end, the Library expects parents/guardians and caregivers to:

- Not leave children nine (9) years and under unattended on Library premises
- Monitor the use of Library services by children under their care
- Be responsible for the behaviour of children under their care on Library premises

##### **5.1. Age Parameters**

###### **5.1.1. Children zero (0) to four (4) Years of Age**

Children four (4) years old and under should be accompanied by a parent/guardian or caregiver while on Library premises, including when participating in Library programs.

###### **5.1.2. Children Five (5) to Nine (9) Years of Age**

Children ages five (5) to nine (9) should be accompanied by a parent/guardian or caregiver unless participating in a program. Parents/guardians or caregivers should remain in the facility during a program in case an emergency arise and pick up their child(ren) at the end of the program.

### **5.1.3. Children Ten (10) and Older**

Children ages ten (10) and older are welcome to use the Library independently as long as they exhibit the ability to be responsible for their own behaviour by adhering to the Library's Code of Conduct.

Parents/guardians or caregivers are responsible for the behaviour of children under their care while on Library premises.

## **6. Procedures**

All Library members and visitors, including children, are expected to adhere to the Library's Code of Conduct. Library staff may contact the child's parent/guardian or caregiver if they are not adhering to the Library's Code of Conduct or if they appear to need assistance.

### **6.1. Responsibility of Library Staff**

Library staff may contact the parent/guardian or caregiver to ensure the well-being of a child in the following or similar situations:

- A child under the age of twelve (12) is left alone with younger children
- A child of any age is alone and is not following Library's Code of Conduct after reasonable reminders
- A child of any age who is or appears to be in distress, visible upset, ill, etc.

### **6.2. Unattended Children at Closing Time**

If a child is left at the Library at closing time, or in the event of an emergency, Library staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian or caregiver. If they cannot be contacted within 15-minutes, staff will notify the police.

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
- Not detain the child if they leave the Library
- Contact local police to ensure the health and safety of the child, when warranted
- Remain with the child until the parent/guardian or caregiver or proper authorities arrive

### **6.3. Request for Information about Children**

Staff will not give information to any person over the telephone regarding children on Library premises. Staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. In the case of a missing child, staff will inform management or directly contact police in the case of an emergency.

### **6.4. Duty to Report**

The CYFSA, section 125, recognizes that all adults have a responsibility for the welfare of children. Members of the public, including Library staff, have a legislated obligation to report to the Kawartha Haliburton Children's Aid Society (KHCAS) if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of sixteen (16), or may be, in need of protection.

It also applies to children subject to a child protection order who are sixteen (16) and seventeen (17) years of age.

The CYFSA defines "child in need of protection" as including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm.

When Library staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will promptly inform the KHCAS as stated in the CYFSA, section 72.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 7.1. The Peterborough Public Library Board is responsible for approving this policy.
- 7.2. The Director/CEO is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- 7.3. The Library Leadership Team is responsible for ensuring employees and volunteers have received training and are applying the policy equitably.
- 7.4. Employees and volunteers are responsible for applying the policy.

## **8. Accessibility**

The City and Library will use reasonable efforts to ensure its policies, procedures, and practices regarding the provision of goods and services to all residents, including people with disabilities, are consistent with the following principles:

- 8.1. Goods and services will be provided in a manner that respects the dignity and independence of all residents;
- 8.2. The provision of goods and services to people with disabilities will be integrated with conventional service unless an alternate measure is necessary, whether temporarily or on a permanent basis, to enable a

person with a disability to obtain, use, or benefit from City goods and services; and

- 8.3. All residents will be given an equal opportunity to obtain, use, and benefit from City goods and services.

## **9. Privacy and Confidentiality**

The Library protects the privacy and confidentiality of all members personal information in keeping with the access to information and privacy provisions of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56 (MFIPPA) and other applicable legislation.

The Library collects personal information of library members under the authority of section 23(4) of the Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.44, and personal information will only be used to administer services and programs at the Library.

## **10. Communications**

This policy will be distributed on the [Library's website](#) and made available, upon request, to any member of the public, in multiple formats suitable to the requestor.

## **11. Inquiries**

Inquiries regarding this policy should be directed to the Library Services Manager.

## **12. Related Documents**

- 12.1. Peterborough Public Library, Code of Conduct
- 12.2. Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched 1