

Chatham-Kent Public Library

Children's Services Policy

Purpose

The intention of this policy is to ensure that children accessing the materials, programs and services of Chatham-Kent Public Library (CKPL) are treated safely, consistently and fairly.

The Chatham-Kent Public Library Board and Staff are committed to providing the best possible services for children and fully endorse the "Children's Rights in the Public Library" statement adopted at the Ontario Library Association's Annual General Meeting, November 1998 (Appendix 1)

Statement of Philosophy

The policy upholds CKPL's long held core value of providing an accessible, inclusive, comfortable and welcoming environment for all ages.

CKPL welcomes children to enjoy its programs and services. Library staff are trained to assist children in using the library; however, parents are responsible for their children's safety and supervision while in the library. The library is a public building with all the inherent risks of such a setting.

Library policies are designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for library users of all ages. Parents/guardians should use the same precautions with their children at the library as they would in any other public setting.

Safety

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide library staff with guidelines when confronted with a situation where a child's conduct is unacceptable or a child's safety is at risk.

Policy Statement

Responsibility for the behaviour and well-being of any child who uses the library rests solely with the parent (or with the guardian/caregiver assigned by the parent).

All patrons, including children, are expected to behave in a manner that is appropriate to the atmosphere in the building for all patrons. (Please refer to CKPL's Code of Conduct).

Responsibility of the Parent/Guardian

CKPL requests Parents/Guardians:

1. Not leave children that require supervision unattended in or about library premises

2. Monitor the use of services and collections by children under their care
3. Be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care

Responsibility of Library Staff

Library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations where:

1. A child is found frightened or crying in the library
2. A child is perceived to be endangering her/himself
3. Another person in the library poses a perceived threat to a child
4. A child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour as outlined in CKPL's Code of Conduct
5. A child is not met by a responsible caregiver at library closing time
6. A child is consistently left on her own in the library for long periods of time

Library staff members will first attempt to locate the parent/guardian to alert them of the situation.

When a child's behaviours or actions are not appropriate, library staff will inform parents of the library policies.

Where a parent or guardian cannot be contacted, 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
4. Remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

Duty to Report

The Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. Members of the public, including professionals who work with children, have an obligation to report if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 may be in need of protection.

When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will advise CEO/Chief Librarian and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local Children's Aid Society, as stated in the CFSA s.72 (1).

Appendix 1

“Rights of Children in the Public Library” as set out by the Ontario Library Association, November 1998:

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’ services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

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For more information or alternative formats of this document, please email cklibrary@chatham-kent.ca.