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Policy Type:	Operational	Policy Number: <b>OP – 13</b>
Policy Title:	<b>Unattended Children Policy</b>	
Previous versions:	August 23, 2012	
Last review/revision date:	November 26, 2020	Next review due: 2025

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## ***OP – 13 Unattended Children Policy***

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of children and define responsibility for their welfare while they are in the Hanover Public Library (the library).

### **Policy Statement:**

The library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to use its facilities and services. Library staff will not monitor, censor or restrict children’s use of materials and services offered in the library. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the building.

### **Definitions:**

“caregiver” means a person assigned by the parent or guardian of a child to be responsible for the child’s care, well-being, safety and supervision. Such a person could include, but is not limited to, the child’s teacher or tutor.

“child” means a person under the age of 16 years.

“parent” or “guardian” means a person who is directly responsible for the care, well-being, safety and supervision of a child.

“unattended” means a child without visible supervision by the child’s parent, guardian or caregiver.

### **Responsibilities:**

Responsibility for the welfare and behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the respective parents, guardians or caregivers. Library staff cannot supervise children nor act as substitute caregivers.

Parents, guardians and caregivers should be aware that the library is a community facility with all the inherent dangers of any public building and make appropriate provision for the child’s safety.

It is especially vital whenever there is a crisis situation, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic, for children to be closely supervised while in the library and while using library materials. Parents, guardians and caregivers are responsible for keeping children safe from risks related to their health and safety.

Children under the age of 6 must have a parent, guardian or caregiver with them at all times, including when participating in a registered library programme.

Children aged 6 to 9 must have a parent, guardian or caregiver with them at all times, except when participating in a registered library programme.

Parents, guardians or caregivers are required to follow sign in/sign out procedures, respectively, at the beginning and end of a registered library programme.

Children aged 10 and older (that is, under 16) are welcome to use the library independently, although parents, guardians and caregivers are still responsible for their care and behaviour.

If a child is unattended, library staff will intervene in any one or more of the following, or similar, circumstances:

- the child is, or is perceived to be, frightened, or is crying;
- the child is, or is perceived to be, endangering themselves or others;
- a person poses a perceived threat to the unattended child;
- the child is not following library rules after reasonable warnings;
- the child is not met by the child's parent, guardian or caregiver at closing time.

Further, if a child is unattended, library staff will do one or more of the following:

- speak with the child and assess the situation;
- attempt to locate in the building the child's parent, guardian or caregiver;
- attempt to contact the child's parent, guardian or caregiver to pick up the child if the parent, guardian or caregiver is not in the building. This policy will be explained to the child's parent, guardian or caregiver;
- inform other staff members about the situation;
- contact the local police service if the child's parent, guardian or caregiver cannot be contacted within a reasonable amount of time.

### **Related Documents:**

Hanover Public Library. *OP--12 - Children and Youth Services*

Hanover Public Library. *OP-02 - Code of Conduct*