
Policy Type:	Operational	Policy Number: OP – 13
Policy Title:	Unattended Children Policy	
Previous versions:	2012, 2020, 2021	
Last review/revision date:	November 15, 2024	Next review due: 2028

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 between the ages of 0-12 years.

Parent or *Guardian* means a person who is directly responsible for the care, well-being, safety and supervision of their child or teen (in the case of a parent) or of a child or teen who is their ward (in the case of a guardian).

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 provisions for the child’s safety.

Children should 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 program.

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

Children aged 10 and older 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, in distress;
- the child is, or is perceived to be, endangering themselves or others;
- another person poses a perceived threat to the unattended child;
- the child is not following library rules after reasonable warnings;
- the child is expecting to be met at closing time by a parent, guardian or caregiver who has not arrived.

Further, to the above paragraph, 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 the child's parent, guardian or caregiver within the building;
- attempt to contact the child's parent, guardian or caregiver to pick the child up if the parent, guardian or caregiver is not in the building. This policy will then 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.

Duty to Report

The library will comply with the provisions of the *Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017* (the Act). Under section 125 of the Act, every person has a responsibility for the welfare of children. Under that section, members of the public, including professionals who work with children, have a legislated obligation to report promptly to the Children's Aid Society (the CAS) if they suspect that a youth aged 18 or less, is or may be, in need of protection. Under the Act, a child in need of protection includes, but is not limited to, a child who is suspected of having suffered physical harm or emotional harm, is suspected of having been sexually abused or sexually exploited or is suspected of being subjected to neglect or risk of harm. For the purposes of section 2 (1) of the Act, *child* means a person under 18.

When a library staff member has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child under the age of 18 is, or may be, in need of protection, the staff member will advise the CEO/Chief Librarian or Branch Manager. The staff member (with the support of the CEO/Chief Librarian or Branch Manager) will promptly report their suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as required under section 125 (1) of the Act. Bruce Grey Child and Family Services can be contacted at 1-855-322-4453.

Related Documents:

Hanover Public Library. *OP12 - Children and Teen Services*

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

Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 17, Sched. 1