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## Safety of Children at Burlington Public Library Policy

Burlington Public Library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to visit the library as a safe space to enjoy our collections, programs and services. The Burlington Public Library Board endorses the Ontario Library Association's statements on Children's' and Teens' Rights in the Public Library. Library staff are expected to assist children in the Library but cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the building.

Parents, guardians, teachers and caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior and safety of children visiting the library. Staff are not responsible for supervising unattended children.

Parents and caregivers are reminded that the Library is a public building with all the inherent dangers of such a setting. Library policies and services are designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for patrons of all ages but parents need to use the same caution with their children at the Library as they would in any other public setting. As in all public places, staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving with persons who are not the appropriate chaperone.

Children under the age of ten must be directly supervised by a responsible caregiver and may not be left alone in the library. Parents and caregivers are responsible for ensuring that children abide by the Library's Customer Experience Standards.

During story times and other programs, the parent or caregiver of a child under the age of ten must remain in the library and return to the programming area by the end of the program. For some programs, parents/caregivers are required to attend with their children.

### **Unattended Children in the Library**

In most circumstances, the health and safety of children, particularly older children and teens, is not an issue. However, Library staff will intervene when they become aware that a child in the library is in these or similar situations:

- A child is alone and visibly upset or ill
- A child under the age of ten is left alone with younger siblings
- A child is alone and doing something dangerous or another person in the library seems to be a danger to the child
- A child is alone, and is not following library rules after reasonable warnings
- A child is left alone at the library at closing time

If a child is left unattended and vulnerable, library staff will:

- reassure the child
- attempt to locate the adult responsible for the child's care
- within the library
- caution the parent/caregiver about leaving children unsupervised in the library

If a responsible adult cannot be located in the library, staff will attempt to call the adult, requesting the child be picked up.

The Library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children prior to opening or after closing. The Library is also not responsible for children outside the building who await transportation or who are socializing. Adults responsible for unattended school-aged children using the Library should be aware of the Library's hours and make arrangements to meet the children on time. This is a particular concern in inclement weather and after dark. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.

### **When Library Staff Cannot Contact a Responsible Adult**

When an adult parent or caregiver cannot be contacted, library staff will:

- not leave a child under the age of ten unattended at closing time
- not give the child a ride home
- contact police non-emergency number or Children's Aid Society.
- remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

### **Children Over the Age of Ten**

Children aged ten and over may use the Library independently on a regular basis, but parents or caregivers are responsible for the actions and well-being of their children while in the Library. Children must know how to reach an adult in case of an emergency, and both children and adults need to be aware of library hours. Children using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the Library. If a child in this age group is not able to leave the Library without an adult, they should not be in the Library alone.

### **Requests for Information Regarding Children**

As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its customers of any age unless there is a problem with their conduct.

If a school age child is noticed to be spending considerable time in the library during the school day, staff may check with the child and ask that a parent confirm with the library that they are aware of the child's whereabouts.

Burlington Public Library respects the privacy of all of its customers. Staff will not give information to any person over the telephone as to whether a child is currently in the

library or has been in the library recently. If the situation seems to be serious, staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. In the case of a missing child or a child in danger, Library staff will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific information.

Effective Date: Mar 2019

Projected Review Date: Mar 2023

Motion #/Date: #19-19, Mar 21, 2019

Amended Dates:

Associated Policies: