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| Policy Type: **Operational** | Policy Number: **11 – 10** |
| Policy Title: **Safety and Conduct of Children in the Library Policy** | Policy Approval Date: **April 10, 2024**  Review Date: **September 2026** |
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# **Purpose**

The Grimsby Public Library welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. Library staff is trained to assist children in using the library but cannot assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children left unattended in the building. 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 clients of all ages but parents and caregivers need to use the same caution with their children at the library as they would in any other public setting.

In an effort to ensure their safety and well-being within a public facility and to maintain an atmosphere of appropriate library use, the following policy has been adopted.

# **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy:

## **Child**

A child is any person under eighteen years of age unless otherwise specified.

## **Parent**

A parent is any person who is either the natural, adoptive, or foster parent of the child.

## **Caregiver**

A caregiver is anyone over 12 years of age to whom the parent has given responsibility for the care of the younger child.

# **Guidelines**

* Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
* The Library acknowledges the following termas stipulated in the Child, Youth and Family Services Act S.O. 2017, c. 14 with regards to supervision of children.
  + 125 - Leaving child unattended
  + (3) 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.
* Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult or caregiver while in the library.
* If a child is left at the library at closing time or in the event of an emergency situation or closure the staff person in charge will attempt to contact the parents or caregivers. If the parent or adult caregivers cannot be contacted within 15 minutes after closing, staff will notify both FACS and the police in an effort to have staff relieved of the responsibility of a child as soon as possible. Staff will remain with the child until the police arrive. Under no circumstances will library staff transport or take the child away from the library building.

# **Conduct of Children in the Library**

Parents, or their designated caregivers, are responsible for the conduct of their children in the library as outlined below:

* Children ages 10 and over may use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behavior of any children while in the library.
* Parents or caregivers must ensure that children requiring supervision are brought to the library with a responsible caregiver.
* Parents or caregivers are responsible for supervising their child’s access to all library resources including the Internet and Media Lab technologies.
* Children under the age of 10 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity unless they are participating in a library program.
* Parents or caregivers who do not attend a program with a child under the age of 10 must remain on the premises.
* Library staff may request that a parent or caregiver be present to sign a child in and out of a program.

# **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, visibly upset or ill;
* A child under the age of 12 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 or is causing the child to be uncomfortable;
* A child is alone, and is not following library rules after reasonable warnings;
* A child is left alone at the library at closing time;
* A child under 10 is left alone in the library;

# **Duty to Report**

* The Child, Youth and Family Services Act recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. It clearly states in section 125(1) that members of the public including professionals who work with children, have an obligation to report promptly to a society, i.e.) FACS if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 is or may be in need of protection.
* The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 18 years.
* When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local FACS (Family and Children’s Services Niagara), and then advise the CEO & Chief Librarian or the staff person in charge. Each individual has the duty to report their suspicions and the information upon which it is based to the local FACS.

# **Requests for Information Regarding Truant Children**

As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its customers unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above.

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. If no contact is possible with a parent the staff may connect with FACS Niagara for guidance if there are concerns about a child’s well-being or if the child discloses abuse.

# **Requests for Information Regarding Missing Children/Runaways**

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. Staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. If a subpoena, warrant or court order is presented in person, staff must cooperate with police or other authorities in helping to locate a missing child. In the case of a missing child, Library staff may share information with “a law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information, where the request is supported by a formal warrant or otherwise required by the law” or as indicated in the Grimsby Public Library Privacy Policy. All such requests must be documented on the Grimsby Public Library’s Disclosure of Personal Information form created for this purpose.

# **Unaccompanied Adults**

The children’s and teen areas of the Library are reserved for children and teens, their parents or responsible adult caregivers, and adults interested in children’s literature, such as teachers and college students taking children’s literature classes. Out of concern for the safety of young patrons, adults who are unaccompanied by a child or children in the children’s area of the Library may be questioned by staff and may be asked to move to another area of the Library.

# **Contravention of Policy**

The Grimsby Public Library Board reserves the right to remove the privileges of any library user found in contravention of the Grimsby Public Library Board’s policies. Consequences may include: a warning; a directive to vacate the premises; suspension of library privileges; prohibition from the library building and premises by way of issuing a Notice of Trespass; and/or laying criminal charges.

A child’s failure to comply with the Grimsby Public Library Code of Conduct or other library policies may result in consequences deemed by library staff to be appropriate to the behavior. The library may require children who are in chronic violation of library rules to be accompanied by a parent / caregiver during library visits for a period to be determined by the CEO & Chief Librarian.

# **Appeal Process**

* An appeal may be submitted, in writing, to the Chair of the Library Board for board consideration. Only one appeal will be considered during the term of the suspension.
* Application must be made, in writing, for re-instatement of library privileges; library privileges are not automatically re-instated.
* The decision of the Library Board shall be considered final.

# **Resources**

**FACS Niagara: Family and Children’s Services**

<https://www.facsniagara.on.ca/>

Call 24/7: 905-937-7731

Toll Free: 1-888-937-7731

# **Related Policies**

* Code of Conduct Policy
* Privacy Policy
* The Rights of Children and Teens Policy