

UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY

1.0 PURPOSE

The Richmond Hill Public Library (Library) is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for customers of all ages. This policy aims to ensure the safety of children while in the Library and to clarify the responsibilities of parents, guardians, caregivers, and Library staff regarding children in the Library. All customers are expected to abide by the Library's Code of Conduct Policy.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

For this policy, the following definitions apply:

- **Child/Children:** All persons who are under the age of 18.
- **Caregiver:** Anyone 12 years of age or older to whom the parent or guardian has given responsibility for the care of the child.
- **Parent or Guardian:** The person who has legal responsibility for the child.
- **Unattended Child:** A child left without visible supervision by a parent, guardian or caregiver. Visible supervision means that the parent, guardian, or caregiver is in the Library and aware of the child's whereabouts in the space.

3.0 POLICY STATEMENT

3.1 Unattended Children:

- a. A child aged 12 or older may use the Library independently, but parents or guardians are still responsible for the behaviour and safety of their child, including ensuring that they follow the Library's policies.
- b. If a child aged 11 or under is left unattended without a parent, guardian, or caregiver, Library staff will first attempt to contact the parent or guardian. If

a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the Library staff may contact local authorities, such as police or Children's Aid Society, to ensure the child's safety.

- c. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for the care, supervision, or safety of children left unattended in the Library.
- d. In the case of an emergency, Library staff will take appropriate action to ensure the safety of a child regardless of their age, including contacting emergency services if necessary.

3.2 Library Programs:

- a. Children attending Library programs are supervised by Library staff only during the scheduled program time. A parent, guardian or caregiver must remain in the Library if their child is under 12 years old.
- b. For some programs, a parent, guardian, or caregiver is required to attend with their children.
- c. Library staff are not responsible for children left unattended before or after Library programs.

3.3 Disruptive Behaviour:

- a. Children, like all Library customers, are expected to comply with the Library's Code of Conduct Policy. Disruptive or inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated.
- b. If a child is disruptive and exhibits inappropriate behaviour, Library staff may ask the child and the parent or guardian to leave the Library. In the absence of a parent or guardian, the staff may contact the parent or guardian or local authorities.

3.4 Duty to Report

- a. The Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA) recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children.

- b. When Library staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection¹, they have the authority to report the concern to the local Children’s Aid Society.

4.0 References and Related Policy

- Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, c. 14, Sched. 1, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/17c14>
- RHPL Code of Conduct Policy

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¹ Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: It’s Your Duty, <https://files.ontario.ca/pdf-3/mccss-report-child-abuse-and-neglect-en-2022-03-31.pdf>