

Children’s Services Policy

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Policy Title: Children’s Services Policy	Policy Approval Date: August 2023
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Introduction:

The Norfolk County Public Library recognizes that the needs of young people are important in their own right: that their intellectual growth, their cultural appreciation and recreational activities should be fostered through quality library service, delivered with consideration and respect. This policy sets out the services to be offered for children in the library as well as parents, guardians and adults who work with children. This policy also sets out the responsibilities for the safety of children in the library.

Purpose:

The Norfolk County Public Library endeavours to provide this service based on the principles stated in the Ontario Library Association's *Children's Rights in the Public Library, 1998*. See Appendix A.

Definitions:

A *child* is a library patron age 13 years and under. They are issued a **juvenile library card** which restricts the loan of “R” rated DVD’s and Blu-ray discs.

A *young adult* is a library patron between the ages of 14 and 17 years. They are issued a **young adult card** which restricts the loan of “R” rated DVD’s and Blu-ray discs.

An *adult* is a library patron age 18 years and over. There are no loaning restrictions placed upon an **adult card**.

Section 1: Services

1. Collections

- a) The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designate will ensure the maintenance and organization of a comprehensive collection of materials for and about children, based on the Norfolk County Public Library Collection Development Policy OP-03.
- b) The collections for children will meet high standards of quality and reflect the changing educational needs and personal interests of children as well as trends in society.
- c) In selection of materials the library staff will give consideration to developing collections to address the issues of:

- i. Canadian authors and content
- ii. award-winning titles
- iii. non-fiction material that complements the local school curriculum
- iv. age appropriate formats

2. Reference and Readers Advisory

- a) Library staff will utilize the full range of collections, technology and methods to answer all users' requests for advice on selecting books and for information, regardless of age and without judgment, with confidentiality and respect.
- b) Library staff will point out the variety of resources available in all areas of the library as appropriate.
- c) Only a parent or caregiver has the right to use their own cultural, religious or other views and beliefs to share or censor the reading, viewing or listening choices of their children.

3. Programs

- a) The library will provide programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, to stimulate creative potential and to encourage and facilitate the habit of reading, independent learning and use of the library.
- b) The library will provide educational, entertaining and literature related programs and support for children, such as:
 - i. programs for parents/guardians, adults, caregivers that will educate them on the importance of early literacy, the role of the library in their children's lives, and the support the library can offer them
 - ii. programs for classes, children's groups, daycare, etc., depending on age, that will emphasize early literacy and library orientation, and that encourages reading for leisure, or highlights various aspects of the collection
 - iii. programs for summer, school breaks and professional development days that will be primarily book based and will highlight various aspects of the collection while encouraging reading for pleasure or leisure activities
 - iv. programs that support the "maker culture" and philosophy of STREAM – science, technology, research, engineering, arts, and math
- c) The number of participants for all programs will be restricted based on size of the facility, fire department limits, staff supervision available, etc.; this will be enforced by the library staff in charge.
- d) Some programs may limit the age of children and the number of children per accompanying adult.
- e) Parents/guardians must remain in the library building while their child is participating in a preschool program.

4. Program Evaluation

- a) All programs are designed with measurable outcomes and are evaluated.
- b) To determine community needs and interests, the Library reviews suggestions for

events and programs and uses various mechanisms to gather community input to assist in setting programming priorities and plans.

- c) The Library will make available a process for user feedback and expressions of opinions and concerns about programs.
- d) The Library will make a process for community submissions available.

5. Partnerships

- a) To assist the library in providing services for children, library staff may partner and cooperate with other community organizations that provide or promote services for children. This may include but is not limited to schools, EarlyON Centres, daycares, Norfolk County departments and agencies.
- b) Library staff are encouraged to partner with home school providers.

6. Internet Services

- a) The Norfolk County Public Library does not filter or restrict legal Internet access. Exceptions are made for early literacy computers in an area designated for the children's collection.
- b) Some images found on the Internet may be inappropriate for children. Children ages 13 years and under have a designated juvenile membership card which means they cannot checkout restricted DVD's or Blu-ray disc. No other restrictions apply to a juvenile card. As with all library resources, parents or guardians are responsible for their children's access to the Internet.

Section 2: Library Space

1. Where space permits in a branch, the library will provide a well-planned area for children that is distinct from the adult area with signage that is clear and age-appropriate
2. These areas should be welcoming and visually stimulating so that children are able to readily distinguish their own space from the rest of the library.
3. These areas will have furniture, shelves and equipment that are designed for and accessible to all children.
4. The area for children is an interactive learning environment where controlled noise levels are tolerated and where young users are invited to explore the library materials and services in their own way.

Section 3: Staffing

1. The Norfolk County Public Library board will support a program of ongoing staff training and professional development in children's services.
2. The CEO will ensure that all staff members assigned to children's services receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library service.
3. The library staff will advocate for children's services in the community by:
 - a) collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy, love of reading, lifelong learning and children's well-being

- b) seek support for children's services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, etc.
 - c) networking with other agencies who provide service to children in the community, region and province
 - d) communicating with principals, teacher librarians and teachers in the community
 - e) promoting the children's services and collections to groups who could benefit from them
4. While library staff will assist young people with finding materials, using the Internet or attending programs, their parents/guardians are responsible for their children's use of the library.

Section 4: Safety of Children in the Library

The Norfolk County Public Library staff recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the library. However, the library is a busy public place and library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facility.

1. Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver

- a) Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
- b) The library is governed by the terms in the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) with regards to supervision of children, and specifically these terms:

Section 79(3) "No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for their supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances

Section 79(4) "Where a person is charged with contravening Subsection (3) and the child is less than 10 years of age, the onus of establishing that the person made provision for the child's supervision and care that was reasonable in the circumstances rests with the person."

- c) The library expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:
 - i. not leave children requiring supervision unattended in or about library premises
 - ii. monitor the use of services by children under their care
 - iii. be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care
- d) Children nine (9) years old and younger must be accompanied by an adult while in the Library.
- e) Children ages ten (10) years and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the behaviour of any children while they are in the Library.

2. Responsibility of Staff

- a) The library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations, where
 - i. an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library
 - ii. an unattended child is perceived to be endangering themselves
 - iii. another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
 - iv. an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
 - v. an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time
 - vi. a child is consistently left on their own in the library for long periods of time
- b) Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, library staff will:
 - i. not leave a child unattended at closing time
 - ii. not give the child a ride home
 - iii. contact local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS)
 - iv. remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

In all of the above situations an Incident Report must be completed.

3. Duty to Report

- a) The *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. It clearly states that members of the public including professionals who work with children, have an obligation to report promptly to the Children's Aid Society (CAS) if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 is or may be in need of protection.
- b) The duty to report applies to any child who is, or appears to be, under the age of 16 years. It also applies to children subject to a child protection order who are 16 and 17 years old.
- c) When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will advise the Chief Executive Officer or designate and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as stated in the CFSA s.72 (1).

Related Documents

Ontario's Child and Family Services Act. R.S.O. 1990, CHAPTER C.11, s.72 (1).
*Norfolk County Public Library **Intellectual Freedom Policy (FN-04)***
*Norfolk County Public Library Policy **Collection Development (OP-03)***
*Norfolk County Public Library Policy **Internet Services (OP-07)***
*Norfolk County Public Library Policy **Circulation (OP-12)***

Appendix A – Ontario Library Association - Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library

OLA Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom
2. Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
3. A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
4. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
7. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
8. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of children's services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

Adopted at the Ontario Library Association
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Posted at http://accessola2.com/data/1/rec_docs/380_ola3.pdf