

Muskoka Lakes Township Public Library  
LIBRARY BOARD POLICY

Policy Type: Operational	Policy Number: OP-06
Policy Title: Safety and Supervision of Children	Policy Approval Date: 09/11/23
Chairperson: V. Duke	Policy Review Date: 09/27

### Intent:

The Muskoka Lakes Public Library Board (herein after referred to as the Board) welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. In addition, the Board recognizes that children have the right to a welcoming respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the Muskoka Lakes Public Library (herein after referred to as the Library). However, the Library is a busy public place and Library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended in the building.

This policy outlines the responsibilities of parents/guardians/assigned caregivers and Library staff to ensure the safety and well-being of children while attending the Library.

### Regulations:

The Library is governed by the terms in the Ontario *Child and Family Services Act* (CFSA) with regards to supervision of children. Specifically:

Section 79(3) “No person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her 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.”

This legislation does not specify an age at which a child can be left alone, rather the legislation sets out to protect young people from any type of abuse or neglect and requires that all parents and caregivers must make reasonable plans (which will vary according to a child’s age, maturity and circumstances) for the supervision of young people under 16 in their care.

Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the Library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or assigned caregiver.

### Procedures:

#### Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians/Assigned Caregivers

1. The Library expects parents/guardians/assigned caregivers and teachers to:
  - a) not leave children requiring supervision unattended in or about Library premises
  - b) monitor the use of services and collections by children under their care
  - c) be responsible for borrowed materials by children under their care
  - d) be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care

2. Children 9 years old and younger must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver while in the Library.
3. A child 9 years old or younger who is attending a Library program need not be accompanied at that program by a parent/guardian/assigned caregiver, unless otherwise indicated. Parents/guardians/assigned caregivers must, however, be present in the building during the program in case an emergency should arise.

### **Responsibilities of Staff**

1. The Library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations, where:
  - a) an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library
  - b) an unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself
  - c) another person in the Library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
  - d) an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
  - e) an unattended child is not met by a parent/ guardian/assigned caregiver at closing time
  - f) a child is consistently left on his or her own in the Library for long periods of time
2. If one of the above situations occurs
  - a) the staff member in charge will attempt to contact the parent/guardian/assigned caregiver
  - b) if the Library is closing, staff will inform the parent/guardian or assigned caregiver of this and advise the parent/guardian/assigned caregiver that they must pick up the child within 15 minutes
  - c) the staff member will remain with the child until the parent/guardian/assigned caregiver arrives and will verify with the child that this person is the parent/guardian/assigned caregiver. Staff will inform the parent/guardian/assigned caregiver of the Safety and Supervision of Children Policy.
3. Where a parent/guardian/assigned caregiver cannot be contacted or does not arrive to pick up the child, Library staff will:
  - a) contact local police or Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions (CAS)
  - b) remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their care
4. In the event of any of the above outlined or similar situations, staff will complete an Incident Report documenting the child's name, parent/guardian/assigned caregiver, phone number and address, an explanation of the situation, and all steps taken.

### **Duty to Report**

1. The 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 Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions (CAS), if they suspect that a child or youth under the age of 16 is or may be in need of protection.

2. 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.
3. 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 and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions (CAS).

### **Requests for Information regarding Truant Children**

1. As a public facility, the Library does not monitor the activities of its users unless there is a problem with conduct or a child is inappropriately left alone as outlined above.
2. 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/guardian/assigned caregiver confirm with the Library that he/she is aware of the child's whereabouts.

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

1. 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.
2. In the case of a missing child, Library staff will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

### **Phone Numbers**

Simcoe Muskoka Family Connections:  
Bracebridge Office: (705) 645-4426  
Muskoka: 1-800-680-4426

Bracebridge OPP: 1-705-645-2211

### **Related Documents**

MLPL OP-21 Youth Services

Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions – Home Alone – [www.familyconnexions.ca](http://www.familyconnexions.ca)

