

SAFE CHILD POLICY

Board Approved: February 20, 2025

The Southgate Public Library welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. The purpose of this Policy is to establish that it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian and not library staff to monitor the whereabouts and behaviour of their children.

Section 1: Scope

The Library is guided by the terms in the Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 (CYFSA) with regard to unattended children.

Section 136(3) “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.”

The 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.

Section 2: Policy Statement

Library staff cannot be held responsible for the welfare of children left unattended in the library. Children younger than age 10 must be accompanied by a parent/caregiver who is no less than sixteen years of age. Children aged 10 and over are welcome to use the library independently, but parents/caregivers are still responsible for the whereabouts and behaviour of their child(ren) while in the library. Sharing the library with other people requires that everyone follow the *Patron Code of Conduct* established by the Library Board and posted in the building and on the library website.

In accordance with this statement, children under the age of ten must remain in the company of a parent/guardian while in the library. A child under ten years of age who is attending a library program need not be accompanied into that program unless otherwise indicated. Parents/guardians must be present in the building during a program in case an emergency should arise. Children under the age of five attending programs must remain in the eyesight of their parents or, if in the confines of a room during a scheduled program, may be supervised by the library staff only during the scheduled time of the program.

Section 3: Responsibility 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 inappropriate behaviour;
 - e. An unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time; and
 - f. A child is consistently left on his or her own in the Library for long periods of time.
2. Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, Library staff shall:
- a. Ascertain if transportation arrangements have been made
 - b. Verify identity of parent/guardian/caregiver with child.
 - c. If parent/guardian/caregiver cannot be located within the Library or care for the child is inadequate, attempt to contact by phone to arrange pickup of child.
 - d. Not leave a child unattended at closing time;
 - e. If the Library is closing, inform parent/guardian/caregiver that they must pick up their child within 15 minutes or police will be called.
 - f. not give the child a ride home;
 - g. Remain with the child until the parent/caregiver or proper authorities can take the child into their protection.
 - h. Inform parent/guardian/caregiver of Children Services Policy.
 - i. Complete an Incident Report documenting attempts to contact parent/guardian/caregiver and further steps taken.