

Policy 2110

Unattended Children and Vulnerable Persons	
Approved	May 25, 2023
Most Recent Review	May 2023

Policy Statement

The Okotoks Public Library (OPL) welcomes children of all ages and vulnerable persons to use its facilities and services. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children and vulnerable persons using the Library ultimately rests with the parent or assigned caregiver and not with Library staff.

Purpose/Rationale

Library staff are available to help and support library users; however, the Library is not able to provide short- or long-term child care, or be responsible for unattended children or vulnerable persons. The purpose of this policy is to establish the rules for use of OPL spaces by children and vulnerable persons and to establish that it is the responsibility of the parent or assigned caregiver and not library staff to monitor the whereabouts and behaviour of their children and/or vulnerable persons.

Definitions

Child: any person under eighteen years of age.

Parent: any person who is either the natural, adoptive, foster parent or legal guardian of the child.

Caregiver: anyone 12 years of age or older to whom the parent has given responsibility for the care of a younger child or, the assigned person accompanying a vulnerable person.

Vulnerable Person: an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity.

Procedures

1. Behavioural Requisites for Using the Library Unattended

1.1. To be left unattended at the library a person must be capable of:

- 1.1.1. leaving the library under their own means, particularly in the event of an emergency or other unexpected event

- 1.1.2. reaching out to an emergency contact (ie know this person's name, phone number and address)
 - 1.1.3. behaving in a manner befitting a public place
 - 1.1.4. using the restroom alone
- 1.2. If a child or vulnerable person cannot meet the behavioural requisites for using the library unattended, a parent, guardian or caregiver must be on site to provide assistance. If inappropriate behaviour continues, the child and their family may be asked to leave the Library.
- 1.3. Any child's failure to comply with Library policies may result in consequences deemed by Library staff to be appropriate to the behaviour. 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 Director or their designate.

2. Unattended Children in the Library

2.1. Children under 6

Children under the age of 6 must be in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with a parent or caregiver in all areas of the Library unless participating in a library program. If children under the age of 6 are found without an adult, staff will attempt to locate the parent or other caregiver. If unsuccessful, staff will notify law enforcement.

2.2. Children 6-8

Children 6-8 must have a parent or caregiver in the building with them at all times during the library visit. If children 6-8 are found without an adult in the building, staff will attempt to locate the parent or other caregiver. If unsuccessful, staff will notify law enforcement.

2.3. Children 9-12

These children are welcome to use the library unattended but parents are still responsible for their behaviour. The child must have a way for staff to contact the parent or caregiver at all times when they are left unattended in the library. If a child becomes anxious or disruptive the staff will attempt to find the parent or caregiver in the library. If they are not available the staff will call the child's home. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible to pick up the child at any time.

2.4. Children 13 years and older

If problems arise, with children 13 years and older, they may be asked to leave the library or parents may be contacted. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible to pick up the child at any time. The child must have a way for staff to contact the parent or caregiver at all times when they are left unattended in the library.

3. Programs

- 3.1 Some Library programs require the parent or caregiver to accompany the child during the program.
- 3.2 For all other Library programs, children ages 8 and under must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver to the program room for drop-off and pick-up.
- 3.3 Parents/caregivers who do not attend a program with children ages 6 and under must remain in the building and must be visible when the program is over.
- 3.4 Parents/caregivers for children ages 6-8 must remain present in the building during the program.

4. Closing Time/Emergency Closures

- 4.1 If a child or vulnerable person is left at the library at closing time, emergency closings or in the event of an emergency situation, the staff person in charge will attempt to contact the parents, guardians or caregivers.
- 4.2 If the parent, guardian or adult caregiver cannot be contacted or if the child or vulnerable person is not collected fifteen minutes after closing, staff will notify law enforcement.
- 4.3 At least two staff will remain with the child or vulnerable person until law enforcement officials arrive.
- 4.4 Library staff will not transport or take the child or vulnerable person away from the library building regardless of whether or not they have consent of the vulnerable person's parent, guardian or caregiver, except in the case of a public emergency.
- 4.5 An incident report will be completed by any Library staff involved.

5. Requests for Information regarding Missing Children/Runaways

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. If there is an active police investigation, library staff will cooperate with police in helping to locate a missing minor.