

## Safe Child Policy

Policy Number:

Policy Type: Operational

Review Period: 3 years

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### *1.0 Purpose*

The purpose of the Safe Child Policy is to provide Library Staff with the guidelines when confronted with a situation where a child, teen or young adult's conduct is unacceptable or the security of a young person is at risk.

### *2.0 Policy Statement*

Greater Sudbury Public Library (GSPL) recognizes that people of all ages have the right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the Library. Library Staff are trained to assist children and teens in using the Library; however, parents and caregivers are responsible for their child's safety and supervision.

Library facilities are public buildings with all the inherent risks of such setting. Library policies and services are designed to provide a safe and welcoming environment for library users of all ages. Parents and caregivers need to use the same precautions with their children at the library as they would in any public setting.

All patrons are expected to abide by the [Library Use Policy](#).

### *3.0 Safety in the Library*

Responsibility for the behaviour and well-being of any child who uses the library rests solely on the parent or with the caregiver assigned by the parent. Library Staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facilities. The Library does not monitor the activities of its patrons unless there is a problem with conduct as outlined in the [Library Use Policy](#) or other GSPL policies.

If a school-aged child is noticed to be spending considerable time in the Library during the school day, Library Staff may check with the individual and ask that a parent confirm with the Library that they are aware of their child's whereabouts. This applies to those up to the age of 16 years old.

Library Staff will not give out any information to any person over telephone or through social media as to whether a person is currently in the Library or has been in the Library recently. Library Staff may offer to take a message and ask the child to call the person back. In the case of a missing person, Library Staff will share information with law enforcement requesting specific personal information.

GSPL recognizes the following terms as stipulated in the Ontario [Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#) (CYFSA) with regards 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 the 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 make reasonable plans (which will vary according to a child’s age, maturity and circumstances) for the supervision of young people under the age 16 in their care:

To this end, GSPL expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:

- Not leave children under 16, requiring supervision, to be unattended in or about library premises
- Monitor the use of services by children under their care
- Be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care

At Greater Sudbury Public Library:

- Children ages 12 and over are welcome to use the library independently on a regular basis, but parents or caregivers are still responsible for the behaviour and access to services, including the Internet, of any children to age 16 while they are in the Library
- Children younger than 12 must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver while in the Library

#### *4.0 Responsibility of Staff*

GSPL staff will be guided by this policy in situations where:

- A child is found frightened or crying in the Library
- A child is perceived to be endangering their self
- Another person in the Library poses a perceived threat to a child
- A child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
- A child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time

- A child is consistently left on their own in the Library for long periods of time

When Library staff are presented with any of these situations, staff will first attempt to locate the parent or caregiver to alert them of the situation. When a child's behaviours or actions are inappropriate, Library Staff will inform parents of the Library's policies.

Where a parent or responsible caregiver cannot be contacted, Library Staff will:

- Not leave a child unattended at closing time
- Not give the child a ride home
- Contact Greater Sudbury Police or Children's Aid Society (CAS)
- Remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

## 5.0 *Duty to Report*

5.1 The [Child, Youth and Family Services Act](#) (Section 125) 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 a legislated 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. The CYFSA defines the phrase "child in need of protection" as including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm.

5.2 Library Staff who are concerned that a 16- or 17-year-old is, or may be, in need of protection may make a report to Children's Aid Society (CAS) and the CAS is required to assess the reported information.

5.3 When Library Staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection, they will advise the CEO and Chief Librarian or designate and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as required in CYFSA s.136 (1).