



## Unattended Children Policy

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The Welland Public Library welcomes children of all ages, and encourages and promotes children's use of the library. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian or caregiver to monitor the whereabouts and behaviour of their children. Library staff cannot be held responsible for the welfare of children left unattended in library facilities.

In accordance with the *Ontario Child and Family Services Act, RSO 1990, c.11*, children under the age of 10 must be accompanied and appropriately supervised by a parent or responsible caregiver. If staff suspect child abuse, they are required by law to contact the police or Family and Children's Services (905-937-7731).

The Library operates with strict adherence to the Ontario Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), RSO 1990, c11, subsections 3 and 4:

### Leaving child unattended

(3) No person having charge of a child less than sixteen years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances

### Reverse Onus

(4) Where a person is charged with contravening subsection (3) and the child is less than ten 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."

A child under the age of 10 who is attending a supervised library program need not be accompanied into that program by a parent/guardian or caregiver, unless otherwise indicated. The parent/guardian or caregiver must, however, remain in the library during the program.

The parent/guardian is responsible for supervising their child's access to all library resources, including the Internet (see Public Internet Access Policy: LS-5-5.1).

Under no circumstances will library staff transport unattended children away from the library.

An unattended or lost child will be reassured by a staff member who will help the child locate their parent/guardian or caregiver using procedures outlined below. Two staff members must be present with an unattended child at all times.

Staff will make multiple attempts to locate the parent/guardian or caregiver of an unattended child, but the Niagara Regional Police will be contacted if all reasonable attempts fail.

### Suspicion of Abuse

1. The Ontario Child and Family Services Act (CFSA) recognizes that members of the public, including professionals that work with children, have an obligation to

report promptly to Family and Children's Services (FACS) 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 under the age of 18.
3. When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection, they will advise Library Management, and report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local FACS, as stated in the CFSA, s.72 (1).