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The Mississippi Mills Public Library recognizes that the needs of young people are important in their own right: that their intellectual growth, their cultural appreciation and recreational activities should be fostered through quality library service, delivered with consideration and respect. This policy sets out the services to be offered for children in the Library as well as parents, guardians and adults who work with children. This policy also sets out the responsibilities for the safety of children in the Library.

The Mississippi Mills Public Library Board is committed to provide this service based on the principles stated in the Ontario Library Association's *Children's Rights in the Public Library, 1998*. (Appendix A)

## Section 1: Services

### 1. Collections

- a) The CEO/Chief Librarian will ensure the maintenance and organization of a comprehensive collection of materials for and about children, based on the Collection Development policy.
- b) The collections for children will meet high standards of quality and reflect the changing educational needs and personal interests of children and teens as well as trends in society.
- c) The staff will develop profiles of the collections to define the scope and to address the issues of:
  - i. Canadian authors and content
  - ii. award-winning titles
  - iii. non-fiction material that complements the local school curriculum
  - iv. age-appropriate formats

### 2. Reference and Readers Advisory

- a) The qualified staff will utilize the full range of collections, technology and methods to answer all users' requests for advice on selecting books and for information, regardless of age and without judgment, with confidentiality and respect.
- b) Library staff should conduct interviews to better understand what each child wants and needs.

- c) Library staff will point out the variety of resources available in all areas of the library as appropriate.

### 3. Programs

- a) The Library will provide programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, to stimulate creative potential and to encourage and facilitate the habit of reading, independent learning and use of the library.
- b) The Library will provide educational, entertaining, STEM and literature related programs and support for children, such as:
  - i. programs for parents/guardians, adults, caregivers that will educate them on the importance of early literacy, the role of the library in their children's lives, and the support the library can offer them
  - ii. programs for classes, children's groups (Brownies), daycare, and so on, depending on age, that will emphasize early literacy and library orientation, and that encourage reading for leisure, or highlight various aspects of the collection
  - iii. programs for summer, school breaks and professional development days that will be primarily book-based and will highlight various aspects of our collection while encouraging reading for pleasure or leisure activities.
- c) The number of participants for all programs will be restricted based on size of the facility, fire department limits, staff supervision available, and so on; this will be enforced by the children's programmer in charge.
- d) Some programs may limit the age of children and the number of children per accompanying adult. This limit may be enforced by the staff as the program is designed for maximum benefit to the child/parent/guardian through one-on-one interaction. Leniency is given to parents of more than one child.

## Section 2: Library Space

1. The Library will provide a well-planned area for children that is distinct from the adult area with signage that is clear and age appropriate.
2. These areas should be visually stimulating so that children are able to readily distinguish their own space from the rest of the library.
3. These areas will have furniture, shelves and equipment that are designed for and accessible to all children.
4. The area for children is an interactive learning environment where controlled noise levels are tolerated and where young users are invited to explore the library materials and services in their own way.

## Section 3: Staffing

1. The Board will support a program of ongoing staff training and professional development in children's services.

2. The CEO will ensure that all staff members assigned to children's services receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library service.
3. The Library staff will advocate for children's services in the community by:
  - a) collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy, love of reading, lifelong learning and children's well-being
  - b) seeking support for children's services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, and so on
  - c) networking with other agencies who provide service to children in the community, region and province
  - d) communicating with principals, teacher librarians and teachers in the community
  - e) promoting the children's services and collections to groups who could benefit from them (e.g., schools, daycares, and so on)
4. Library staff can assist young people with finding materials, using the Internet or attending programs but parents/guardians are responsible for their children's use of the Library.

#### **Section 4: Safety of Children in the Library**

The Library staff recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful, supportive and safe environment when they visit the Library. However, the Library is a busy public place and Library staff cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended within our public facility.

1. Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver
  - a) Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the Library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
  - b) The Library is guided by the terms 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."  
NOTE: 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.
  - c) To this end, the Library expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:
    - i. not leave children under 16, requiring supervision, to be unattended in or about library premises
    - ii. monitor the use of services by children under their care
    - iii. be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care
  - d) In this Library:
    - i. Children ages twelve and over are welcome to use the Library independently on a regular basis, but parents are still responsible for the

- behaviour of any children to 16 while they are in the library.
- ii. Children younger than 12 should be accompanied by an adult while in the library.
- iii. Children under the age of five (5) attending programs, may be supervised by the Library staff only during the scheduled time of the program; their caregivers must always remain in the library building (except during summer programming).

## 2. Responsibility of Staff

- a) The Library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations, where:
  - i. an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library
  - ii. an unattended child is perceived to be endangering him/herself
  - iii. another person in the Library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
  - iv. an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behaviour
  - v. an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time
  - vi. a child is consistently left on his or her own in the Library for long periods of time
- b) Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, Library staff will:
  - i. not leave a child unattended at closing time
  - ii. not give the child a ride home
  - iii. contact local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS)
  - iv. remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

## 3. Duty to Report

- a) 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 Act defines the phrase "child in need of protection" as including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, and risk of harm.
- b) 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 and the CAS is required to assess the reported information.
- c) 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/Chief Librarian and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, as required in the Act s.136 (1).

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. S.O. 2017, CHAPTER C.14, sections 74, 84 (1), 125, 136 (3).
- Mississippi Mills Public Library *OP-03 Circulation Policy*
- Mississippi Mills Public Library *OP-04 Collection Development Policy*
- Mississippi Mills Public Library *OP-15 Technology Policy*

## APPENDIX A

### **The Ontario Library Association's Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library**

Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom
2. Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
3. A full range of materials, services and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.
4. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.
5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
6. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
7. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through the transition to adult user.
8. An advocate who will speak on their behalf to the library administration, library board, municipal council and community to make people aware of the goals of children's services.
9. Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

Adopted at the Ontario Library Association  
Annual General Meeting  
November 1998

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