

Unattended/Abandoned Child Policy

Board motion number: 06-23

Chair's Signature: *Doree Bennett*

Date of original motion: March 21, 2006 Date of review: _____

Pembroke Public Library Policy

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The Pembroke Public Library welcomes families to the library. Parents and caregivers are responsible for the safety, behaviour, and well-being of their children while they are in the library or attending library programmes. We want to ensure that the library is a safe, constructive and educational place for your child(ren). For the safety of your child(ren) and family, please do not leave your child(ren) unattended in the library. Together we hope to foster your child's love of reading, literature and the library.

Library staff members are not responsible for the welfare, behaviour and safety of unattended children.

The staff person who has "reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection" must contact the Children's Aid Society directly. The staff person "must not rely on anyone else to report on his or her behalf". CFSA's 72 (3). As a staff member, you must discuss the problem with a senior staff person before calling Children's Aid, or the police, as appropriate. A written record will be produced and signed by the staff member and kept on file at the library.

Children up to 10 years of age must have a parent or caregiver with them when they visit the library.

Infants and toddlers (children 2 years of age and under) must always have a parent or caregiver with them in close proximity, when visiting the library. This includes participation in library story times for infants.

Preschool children (children 3 - 6 years of age) must have a parent or caregiver with them at all times when visiting the library. If they are attending library story time, then the parent or caregiver must remain in the building.

Parents of children 10 to 16 years of age are expected to make provision for their child's care that is "reasonable in the circumstances." If you believe that a child within this age range does not have the maturity to be left alone, you must contact the senior staff person. Children who are attending library programmes may attend without a parent at the parent or caregiver's discretion; however, if the library staff feel that the child (ren) cannot be left alone, the parent or caregiver will be asked to remain in the building. When children are attending a library programme, parents must leave emergency information with the staff member in charge and pick up their child(ren) at the designated time. Failure to do so will result in the classification of the child(ren) as abandoned and appropriate steps will taken.

Unattended Children

If a staff member observes a child unattended in the library, they will:

1. Approach the child and ask their name, age, phone number, and whether or not a parent or caregiver has accompanied them to the library.
2. If they are unsupervised, the staff member will try to locate the parent or caregiver.
3. If the child says the parent or caregiver is in the library, staff will page them on the intercom system to locate the parent. The staff member will then explain the policy.
- 4) If the parent is not located after paging, the staff member will attempt to call the child's parents or caregiver.
- 5) If the parent or caregiver is not contacted within 1 hour, the Children's Aid Society will be called (732-8902) during office hours, and the police (732-5969) after 4:00 p.m. Two staff members will remain with the child until the proper authorities arrive.
- 6) If the parent or caregiver is located, the staff member will explain the policy and ask them to pick up their child(ren).
- 7) The staff member will make up to three attempts to reach the parent before the child will be classified as abandoned. At this point appropriate steps will be taken (please refer to the section entitled Abandoned Child)

Abandoned Child

If a child is left at the library without supervision, and is incapable of being there on their own, staff may classify the child as abandoned and proceed with the following steps:

1. Ask the child for their name, parent's name and phone number.
2. Try to page the parent or caregiver to determine whether or not they are in the library. If they are not in the library, proceed to the next step.
3. Attempt to reach the child's parent or caregiver at home or work. Make a minimum of three attempts. If the staff member has success contacting the parent or caregiver, they will explain the policy and ask the parent or caregiver to pick up the child. Two staff members will stay with the child until the parent or caregiver arrives. If the parent or caregiver fails to pick up their child, proceed to the next step.
4. If staff cannot reach the parent or caregiver, the Children's Aid Society (732-8902) will be called during office hours, and the local police (732-5769) after 4:00 p.m.
5. Two staff members will remain with the abandoned child until a member from the Children's Aid Society or Police arrive.
6. Under no circumstances will staff leave the building with the child or drive the child home.
7. A written report should be filed, both the staff member and their supervisor should sign the report.
8. If a child is left at the library after library hours staff will make 1 attempt to contact parents. If parents are not located, the Children's Aide Society or police will be called.