



The Meaford Public Library recognizes that the needs of children are important in their own right: that their intellectual growth, 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 and their caregivers in the library.

Rights of the Child

The Meaford Public Library endeavours to provide this service based on the principles stated in the Ontario Library Association's *Children's Rights in the Public Library, 1988* (See Appendix A).

Section 1: Scope

1. The services described in this policy are intended to meet the needs of children as well as parents, guardians, and adults who work with children or are interested in children's literature and programs. Children are those aged 0 – 11 years.

Section 2: Services

1. Collections:

- a) The Library Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designate will ensure the maintenance and organization of a comprehensive children's collection based on Policy 26 – Collection Development.
- b) The children's collection will meet best practice standards of quality and reflect the changing educational needs and personal interests of children as well as trends in society.
- c) Access to teen and adult materials in the library will not be restricted by library staff but will be the responsibility of caregivers to determine suitability for their child.

2. Reference and Readers' Advisory:

- a) Library staff will utilize the full range of collections, technology, and methods to answer all user requests for advice on selecting books and for information,

regardless of age and without judgment, with confidentiality and respect.

- b) 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 caregivers, both in and out of the library, to stimulate creative potential, creative self-expression, social interaction, physical activity and values of acceptance. In addition, to encourage and facilitate the love of and habit of reading, independent learning, and lifelong use of the library.
- b) The library will provide educational, entertaining, and literature-related programs and support for children, such as:
 - i. programs for parents/guardians, adults, and 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, daycare, etc., depending on age, will emphasize early literacy and library orientation, and will encourage reading for leisure, and highlight various aspects of the collection;
 - iii. programs for summer, school breaks, and professional development days 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, etc. This will be enforced by appropriate library staff.
- 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.
- e) The library will look to collaborate and partner for children services in the community by:
 - i. Collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy, love of reading, lifelong learning, and children's health and well-being.
 - ii. Seeking support for children's services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, etc.
 - iii. Networking with other agencies which provide services to children in the community, region, and province.
 - iv. Communicating with principals, support staff, and teachers in the community.
 - v. Promoting the children's services and collections to groups which could benefit from them (schools, daycares, etc.).
 - vi. Welcoming class visits and orientation for school children and home-schooled children.

Section 3: Library Space

1. Where possible the library will provide well-planned areas for children that are distinct from the adult area with signage that is clear and age appropriate.
2. These areas should be visually stimulating so that children are readily able to distinguish their own space from the rest of the library.
3. Where possible, these areas will have furniture, shelves, and equipment that are designed for and accessible to all children.
4. The children's areas are interactive learning environments where controlled noise levels are tolerated and where young users are invited to explore the library materials and services in their own way while following Policy 5 - Library Rules of Conduct.

Section 4: Staffing

1. The Board will support a program of ongoing staff training and professional development in children services.
2. The CEO will ensure that all staff members assigned to children's services receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library service.
3. While library staff will assist children with finding materials, using the Internet, or attending programs, caregivers are responsible for their children's use of the library and suitability of materials borrowed.

Section 5: Safety of Children in the Library

The Meaford Public Library recognizes that children of all ages have a right to a welcoming, respectful supportive, and safe environment when they visit the library. As a public facility, the library does not monitor the activities of its patrons unless there is a problem with conduct as outlined in Policy 5 – Library Rules of Conduct, and Policy 37- Unattended Children. There are specific situations which require specific guidance:

1. **Truancy** – If a young person (up to the age of 16) is noticed to be spending considerable time in the library during the school day, staff may check with the individual and ask that a caregiver confirm with the library that they are aware of the young person's whereabouts.
2. **Missing Persons** - Library staff will not give information to any person over the telephone 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 teen/young adult to call the person back. In

the case of a missing person, library staff will share information with the law enforcement agency requesting specific personal information.

Related Documents:

Meaford Public Library, ***Policy 2 Internet Services Policy***

Meaford Public Library, ***Policy 3 Circulation Policy***

Meaford Public Library, ***Policy 5 Library Rules of Conduct***

Meaford Public Library, ***Policy 26 Collection Development Policy***

Meaford Public Library, ***Policy 37 Unattended Children Policy***

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Approved:

K Grafton

Meaford Public Library Board Chair

L. Fascinato

Meaford Public Library Acting CEO

Appendix A
OLA 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 are written to include the needs of the child.

*Adopted at the Ontario Library Association
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