



BRACEBRIDGE LIBRARY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policy Number: OP-40
Title: Children Services
Board Approval Date: September 2025

Category: Operational
Policy Replacing: Children in the Library - Children & Young Adult Services #1 (2021)
Year of next review: 2029

PURPOSE

Bracebridge Library is committed to supporting the intellectual, cultural, recreational, and social needs of children in our community. This policy outlines the Library’s approach to services, spaces, and responsibilities regarding children and their caregivers, with a focus on providing a welcoming, inclusive, and safe environment. This policy also sets out the responsibilities for the safety and supervision of children in the library.

This policy is guided by the Ontario Library Association’s Children’s Rights in the Public Library (See Appendix A) and recognizes that:

- Children deserve respectful, responsive library service tailored to their needs
- The library plays a vital role in early literacy, lifelong learning, and safe exploration
- Parents and caregivers are responsible for the supervision and safety of children while in the library

DEFINITIONS

Children: Individuals who are under the age of 14

Young Adults/Teens: Individuals aged 14–17

Caregiver: A parent, guardian, or responsible adult charged with supervision

Unattended Child: A child in the library without adequate adult supervision, based on their age, maturity, and situation

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Children’s Services

1.1 Collections

Bracebridge Library will maintain a strong, well-organized collection of materials for and about children that reflect, but not limited to:

- Canadian authors and content
- Award-winning titles

- Curriculum-supportive non-fiction
- Formats appropriate to developmental stages
- Representation of diverse experiences and identities

Caregivers are responsible for determining the suitability of library materials their child borrows or accesses. Access to teen and adult collections in the library will not be restricted by library staff.

1.2 Programs

The Library offers literacy-based, educational, and recreational programs for children and their caregivers throughout the year. Programs are designed to:

- Promote early literacy and reading for pleasure
- Encourage creativity, learning, and social engagement
- Support caregivers in fostering reading habits at home

Programs may have age limits or require registration based on safety, staffing, and space. Library staff may enforce participation limits to ensure a safe and enriching experience for all attendees.

1.3 Reader's Advisory and Reference

Children and caregivers are entitled to the same high-quality reference and reader's advisory support as any library user. Staff will:

- Provide non-judgmental assistance
- Engage children in age-appropriate conversation
- Support discovery across all areas of the collection
- Ensure privacy and respect in all interactions

2. Children's Library Spaces

Bracebridge Library will provide clearly marked, welcoming, and developmentally appropriate spaces for children. These spaces will include:

- Child-sized furniture, shelving, and interactive elements
- Signage and visuals designed for accessibility and engagement
- Tolerance for age-appropriate noise and play

Children's spaces are intended for use by children, their caregivers, and those accessing children's materials.

3. Staffing and Advocacy

The Library will support and invest in ongoing professional development for all staff providing services to children. Staff assigned to children's services will:

- Maintain knowledge of children's literature and developmental needs
- Build partnerships with schools, community agencies, and caregivers

- Promote library services and collections to groups supporting children
- Advocate for inclusive, accessible programming and spaces

4. Supervision and Safety

Bracebridge Library is a public space. While we are committed to creating a safe and supportive environment for all users, we do not assume the role of caregiver. The ultimate responsibility for a child's safety and behavior rests with their parent or caregiver.

4.1 Responsibilities of Caregivers

Caregivers are expected to:

- Directly supervise children aged 9 and under at all times while in the library.
- Ensure children aged 10 and 11 are not left alone for up to 1 hour and are capable of responsible library use.
- Ensure children aged 12–14 using the library independently are able to do so responsibly.
- Monitor the materials, internet use, and programs their children access.
- Pick up children promptly at closing time.

The Library follows the Child, Youth and Family Services Act (CYFSA), Section 136(3), which states that individuals having charge of a child under 16 must not leave them without making reasonable provision for supervision and care.

4.2 Responsibilities of Staff

Library staff will follow this policy in cases where:

- A child is frightened, distressed, or behaving unsafely toward themselves or others
- A child appears to be left alone for long periods
- Another person may pose a risk to a child
- A child is not met by a caregiver at closing time

Where appropriate, staff will attempt to contact the caregiver. If a caregiver cannot be located, staff will:

- Remain with the child in a safe space until the proper authorities are able to take the child
- Not provide transportation
- Contact local authorities or Children's Aid Society (CAS) as needed

4.3 Duty to Report

Under the CYFSA, Section 125, library staff have a legal obligation to report to CAS if they have reasonable grounds to suspect a child under 16 may be in need of protection. Staff concerned about a 16- or 17-year-old may report voluntarily and CAS is required to assess.

In all cases, staff will consult with the CEO and report jointly, as required by law.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION:

Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*. S.O. 2017, CHAPTER C.14, sections 74, 84 (1), 125, 136 (3); Bracebridge Library *OP-11 Code of Conduct*; Bracebridge Library *OP-09 Collection Development*; Bracebridge Library *OP-14 Internet Services & Technology*
Bracebridge Library *OP-04 Membership, Circulation & Collection Use*

REVISIONS:

Children & Young Adult Services #1 (2021) ; Children & Young Adult Services #2 (2021)

**THE ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
POSITION ON
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE 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