



SUBJECT: CHILDREN & YOUTH SERVICES POLICY

Policy No: 2025-13

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the Library's criteria and guidelines for providing high-quality services to children and youth. All programs, events, and services will provide age-appropriate content and experiences, honouring the diverse intellectual, cultural, and recreational needs of Innisfil's children and youth.

POLICY:

General

Library services for children and youth are a vital part of the Library's mandate. They support growth and development by promoting lifelong learning, literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving in a technology-rich environment. As highlighted in the Library's *Position Statement on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility*, Libraries have a responsibility to create an environment and contribute to a culture that respects individual dignity, ideas, and beliefs, and ensures all can maximize their potential.

Children and Youth Services encompass collections, programs, partnerships, and spaces, delivered by skilled employees in services for children, youth, and families.

Application

This policy applies to all Library Employees, and to anyone using Library spaces, including children and youth, their caregivers, and program partners.

Definitions

- **Parent:** A natural, adoptive, or foster parent of a child or youth.
- **Guardian:** A legal custodian responsible for the care of a child or youth.
- **Caregiver:** Any person aged 12 years or older, including parents and guardians, responsible for the direct care of a child using the Library or services.
- **Children:** Individuals aged 0-11, until their 12th birthday.
- **Youth:** Individuals aged 12-17, until their 18th birthday.
- **Employee:** All Library staff, including full-time, part-time, contract, seasonal, casual, student/co-op employees, long-term volunteers, and Board Members.

Administration

The Innisfil Public Library Board is committed to quality services for children and youth and endorses the *Children's Rights in the Public Library* statement, the OLA's statement on *Teen's Rights in the Public Library*, and the Canadian Federation of Library Association's *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries*. (see Appendices)

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Caregivers:** Responsible for the supervision, safety, behaviour, and material choices of children and youth in their care, including internet use.
- **Employees:** Provide access to collections, technology, and programs, and enforce Library policies. Employees are trained to deliver safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate services, but do not act as caregivers.
- **Visitors:** All visitors, including children and youth, must adhere to the Library's Rules of Conduct policy.

Guidelines

Space for Children and Youth

The Library is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for children and youth, with designated areas where possible, to support learning, exploration, and social connection. Compliance with the Library's Rules of Conduct is required at all times.

Collections, Reference & Readers Advisory

A broad range of materials is provided to meet the needs of children and youth, maintained through continuous evaluation as per the Collection Management Policy. Employees will assist users with requests for resources, books and information, confidentially and respectfully, and by engaging in meaningful and age-appropriate conversations. Caregivers determine the suitability of library materials and oversee children's use of digital devices.

Library employees do not act as caregivers and will neither censor nor restrict access to any materials within the collection. The responsibility to assess the suitability of library materials for children and youth resides with caregivers, not library employees. As outlined in the Membership & Borrowing Policy, caregivers are accountable for the materials that children and youth in their care access or borrow from the Library.

In alignment with the Public Internet and Technology Use Policy, the Library provides unfiltered Internet access for all. Caregivers are responsible for supervising the usage of digital devices and services by children and youth, including managing potential risks such as damage or loss, as well as restricting access to inappropriate online materials.

Programming

The Library is committed to delivering a wide range of activities, events, and programs that enrich the lives of children and youth. These offerings are specifically designed to spark curiosity, stimulate imagination, and support lifelong learning and literacy. By incorporating the latest insights from early childhood research and educational trends, these programs reflect best practices and innovative approaches.

All programs for children, youth, and families are developed according to the Program Policy, ensuring inclusive, supportive environments. Library employees work closely with caregivers to maximize participation, providing expertise to align program choices with individual developmental needs. Employees are equipped to recommend appropriate programs, suggesting alternatives when another option may better serve a child's or youth's unique requirements.

Caregiver Responsibilities During Programs

- Programs are classified as either supervised, where a caregiver attends alongside the child, or independent, allowing the child to engage without direct supervision.
- During independent programs, caregivers are required to stay within the Library premises and must return to the program space promptly when the session concludes.
- Caregivers must always be available to assist their child upon staff request, for situations such as washroom breaks, sickness or injury, behavioral issues, or emergencies.

Advocacy & Outreach

Employees focused on Children & Youth Services play an essential role in advocacy by:

- Partnering with municipal departments, local agencies, schools, and childcare centers to promote early literacy and lifelong learning, thereby boosting the well-being of children and youth in Innisfil.
- Actively pursuing support from community organizations, seeking partnerships, and encouraging fundraising efforts to enhance services for children and youth.
- Connecting with other service providers on local, provincial, and broader levels to share best practices and improve service delivery.
- Maintaining communication with education professionals like principals and teachers, fostering joint initiatives that support educational and developmental goals.

Through these activities, Library employees help build robust community support systems that prioritize the growth and development of children and youth, ensuring broad access to vital resources and opportunities.

Volunteering

The Library offers a variety of youth volunteering opportunities for students living and/or attending school in Innisfil. Volunteer hours are offered to those students who apply on an as needed basis.

Conduct and Behaviour

All visitors must follow the Library's Rules of Conduct Policy. Responsibility for the behaviour and well-being of children and youth using the Library lies with caregivers. Employees may enforce rules through excluding an individual or group from Library property for the remainder of the day, banning or trespassing for a set period of time, or requiring guardian accompaniment when accessing library facilities or services.

Unattended Children and Youth

The Library cannot assume responsibility for children left unattended. Caregivers are responsible for supervision, safety, and behaviour while they are on Library property.

- Children age 11 years and younger must be supervised at all times while visiting the Library.
- Youth aged 12 and up may use the Library independently, with caregivers remaining accountable for their behaviour as outlined in applicable Library policies.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

As per the *Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (Section 125), library employees are mandated to report any suspicions of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, or risk of harm involving children and youth under 16 to Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions. For concerns involving 16 or 17-year-olds, employees may report suspected abuse or neglect to Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions as well. While reporting for this age group is not mandatory, the agency is obliged to assess the information provided and determine the necessary actions. Employees must notify the CEO or designate of all reports made to Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions regarding abuse and neglect.

Appendix #1 – Ontario Library Association Position on Children’s Rights in the Library, Adopted 1998

Appendix #2 – Ontario Library Association Teen’s Rights In the Library, Adopted 2010

Appendix #3 – Canadian Federation of Library Associations Statement on the Intellectual Freedom and Libraries, Adopted 1974

RELATED POLICIES:

Collection Management Policy

Membership and Borrowing Policy

Program Policy

Public Internet and Technology Use Policy

Rules of Conduct Policy

Volunteer Policy

Approved by the Innisfil Public Library Board, September 15, 2025, Motion Number: 2025.50

Supersedes Policy #2024-20, approved October 21, 2024; and Policy #2020-26, approved October 19, 2020, Motion #2020.78; and Policy #2016-16, approved October 17, 2016, Motion #2016.80 & Policy #2013-21, approved December 9, 2013, Motion #2013.110; &

Policy #2010-11, approved May 17, 2010, Motion #2010.40; &

Policy #2005-09, approved November 14, 2005, Motion #2005.54; &

Policy #2001-12, approved November 9, 1998, Motion #98.40.

Appendix 1

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.

Appendix 2



∴ ontario library association

Teen’s rights in the Public Library

Goals for Library Services for Teens:

Young people are valuable members of our library community who deserve the same respect, dignity and human rights as all library members. This document provides a framework for developing library services to teens that meet the educational, informational, and cultural and leisure needs of young people in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Each public library has a different community to serve and therefore different priorities and needs.

Although specific services for teens have not been well established in all libraries, these goals are created in the belief that young adulthood is a unique life stage and that young adults are entitled to the same quality of library services offered to other age groups in the population.

(Adapted from the IFLA Guidelines for Library Services for Young Adults, 2006 and the YALSA Guidelines for Library Services to Teens, Ages 12-18, 2006.)

The goal of library services for teens is to assist with the transition from children’s services to adult services and to provide access to both resources and an environment that meets the needs of young people for intellectual, emotional and social development. Specifically these needs are based on the unique seven developmental needs of adolescents and the five core values of quality service to teens:

7 Developmental Needs of Teens	5 Core Values of service to teens
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical activity,• Competence and achievement,• Self definition,• Creative expression,• Positive social Interaction with Peers and Adults,• Structure and Clear Limits,• Meaningful Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respecting and responding to unique YA needs,• Providing equal access,• Empowering Youth through participation,• Engaging Teens in active collaboration,• Supporting healthy youth development.
<small>Excerpted from: Dorman, G. (1981). The Middle Grades Assessment Program: User’s Manual. Carrboro, NC: Center for Early Adolescence.</small>	<small>Core Values excerpted from Jones, P. (2002). <i>New directions for library service to young adults</i>. Chicago: American Library Association.</small>

Teens in Ontario Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom

The library establishes clear policy statements concerning the right to free access by young adults to library resources and information sources; and respect for the rights of young adults to select materials appropriate to their needs without censorship, The library’s teen collection, policies and services should be consistent with the concepts of intellectual freedom defined by the CLA, OLA and Ontario Human Rights code.

2. Equal access to the full range of materials, services, and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their unique needs.

The Library integrates library service to teens into the overall plan, budget and service program for the library. Library service to teens is integrated with those offered to other user groups.

3. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.

The Library incorporates funding for materials and services for teens in the library operating budget and ensures there is equitable distribution of resources to support programs and services for young adults.

4. Collections that specifically meet the needs of teens

The Library provides a wide spectrum of current materials of interest to young adults to encourage lifelong learning, literacy, reading motivation, and reader development. The library endeavors to develop collections that encourage leisure reading, support homework and school success and responds to gender and cultural diversity. The library provides unfettered access to technology including social networking, licensed databases, and other online library resources for teens.

5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.

The Library provides identifiable spaces for teens that are separate from children's spaces where possible, reflects their lifestyle and allows for teens to use this library space for leisure or study, either independently or in groups.

6. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service at every service point.

The Library promotes friendly, positive, non-biased customer interactions with teens, providing staff development and training and ensures that services for teens embrace cultural and gender diversity and economic differences. Library staff will endeavor to respect the teen's need for privacy and nonjudgmental service and assist young adults in acquiring the skills to effectively access all library resources and become information literate.

7. Library Programs and Services appropriate for Teens

The Library fosters youth development by providing programs for teens that contribute to literacy, life-long learning and healthy youth development. The library endeavors to provide volunteer opportunities for helping others through community service hours including participating on Library Advisory Boards, and other projects that help develop a sense of responsibility and community involvement. The library's teen services initiatives are effectively managed according to best practices in the field of Youth Services.

8. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in teen services.

Library staff is knowledgeable about adolescent development and age appropriate resources for young adults inclusive of those with special needs. The library provides services by teen specialists as well as by others who are trained to serve teens.)

9. 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 teen services.

The Library works in partnership with other community agencies and organizations to support all aspects of healthy, successful youth development.

10. Library policies are written to include the needs of the youth.

Adopted at the Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting June 2010.

Appendix 3



Canadian Federation of Library Associations
Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques

Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries

Approval History: ~ CLA: June 27, 1974. Amended November 17, 1983; November 18, 1985; September 27, 2015. CFLA-FCAB:
Adopted August 26, 2016; Reviewed April 12, 2019.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms further that libraries have a core responsibility to support, defend and promote the universal principles of intellectual freedom and privacy.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and foster free expression and the right to safe and welcoming places and conditions. To this end, libraries make available their public spaces and services to individuals and groups without discrimination.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and defend privacy in the individual's pursuit of expressive content. To this end, libraries protect the identities and activities of library users except when required by the courts to cede them.



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Furthermore, in accordance with established library policies, procedures and due process, libraries resist efforts to limit the exercise of these responsibilities while recognizing the right of criticism by individuals and groups.

Library employees, volunteers and employers as well as library governing entities have a core responsibility to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom in the performance of their respective library roles.

You can find CFLA-FCAB's Position on Third Party Use of Publicly Funded Library Meetings Rooms and Facilities: An Interpretation of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries [here](#)