

**Lincoln Public Library Board
POLICY MANUAL**

SECTION:	FACILITIES	INDEX: C-10
TOPIC:	Unattended Children	PAGE: 1 of 3
DATE:	April 2006	REVISED: December 2010; October 2014; September 2018

The Lincoln Public 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. The following policy establishes the conditions needed to maintain the well-being of children and the responsibilities of their caregivers.

1. Responsibilities of the Parent or Caregiver

- i. Responsibility for the welfare and the behaviour of children using the library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
- ii. 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.”

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. The Lincoln Public Library has determined that children under the age of 10 cannot be unattended in its facilities.

- iii. The library expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:
 - a) not leave children under 10 requiring supervision unattended in or about library premises
 - b) monitor the use of services and collections by children under their care
 - c) be responsible for borrowed materials and fines incurred by children under their care

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SECTION: FACILITIES **INDEX: C-10**
TOPIC: Unattended Children **PAGE: 2 of 3**
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- d) be responsible for the appropriate behaviour of children under their care
- e. Children nine (9) years old and younger must be accompanied by an adult while in the Library.
- f. 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.

2. Responsibility of Staff

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

3, Duty to Report

- i. 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

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SECTION:	FACILITIES	INDEX: C-10
TOPIC:	Unattended Children	PAGE: 3 of 3
DATE:	April 2006	REVISED: December 2010; October 2014; September 2018

children, have an obligation to report promptly to 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 CYFSA defines the phrase “child in need of protection” as including physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect and risk of harm.

ii. 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 the CAS and the CAS is required to assess the reported information.

iii. When library staff members have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection, they will advise the Library CEO and together they will promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the local CAS, are required in CYFSA s. 136 (1)