



Section of Policy Manual: Services	Policy No. : SER-02
Subject: Children's Services	Policy Approval Date: October 10, 2024 Date first approved: October 12, 2017
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### **Section 1: Purpose**

The Gravenhurst Public Library is committed to meeting the needs of all people in Gravenhurst. The Library recognizes the importance of children in their own right. To ensure that the Library is upholding its mandate and aiding in the stimulation of intellectual growth and cultural appreciation of children, the Library will: strive to provide appropriate children's materials, reference and reader guidance, resources, programming, space, and general services to children. This policy will discuss the above services in further detail as well as provide guidelines for the safety and supervision of children in the library.

### **Section 2: Scope**

To ensure that the needs of the children of Gravenhurst are met, this policy will discuss the services and materials available to every child from newborn to 12 in Gravenhurst. In addition, these guidelines are applicable to parents, guardians, caregivers, adults who work with children, and adults who are interested in children's materials.

### **Section 3: Rights of Children in the Library**

Gravenhurst Public Library upholds the Ontario Library Association's (OLA) position on children's rights in the Public Library. According to the OLA, Children in Public Libraries have the right to:

- a) Intellectual Freedom.
- b) Equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
- c) A full range of materials, services, and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their needs.



- d) Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use, and local community needs.
- e) A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.
- f) Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in children's services.
- g) Welcoming, respectful, supportive service from birth through transition to adult user.
- h) 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.
- i) Library policies written to include the needs of the child.

#### **Section 4: Services**

1. Gravenhurst and other Muskoka residents of all ages have the right to a Gravenhurst Public Library card, with the following guidelines for children:
  - a) All children from newborn to 12 may be issued their own membership card with the understanding that the parent or guardian accepts responsibility for its use.
  - b) According to the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, section 54.c, parents, or guardians may obtain access to information regarding which materials children currently have checked out.
2. Gravenhurst Public Library recognizes the right of children to have equal access to a full range of materials and services. To ensure equitable access to materials, children who do not have their library card on their person may sign out materials by confirming information on their account including their home address or phone number in lieu of presenting a personal ID. The Library reserves the right to refuse this service.
3. All children without a public library card will have equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users (with the exception of checking materials out).
4. Gravenhurst Public Library offers a variety of services to children, parents, guardians, caregivers, adults who work with children, and adults who are interested in children's materials. These services include, but are not limited to:



- a) Regular programming.
- b) Readers' advisory and reference specifically in regards to children's materials.
- c) Outreach into the community
- d) Class Visits
- e) Group Visits

### **Section 5: Collections**

1. A comprehensive children's collection based on the Collection Development Policy (MAT-01) will be maintained. These collections will include:
  - a) Materials that meet high standards of quality, including reviewed and award winning materials;
  - b) Materials that reflect current children's, community, and societal trends, as well as materials that can be considered to have permanent or contemporary value, including materials that could be considered "classics";
  - c) Materials designed to aid in reading comprehension and literacy development;
  - d) Materials that represent a large range of mediums, including print, non-print materials, and age-appropriate formats.

### **Section 6: Reference and Readers' Advisory**

1. Staff will provide reference and readers' advisory using a wide range of skills, tools, and methods. These include digital and print readers' advisory tools as well as personal experience with the materials in the Library;
2. Staff will strive to better understand the request of the patron by using a variety of methods, including conducting readers' advisory interviews;
3. Regardless of the age of the requester, all library-related questions and requests placed upon staff should be answered in a professional, non-judgemental, non-biased or censored manner, using confidentiality and respect;



4. When appropriate, staff will point out a variety of resources available throughout all areas of the Library. These include, but are not limited to, print, non-print, and digital resources;
5. When appropriate, staff will teach patrons how to better utilize the Library's materials, including demonstrating how to find materials, how to use the catalogue, and how to access digital resources both at home and in the Library.
6. When appropriate, staff will direct patrons to resources that complement the Ontario school curriculum or support alternative education and homeschooling environments.

### **Section 7: Advocacy for Children**

1. Staff members take an active role in child advocacy through community outreach and partnerships. In order to ensure that children have a voice in their community, staff will:
  - a) Network and provide outreach throughout the community to ensure that children, parents, and guardians are aware of the services available to them at the Library;
  - b) Collaborate with agencies to promote and foster early literacy, love of reading, lifelong learning, and children's health and well-being;
  - c) Seek support for children's services from community organizations, fundraising, donations, etc.;
  - d) Advocate for children's services to the Library Board;
  - e) Maintain open communication with principals, teachers, and teacher librarians within the community;
  - f) Welcome class visits and orientation for school children and home-schooled children.
2. To ensure the safety of children in the Gravenhurst community, the entire staff at the Gravenhurst Public Library abides by the *Ontario Child and Family Services Act*. Section 72.1 of the act states that a person who performs professional and official duties with respect to children, must report any suspicions regarding neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children. These suspicions must be reported promptly and immediately by the individual who witnesses or suspects that a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed.



## **Section 8: Staffing**

1. The Library will ensure that all staff members receive appropriate training to provide knowledgeable library service to children, including readers' advisory and reference services.
2. The Library Board will support ongoing staff training and professional development in children's services.
3. Staff are never responsible for children in the Library. All browsing of materials, access to information, and use of the Library by children is the parents' or guardians' responsibility.
4. At least one staff member will oversee children's programming and collections. In addition, the Library will hire summer staff to focus on children's summer programming and assign additional staff members to support children's programming and outreach.
  - a) Children's staff members will have a desire to work with children and will have expertise in bringing materials and children together;
  - b) Children's staff members will have a commitment to ongoing training and professional development;
  - c) Children's staff members will be qualified, knowledgeable, and personable individuals.

## **Section 9: Programming**

1. Gravenhurst Public Library recognizes its role in providing the community with opportunities to learn and grow. As such, the library will offer programs that are both educational and engaging, and that reflect the Programming Values outlined in Section 2 of the Library's Programming Policy (SER-13). The library will provide programming for children and parents, both in and out of the library, that encourage a love of literacy, promote lifelong learning, nurture curiosity, creativity and innovation, and facilitate community building, collaboration and social connection.
2. All children's programming will be facilitated by trained Library staff or appropriate and trained partner groups.



3. All children's programming will follow the guidelines outlined in the Library's Children's Program Code of Conduct (PAT-05). Library staff will enforce the Code of Conduct and may use their judgement to mandate a compulsory break from programs for participants who consistently breach the Code of Conduct.
4. Library programs are to be educational and engaging. Programs will promote or highlight library collections and services, encourage independent reading and use of the Library, nurture literacy and related skills, and emphasize the importance of the Library in the community.
5. The library will provide educational, entertaining and literature related programs and support for children. Children's programs will reflect the Library's programming values as outlined in Section 2 of the Programming Policy (SER-13), and will include:
  - a) Regularly scheduled, age-appropriate children's programs and events that are both educational and recreational in nature.
  - b) Programs for parents/ guardians, adults, and caregivers that offer opportunities to learn and connect with other parents and families.
  - c) Educational programs for classes, children's groups, and daycares that support or complement the Ontario curriculum.
  - d) Programs for summer, school breaks, and professional development days.
  - e) Community outreach that promotes library services and collections and engages the community in learning and recreation.
6. The number of participants for some programs may be restricted based on size of the facility, fire department limits, staff supervision available, etc.; this will be enforced by the programmer in charge.
7. Some programs may require registration. Some programs may limit the age of children and the number of children per accompanying adult. These limits may be enforced by staff in order to ensure optimal safety and learning conditions for both patrons and staff.

## **Section 10: Technology Services**

1. Gravenhurst Public Library provides children with access to technology. Child-safe computers and tablets are located within the children's section for



children's use. The Library assumes no responsibility for the accuracy or effectiveness of the parental controls on child-safe devices.

2. Access to technology within the Library is governed in regards to the Internet Access Policy (SER-11). Guidelines specific to children include:
  - a) Children are entitled to access all information and facilities in the Library. As with other library materials, children's access to computing hardware, software, and the internet is the responsibility of parents or guardians. This includes the use of Library computers and Wi-Fi.
  - b) The Library accepts no responsibility for enforcing the restrictions which a parent or guardian places on a child's use of Internet resources.
    - i. Staff will:
      1. Affirm and acknowledge the rights and responsibilities of parents and guardians to monitor and determine their children's access to materials and resources;
      2. Make available resources to aid parents in guiding their children in the safe and effective use of the Internet.
    - ii. Parents will:
      1. assume responsibility for deciding which resources and type of network access are appropriate for their children;

### **Section 11: Library Space**

1. The Library is committed to providing dedicated space to children. These spaces will be comfortable, welcoming, and visually stimulating so that children can easily distinguish that the space is designed for them. These spaces will have a place for individual reading as well as collaborative space for group learning. The Library recognizes that these spaces are for learning and growth, and as such controlled noise levels are acceptable and young patrons are invited to explore the Library resources in their own way. The following will be taken into account in the children's space:



- a) Appropriate children's materials will be made easily available within the children's space;
- b) All shelving, furniture, and seating will be designed for and accessible to children of all ages;
- c) The Library will ensure that the signage is clear and age appropriate.

### **Section 12: Unattended Children in the Library**

1. According to the *Ontario Child and Family Services Act* section 79.3, "no person having charge of a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his or her supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances." The Library is a public place and parents/ guardians are responsible for their children's supervision at all times. At no point are children the responsibility of Library staff.
2. To this end, the library expects parents, caregivers and teachers to:
  - a. not leave children under the age of 10 unattended in or about library premises
  - b. not leave children under 16, requiring supervision, unattended in or about library premises
  - c. monitor the use of services by children under their care
  - d. be responsible for the appropriate behavior of children under their care
3. Responsibility of Staff
  - a. Library staff members will be guided by this policy and will intervene in situations, where:
    - i. an unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library
    - ii. an unattended child is perceived to be endangering themselves or other library users
    - iii. another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
    - iv. an unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behavior
    - v. an unattended child is not met by a responsible caregiver at closing time or at end of program
    - vi. a child is consistently left on their own in the library for long periods of time





- b. Where a responsible adult cannot be contacted, library staff will:
  - i. not leave a child unattended at closing time
  - ii. not give the child a ride home
  - iii. contact local police or Children's Aid Society (CAS)
  - iv. remain with the child until the proper authorities can take the child into their protection

### **Section 13: Conduct Behaviour**

1. Children are expected to follow the Library's Rules of Conduct Policy. Parents are responsible for the behaviour of their children while they are in the Library. The Library recognizes that the children's space is a place of learning and collaboration. As such, controlled noise levels are acceptable. Library staff will intervene and stop a child from a behaviour if:
  - a) It affects the reasonable use or enjoyment of the Library for others;
  - b) It disrupts a program;
  - c) It presents a dangerous situation for that patron, any other patron, or staff;
  - d) It affects Library equipment, Library furniture, or the Library facility.

### **Related Documents**

Government of Ontario. ***Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act***, section 54.c

Government of Ontario. ***Ontario Child and Family Services Act***. Section 72.1

***GPL Policy GOV-09 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion***

***GPL Policy SER-13 Programming***

***GPL Policy MAT-01 Collection Development***

***GPL Policy PAT-05 Children's Program Code of Conduct***

***GPL Policy SER-11 Internet Access***

***GPL Policy PAT-03 Patron Code of Conduct***