OXFORD COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD POLICY MANUAL

Section:	Operational	Chairperson's Signature:	
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Children and Young Adult Services Policy

BACKGROUND

Oxford County Library offers many services and programs for the benefit of children, teens, and parents/caregivers. These programs aim to build community, foster literacy, and promote library use.

Services to children and teens will be based on the principles stated in the Ontario Library Association's *Children's Rights in the Library (1998)* and *Teen's Rights in the Public Library (2010)*.

Levels of service vary between branch tiers, as outlined in the Library's *Service Delivery Model.*

PURPOSE

This policy serves to provide parameters for the development and implementation of services, spaces, collections and programs for children and teens at the Oxford County Library.

DEFINITIONS

Child Ages 0 to 13

Young Adult / Teen Ages 14 to 18

Caregiver A parent, guardian, or responsible person designated by the parent/guardian of a child.

PROCEDURES

1.0 Oxford County Library creates patron-centred services that are inclusive and equitable. The Library is committed to supporting the unique nature and diverse needs of our individual branch communities and the various age groups served.

2.0 Staffing

2.1 Oxford County Library staff are dedicated to servicing children and teens.

2.2 Library staff receive ongoing opportunities for professional development that support their knowledge of readers' advisory, collections, and programming applicable to all ages, including children and teens.

3.0 Collections

3.1 Comprehensive collections for children and teens will be provided in accordance with the Library's *Collection Development Policy*.

3.2 Collections for children and teens will reflect the diverse and evolving needs and interests of those for which they are intended.

3.3 In the selection of materials, professional staff will give consideration to:

3.3.1 Canadian, Indigenous, and local authors and content

3.3.2 Award-winning titles

3.3.3 Representations of diverse experiences

3.3.4 Non-fiction material that complements the local school curriculum

3.3.5 Age-appropriate formats.

3.4 Access to collections will not be restricted based on age of the borrower, except where restrictions are mandated in accordance with provincial or federal legislation. Parents/caregivers and legal guardians are responsible for children's reading and viewing.

4.0 Library Space

4.1 The Library will dedicate areas for children and teens, and their collections in each branch, where possible.

4.2 Library spaces for children and teens will be distinct from adult spaces and include furnishings and amenities that will provide a welcoming, safe and inclusive atmosphere. These spaces adhere to a flexible attitude toward fluctuating noise levels.

5.0 Programming and Outreach

5.1 Oxford County Library will provide programming and outreach for children, teens and their parents/caregivers that will:

5.1.1 stimulate creative potential;

5.1.2 promote an inclusive environment;

5.1.3 encourage and facilitate a culture of literacy and independent learning;

5.1.4 provide equitable access.

5.2 The number of participants may be restricted for any program based on facility size, fire department limits, available staff supervision, health and safety recommendations, etc. Limits will be enforced by the staff person in charge of the program.

6.0 Access to Information

6.1 All children and teens will have equal access to the full range of services available to other users.

6.2 All children and teens are eligible for an Oxford County Library card.

6.2.1 Parents/caregivers may apply on behalf of their child, up to and including the age of 13.

6.2.2 Once the individual has reached the age of 14, and can provide their own identification, they may apply without parental/caregiver consent.

6.3 The full range of qualified staff skills, collections, equipment and methods will be used to answer all patron requests, regardless of age.

6.4 Library staff will not censor material or information, unless required by law.

6.5 All children's and teens' requests will be answered without judgement, with confidentiality and with respect.

7.0 Advocacy for Children and Teens

7.1 The Library will advocate for children and teen services in the community by:

7.1.1 collaborating with agencies to promote early literacy and a culture of reading, while also supporting children and teen health and well-being;

7.1.2 seeking support for children and teen services from community organizations, as well as through fundraising and community donations;

7.1.3 networking with other agencies who provide service to children and teens in the community, region and province;

7.1.4 communicating with principals, teacher librarians and teachers in the community;

7.1.5 promoting services and collections to benefit local children and teen groups/agencies such as schools, daycares, etc.;

7.1.6 welcoming tours and class visits for all Oxford County schools, home-school groups, and other groups and agencies that support children and teens.

8.0 Parental / Caregiver Responsibility

8.1 Oxford County Library believes in the freedom of the individual and the rights and obligations of parents/caregivers to develop, interpret, and maintain their own code of values as a family. In support of this belief, parents/caregivers are responsible for the library collections, technologies, services and programs accessed by their children.

8.2 Library staff cannot act in place of, or absence of, a parent/caregiver. Staff are not responsible for enforcing restrictions which a parent/caregiver may place

upon a child or teen's use of library collections, technologies, services and/or programs.

8.3 Parents/caregivers are responsible for the supervision of the child(ren) in their care while accessing library services and programs. Library staff are not responsible for the supervision, safety, and behaviour of children and teens visiting library spaces. All patrons must abide by the Library's *Code of Conduct.*

9.0 Unattended Children

9.1 The Library is a public place and parents/caregivers are responsible for children's supervision and behaviour at all times.

9.2 Library staff are not caregivers and cannot assume responsibility for children in the Library.

9.3 Library staff are obligated to call the police or the Children's Aid Society if they believe a child is in need of protection and their parents/caregivers are not available.

10.0 Duty to Report

10.1 All staff members of the Oxford County Library are obligated under the Ontario *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* to report suspicions of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse of children under the age of 16. According to law, reporting must be done promptly and immediately by the individual who witnesses or suspects that a child has experienced harm or is at risk of being harmed.

11.0 References and Related Documents

11.1 Oxford County Library Policies

11.1.1 Oxford County Library. (2022). *Service Delivery Model.*

11.1.2 Oxford County Library. (2024). *Code of Conduct.*

11.1.3 Oxford County Library. (2022, June). *Collection Development Policy*.

11.2 Legislation

11.2.1 *Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, 2017, S.O. 2017, c.14, Sched.1

11.3 Position Statements

11.3.1 Canadian Federation of Library Associations. (2019, April). *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries*. CFLA-FCAB.

11.3.2 Ontario Library Association. (1998, November). *Position on Children's Rights in the Library.* OLA: Ontario Library Association.

11.3.3 Ontario Library Association. (2010, June). *Teen's Rights in the Public Library*. OLA: Ontario Library Association.

11.3.4 Ontario Library Association. (2020, January). *Statement on Intellectual Freedom and the Intellectual Rights of the Individual*. OLA: Ontario Library Association.