



SUBJECT: CHILDREN'S SERVICES POLICY

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the criteria and guidelines of Innisfil Public Library in providing service to children to support and foster a life-long love of reading and learning. All programmes, events, and services will provide age-appropriate content and experiences to meet the diverse informational and recreational needs of Innisfil's children. This policy also provides a framework for how the Library achieves its goals and strategic priorities when serving children.

POLICY:

General

Library services to children are a vital and integral part of the Innisfil Public Library's mandate. They contribute to individual growth and development by supporting life-long learning, including literacy, numeracy, and problem solving, in a technology-rich environment. The Innisfil Public Library Board is committed to providing the best possible services for children and fully endorses the *Children's Rights in the Public Library* statement adopted at the *Ontario Library Association* Annual General Meeting, November 1998 (Appendix 1).

Application

Staff, children ages 0 to 12 years, their parents/guardians/caregivers, and those who work with children.

Guidelines

Space for Children

Innisfil Public Library shows its commitment to exemplary library service for children by providing dedicated areas for children and their collections in each branch. These areas strive to be interactive learning environments that, where possible, include children-specific furnishings, age-appropriate technologies, educational toys and manipulatives, and offer a friendly, inviting atmosphere that encourage exploration and learning.

Staff

The Library employs qualified Staff dedicated to the provision of excellent library service to children, and who are committed to ongoing training and professional development.

Collections

The Library provides a wide range of materials in all formats and reading levels to meet the informational, cultural, learning and leisure needs of children. The Library will maintain a fresh, comprehensive, up-to-date collection for children that supports the local school curriculum and reflects the constantly evolving interests of children. This is accomplished by an ongoing evaluation of resources. Additions to the collection will be made in accordance with the Library's current Collection Management Policy.

Programming

The Library provides activities, events, and programmes for children 0 to 12 years to enrich their lives, invoke curiosity, stimulate the imagination, and encourage life-long learning and literacy through the incorporation of current trends in early childhood research and education. All children's programmes support the Library's mission, values, goals, and strategic priorities by:

- Making the Library a hub for discovery and experience;
- Developing a strong community presence;
- Cultivating a "hacker ethic"; *and*
- Fostering a culture of innovation.

In addition to these key objectives, children's programmes support the use of library collections and resources, promote services, and share knowledge and expertise where appropriate.

Registration & Attendance

- Most library programmes will require advance registration and the number of participants is restricted based on the format of the programme, the size of the facility, fire safety limits, staff supervision available, etc. and will be enforced by the children's programmer in charge of the programme.

- Programmes are tailored to developmental stages to best meet the needs of all children. Children must therefore have reached the minimum age requirement for the programme by the end of the programme session for which they are registered. Proof of age is required for some registrations and may be requested at any time by a Staff Member.
- Some children, regardless of age may not be socially prepared for a programme. The children's programmer will determine this and will work with the parent/guardian/caregiver to provide a course of action which may include removing the child from the programme.
- Some programmes limit the number of children per accompanying adult. This limit may be enforced by the programmer as the programme is designed for maximum benefit to the child/parent/care-giver through one-on-one interaction.
- Consistent attendance at all registered programmes will result in optimum benefit to the child. Participants who miss two consecutive weeks without advising the programming Staff in advance may be asked to forfeit their spot to a child on the waiting list.

Charging for Programs

- It is a priority for the Library to offer low or no-cost programmes, and the majority of children's programmes are free to attend. Any fees associated with programmes are charged to offset the cost of specialized supplies. Should parents/caregivers be concerned about their ability to pay programme fees, they are encouraged to speak with the Manager of Programming to explore options for their families. The Library places a high priority on serving families regardless of their financial situation.
- If a participant attends a programme with an associated cost with a support person, there will be no charge for the support person to attend.

Marketing

- Programmes will be fully promoted using various channels of communication through community partnerships, local media, in-house publications and displays, including the Library's website and social media.

Advocacy & Outreach

The Library Board is committed to providing the best possible services for children and has adopted the *Ontario Library Association's Position on Children's Rights in the Library* (appendix 1).

Children's Services at Innisfil Public Library will take an active role in child advocacy through community outreach partnerships with schools and other community organizations serving children, providing educational, entertaining, and literacy based programmes which support children, families, parents/guardians, caregivers, and educators. These programmes share the goals and priorities of in-house programming.

Where appropriate, programmes including parents/guardians, teachers, and caregivers will focus on the importance of early childhood literacy, current trends in education and technology, and the role of the Library in supporting their needs.

The Library will continue to develop a high profile in the community and increase partnerships through:

- collaborating with local service agencies to emphasize the importance of fostering a love of reading and life-long learning in children;
- actively seeking support for children's services from community organizations, including fundraising, donations, etc.;
- networking with others who provide services to children locally, provincially and beyond;
- encouraging communication with principals, teacher librarians, and teachers in our community, as well as with those staff at the school board;
- promoting services and collections to groups who could bring them to larger audiences of children – schools, daycares, etc.;
- class visits for local school children and home schooled children;
- participating in local events, i.e. parades, fairs, 'Family Fun Day', 'Light-Up Night';
- local business contacts.

Intellectual Freedom/Access to Information

Children have the right to intellectual freedom and are entitled to open access to all information and services throughout the Library.

- All children will have equal access to the full range of services and materials available to other users.
- Any children from birth forward, who live or attend school in the Town of Innisfil are eligible for an Innisfil Public Library card. Parents/guardians may apply on behalf of their child, up to and including the age of 13. Once the customer is in high school and can provide their own identification, they may apply without parental consent.
- Any child with or without a library card may use the services and collections within all library facilities, unless use of the service or space specifically requires a card (i.e. Digital Media Lab, public computer use, etc.).
- The full range of qualified staff skills, collections, equipment and methods will be utilized to answer all customer requests, regardless of age.
- In accordance with the *1998 Ontario Library Association's Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual* adopted by the Innisfil Public Library Board (see Appendix 2), while Library Staff will assist a child in finding materials, they do not act in place of a parent. Parents/Guardians are responsible for the materials borrowed by the children in their care and for supervising all aspects of their children's use of the Library.
- All children's requests will be answered without judgment, with respect and according to the Library's confidentiality guidelines.

- The Library provides unfiltered Internet use for children in accordance with the Innisfil Public Library Board's current Internet Service Policy.

Conduct and Behaviour

The Children's Services policy on noise levels, conduct and behaviour is an adjunct policy to the Library's current Rules of Conduct Policy.

- Parents are responsible for the behaviour of their children while in the Library.
- Library Staff will stop a behaviour if it:
 - affects the enjoyment of the Library for others;
 - disrupts a programme;
 - presents a dangerous situation for that customer, any other customer or Staff; *or*
 - affects library equipment or a library facility.
- When a Staff Member attempts to stop a behaviour, they will explain why the behaviour is not acceptable.
- Customers of all ages will be asked to leave the Library if they do not comply with the Library's Rules of Conduct.

Unattended Children

The Library is a public place and parents/guardians are responsible for their children's supervision at all times. According to the *Ontario's Child and Family Services Act*, children under 16 must never be left without "provision made for their supervision and care that is reasonable in the circumstances".

Supervision of children under 12 years of age while in the Library rests on the parent/guardian of the children. Library Staff will strive to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for children, but cannot be held responsible for their care. Parents of children under 10 years of age should not leave the library premises while their children are using the space or participating in a programme, and parents of children between the age of 12 and 16 will be asked to use their best judgement in leaving children alone at the Library.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

The entire Staff of the Innisfil Public Library, as members of society, as members of the public and as professionals who work with children, is obligated under the *Ontario Child and Family Services Act* to report suspicions of physical, emotional and sexual abuse to children under the age of 16. The 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.

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

Appendix #2 – Ontario Library Association Statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual, 1998

RELATED POLICIES:

Borrowing Policy

Collection Management Policy

Internet Service Policy

Programme Policy

Rules of Conduct Policy

Youth Services Policy

Approved by the Innisfil Public Library Board, October 17, 2016

Motion Number: 2016.80

Supersedes 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.

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.

**ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
STATEMENT ON
THE INTELLECTUAL RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL**

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

1) That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality.

2) That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular.

3) That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.

4) That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic.

5) That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and to implement it consistently in the selection of books, periodicals, films, recordings, and other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet.

6) That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by any individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.

7) That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of material is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation.