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# UNATTENDED CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY POLICY

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## Purpose

The Southgate Ruth Hargrave Memorial Library welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. The purpose of this policy is to establish that it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian and not the library staff to monitor the whereabouts and behaviour of their children.

## Scope

The *Ontario Child and Family Services Act* states:

*“No person having charge a child less than 16 years of age shall leave the child without making provision for his/her supervision and care, that is reasonable in the circumstances. (S. 79 (1) (3)).*

In accordance with this statement, children under the age of nine (9) must remain in the company of a parent/guardian or caregiver while in the Library. A child under nine (9) years of age who is attending a Library program need not be accompanied into that program *unless otherwise indicated*. Parents/guardians/caregivers must, however, be present in the building during the program in case an emergency should arise.

## Policy Statement

Library staff cannot be held responsible for the welfare of children left unattended in Library facilities. Children in the library should always be accompanied by a parent, a guardian, or an assigned caregiver who is no less than 12 years of age.

Sharing the Library environment with other people requires that everyone follow the Library Patron Code of Conduct established by the Library Board and posted in the building and on the Library website.

## Staff Procedure

The following appropriate steps need to be taken by staff in regards to unattended or

## unsupervised children:

1. Unattended or unsupervised children under the age of 9 will be asked to give their name, the location of their parents or caregiver, and the time of their return.
2. Parent or caregiver will be located if present in the Library.
3. Children under the age of 9 left unattended for long periods of time in the Library (i.e. in excess of one hour) may be questioned by Library staff regarding their arrangements to be picked up.
4. Staff should attempt to contact the parent or caregiver but may call the Children's Aid Society if neglect is apparent.
5. Thirty (30) minutes prior to closing, staff will attempt to contact a parent or caregiver of any young children left in the library.
6. If unable to make contact, staff will contact police to take charge of said children.
7. Under no circumstances shall staff leave a child alone or drive a child home.
8. An incident report will be kept on file at the Library.