



## POLICY

**Policy Type:** Library Services      **Policy Number:** 03-12  
**Policy Title:** Children's and Teens' Services

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### **Introduction:**

The goal of Children's and Teens' Services is to support St. Thomas Public Library's mission: "to enrich, inform and educate", to foster a lifelong love of reading, exploration, learning and creativity. The encouragement of personal expression, the exploration of technological resources as well as personal growth and development will be fostered through quality library service, delivered with consideration and respect. St. Thomas Public Library Board endorses the OLA Position on Children's Rights in the Public Library and OLA Teen Rights in the Public Library (attached).

### **Clients Served:**

Children up to the age of 13 years and teens up to the age of 17 are the primary user group of children and teens' services and materials.

### **Children's and Teens' Area:**

The Children's and Teens' service area shall be distinct from the adult area. It is understood that Children's and Teens' areas are no longer places of silence, but interactive learning environments with flexibility towards noise. Teens are best served by having a distinct area with appropriate collections and furnishings.

### **Staffing:**

The Library provides responsive, trained staff who have a rapport with children and teens and who provide user focussed services by:

- § ensuring that all staff in children's and teens' services are offered opportunities to serve on committees and attend workshops, courses and conferences related to the entire library field
- § identifying and pursuing an active program of ongoing staff training and professional development in children's and teens' services

## **Resources:**

The Library provides a wide range of materials in all formats to fulfill the informational, cultural, learning and leisure needs of children and teens by:

- ensuring a materials selection policy that reflects the characteristics inherent to children's and teens' collections (i.e. books that reflect the developmental stages of reading in children, teens' materials dealing with issues that are relevant to them, and a parenting collection for use by both adults as well as children)
- evaluating the children's and teens' collections on an ongoing basis
- ensuring that adequate funds are made available to support the development of a children's and teens' collection that is relevant, up-to-date, in good condition and generally attractive
- ensuring that the children's and teens' collections are organized for easy access and with children's capabilities in mind
- providing materials representing Canadiana, award-winning authors and illustrators, traditional literature, literature designed to serve special groups and popular and ephemeral materials, keeping in mind the needs of the children and teens of the community.

Materials for children and teens shall be chosen in accordance with the library's overall Collection Management policy.

## **Intellectual Freedom:**

The Library provides children and teens with open access to information and facilities throughout the Library by:

- providing library service for children and teens with the respect and consideration assured to all customers
- ensuring that library procedures support the Children's and Teens' Services Policy
- ensuring the public has access to policy statements.

## **Reference Service:**

Reference and readers' advisory services are major responsibilities of library staff working with children and teens. Readers' Advisory service involves the process of connecting readers and viewers to the materials that they want or need – “the right book for the right child or teen at the right time.” It requires a broad collection of material selected with children's and teens' interests and abilities in mind.

## **Programming:**

The Library provides programs for children and teens, both in and out of the Library, to foster literacy, enhance recreational, creative, cultural and educational needs and to promote the use of the collection and services.

Children's and teens' programming shall be conducted in accordance with the Programming Policy.

### **Rights and Responsibilities of Parents:**

The Library expects parents to:

- monitor the use of services and collections by their children
- be responsible for borrowed materials and fines incurred by their children
- not leave unattended children age 14 and under requiring supervision, on or about Library premises
- accept that a parent or guardian's signature on a membership implies adherence to all rules and regulations of St. Thomas Public Library, including Internet usage

### **Unattended Children:**

While the library board welcomes children using its services, children are the responsibility of their parent or guardian at all times.

### **Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect:**

The entire staff of St. Thomas 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.

### **Community Outreach:**

The Library communicates and cooperates with other community groups and organizations devoted to serving children and teens by:

- actively encouraging the continued cooperation of schools and other community groups in the use of the library
- providing expertise and support for community groups and organizations serving children.
- participating in community collaborative initiatives
- being knowledgeable about supports and services in the community so appropriate referrals can be made if needed

### **School Curriculum Support:**

St. Thomas Public Library's policy is to acquire a broad range of general information resources. It may occur that these materials meet the demands of school projects, but this is not the reason for their purchase. In view of the fact that the library does not buy multiple copies of books for school projects, efforts are made to ensure that alternate sources are available.

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## **Attachment: OLA Position on Children's Rights in the Public 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

Attachment: OLA Position on Teens' Rights in the Public Library

Goals for Library Services for Teens:

Teens in Ontario Public Libraries have the right to:

1. Intellectual freedom

The library establishes clear policy statements concerning the right to free access by young adults to library resources and information sources; and respect for the rights of young adults to select materials appropriate to their needs without censorship, The library's teen collection, policies and services should be consistent with the concepts of intellectual freedom defined by the CLA, OLA and Ontario Human Rights code.

2. Equal access to the full range of materials, services, and programs specifically designed and developed to meet their unique needs.

The Library integrates library service to teens into the overall plan, budget and service program for the library. Library service to teens is integrated with those offered to other user groups.

3. Adequate funding for collections and services related to population, use and local community needs.

The Library incorporates funding for materials and services for teens in the library operating budget and ensures there is equitable distribution of resources to support programs and services for young adults.

#### 4. Collections that specifically meet the needs of teens

The Library provides a wide spectrum of current materials of interest to young adults to encourage lifelong learning, literacy, reading motivation, and reader development.

The library endeavours to develop collections that encourage leisure reading, support homework and school success and responds to gender and cultural diversity. The library provides unfettered access to technology including social networking, licensed databases, and other online library resources for teens.

#### 5. A library environment that complements their physical and developmental stages.

The Library provides identifiable spaces for teens that are separate from children's spaces where possible, reflects their lifestyle and allows for teens to use this library space for leisure or study, either independently or in groups.

#### 6. Welcoming, respectful, supportive service at every service point.

The Library promotes friendly, positive, non-biased customer interactions with teens, providing staff development and training and ensures that services for teens embrace cultural and gender diversity and economic differences. Library staff will endeavour to respect the teen's need for privacy and nonjudgmental service and assist young adults in acquiring the skills to effectively access all library resources and become information literate.

#### 7. Library Programs and Services appropriate for Teens

The Library fosters youth development by providing programs for teens that contribute to literacy, life-long learning and healthy youth development. The library endeavours to provide volunteer opportunities for helping others through community service hours including participating on Library Advisory Boards, and other projects that help develop a sense of responsibility and community involvement. The library's teen services initiatives are effectively managed according to best practices in the field of Youth Services.

#### 8. Trained and knowledgeable staff specializing in teen services.

Library staff is knowledgeable about adolescent development and age appropriate resources for young adults inclusive of those with special needs. The

library provides services by teen specialists as well as by others who are trained to serve teens.)

9. 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 teen services.

The Library works in partnership with other community agencies and organizations to support all aspects of healthy, successful youth development.

10. Library policies are written to include the needs of the youth.

**Related Documents:**

- Programming Policy
- Collection Management Policy
- Internet Use Policy

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