

POL-PUB.2018.57 Title: *Children & Teens Services*



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Teen’s Rights in the Public Library
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PUB.2018.57.1 Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for inclusive, high-quality youth services that support the intellectual growth, cultural appreciation, creativity, and recreational interests of children and teens, while reflecting recognized best practices in gallery, library, archive, and museum (GLAM) service delivery. In support of this commitment, the Blue Mountains Public Library Board endorses the Ontario Public Library Association’s statements on Children’s and Teens’ Rights in the Public Library. See *Appendices*.

PUB.2018.57.2 Scope

This policy applies to all BMPL staff, volunteers, community partners, and individuals using BMPL spaces and services.

PUB.2018.57.3 Definitions

1. **Caregivers:** Any individual responsible for the care, supervision, or support of a child or teen while using BMPL facilities or participating in BMPL programs. This includes parents, legal guardians, family members, and other trusted adults or individuals (such as older siblings, family friends, or support workers), regardless of legal or biological relationship. Caregivers may provide supervision, guidance, transportation, or assistance with participation in library services and activities. For the purposes of this policy, a caregiver is expected to be aware of the child or teen’s needs and to provide appropriate oversight based on the child’s age, maturity, and abilities.
2. **Children:** Individuals up to 12 years of age.
3. **Teens:** Individuals 13-19 years of age.
4. **Youth:** A collective term referring to children and teens.

PUB.2018.57.4 Spaces for Youth

1. BMPL supports the intellectual freedom rights of children and teens and recognizes that responsibility for determining the appropriateness of materials, services, and experiences, rest with caregivers. BMPL staff shall not assume this responsibility.
2. Wherever possible, BMPL will provide spaces, furnishings, collections, signage, and services that support the diverse interests, abilities, and developmental needs of youth and their caregivers.
3. Designated youth spaces shall support active learning, recreation, collaboration, and social interaction, while individuals seeking quiet study or reflective space are encouraged to use areas intended for that purpose.
4. All users must comply with the BMPL *Code of Conduct*.

PUB.2018.57.5 Programs for Youth

1. BMPL will provide programs and experiences for children, teens, and caregivers both within and beyond BMPL spaces to encourage creativity, literacy, lifelong learning, independent discovery, and meaningful engagement with library, gallery, archive, and museum (GLAM) services.
2. BMPL programming shall include recreational, educational, cultural, and literacy-based opportunities that support the diverse interests and developmental needs of youth. Programs may complement school-based learning, encourage reading for pleasure, foster creativity, critical thinking, and promote awareness and use of BMPL collections and services.
3. Participation limits for programs and events may be established based on room capacity, safety, staffing, program design, and occupancy regulations.
4. Certain programs may be intended for specific age groups or may require caregiver participation or supervision. Program requirements may be established and enforced by BMPL staff to support safety and effective participation.
5. Children who are unable to safely leave a facility independently should not be left unattended at BMPL locations or programs. In emergency situations, BMPL staff may attempt to contact a parent, guardian, or emergency contact and, where necessary, seek assistance from emergency services or law enforcement.

PUB.2018.57.7 Children Collections and Resources

1. BMPL will strive to provide collections and discovery tools that:
 - 1.1. Support access to materials intended for children and youth from infancy through adolescence;
 - 1.2. Provide accessible catalogue and discovery services that support browsing and independent exploration;
 - 1.3. Reflect a broad range of interests, perspectives, cultures, identities, and lived experiences;
 - 1.4. Are maintained in a manner that supports accessibility, usability, and ease of discovery; and
 - 1.5. Support both personal interest and educational or curriculum-related learning.
2. Children's materials shall be selected in accordance with the BMPL *Collection Development Policy* and related operational guidelines.

PUB.2018.57.8 Teen Collections and Resources

1. BMPL will strive to provide teen collections and discovery tools that:
 - 1.1. Support access to materials intended for teen and young adult audiences;
 - 1.2. Provide accessible catalogue and discovery services that encourage independent browsing and exploration;
 - 1.3. Reflect a broad range of genres, viewpoints, lived experiences, and contemporary topics relevant to teens;
 - 1.4. Are maintained in a manner that supports accessibility, usability, and ease of discovery; and
 - 1.5. Support both personal interest and educational or curriculum-related learning.
2. Teen materials shall be selected in accordance with the BMPL *Collection Development Policy* and related operational guidelines.

PUB.2018.57.9 Computer Access

1. Children and teens are entitled to equitable access to BMPL technology, digital resources, and internet services in support of learning, creativity, communication, and intellectual freedom. Caregivers are encouraged to take an active role in guiding youth in their use of online resources, services, games, and digital interactions.

2. Use of BMPL technology and internet services is governed by the BMPL *Technology Policy and Code of Conduct*.

PUB.2018.57.10 Advocacy and Community Partnerships

1. BMPL recognizes the importance of advocating for accessible, inclusive, and high-quality services for children and teens, and may promote the value and goals of youth services to the Library Board, Municipal Council, community partners, and the broader community.
2. BMPL works in partnership with schools, community organizations, agencies, and other partners to support literacy, creativity, lifelong learning, intellectual freedom, well-being, and healthy youth development.
3. BMPL may pursue partnerships, grants, donations, sponsorships, fundraising opportunities, and professional networks to enhance programs, collections, spaces, and services for children, teens, caregivers, and families.

PUB.2018.57.11 Rights and Responsibilities of Caregivers

1. Caregivers are responsible for the safety, supervision, behaviour, and well-being of children in their care while using BMPL spaces, services, programs, and materials. BMPL staff do not provide childcare or supervision outside the normal scope of supervised programs.
2. Caregivers are responsible for a child's or teen's use of Library materials, spaces, technology, and services.
3. Youth may use BMPL facilities independently if they can do so safely and in accordance with BMPL policies, including the *Code of Conduct*. Staff may intervene when behaviour is unsafe, disruptive, or inconsistent with BMPL policies.
4. Youth who require supervision should not be left unattended. In emergencies or ongoing safety concerns, BMPL staff may contact a caregiver, emergency contact, emergency services, or law enforcement.
5. In accordance with the *Ontario Child, Youth and Family Services Act*, BMPL employees have a duty to report suspected child abuse, neglect, risk of harm, or protection concerns involving children under 16, and may report concerns involving youth aged 16 or 17. Employees who make a report shall notify the CEO or designate as soon as reasonably possible.

Appendix A

Ontario Library Association Statement on the Rights of the Child

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 BMPL 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 BMPL 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.

Adopted at the Ontario Library Association Annual General Meeting, November 1998

Appendix B

Teen Statement

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; 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 [Canadian Library Association] CLA, [Ontario Library Association] 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 BMPL 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 endeavors 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 endeavor to respect the teens' 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,

lifelong learning and healthy youth development. The library endeavors 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.

Adopted by the Ontario Library Association General Meeting, June 2010. Revised April 28, 2011