
Youth Access and Safety Policy**Policy Statement**

Portland Public Library (PPL) endeavors to be a safe and welcoming environment for youth and their families/caregivers. The library provides designated staff and developmentally appropriate service areas, collections, technology, and programs for youth to foster a lifelong love of learning, libraries, and community. We hope that families and caregivers will help their youth make effective use of the library and assist them in selecting materials, using library spaces, and attending programs.

Three out of four PPL facilities are located adjacent to schools. At the Downtown Branch, neighbors include childcare centers, a family shelter, a teen shelter, and two high schools with open campuses. We also serve many families with younger children who are not yet in school and families who homeschool their youth. As a result, PPL locations and spaces are used by young people and their caregivers throughout all hours of operation, not just during traditionally busy periods such as after school and during school breaks.

For the purpose of this policy, “caregiver” is used as an umbrella term to cover parents, guardians, and other persons directly responsible for the supervision of youth.

Access to Youth Areas

Youth are welcome at all PPL locations as long as they can follow PPL’s [Rules of Conduct](#).

The Children’s Library and Teen Library located at the Downtown Branch are specifically designed to serve the needs of children and teenagers.

The Children’s Library at the Downtown Branch is designed and reserved for the use of children aged 12 and under, their caregivers, and patrons using the Children’s collections or seeking assistance from library staff. Seating and technology are reserved for children aged 12 and under and their caregivers only.

The Teen Library at the Downtown Branch is designed and reserved for the use of teenagers aged 12 to 19, their caregivers, and patrons using the Teen collections or seeking assistance from library staff. Seating and technology in the Teen Library are reserved for teenagers only. Caregivers working with teens, such as parents or mentors, are welcome as long as they directly engage with their teens and do not interfere with other teens’ use of the space.

Adults in the Children’s or Teen Libraries who are not using the space for their intended purposes will be asked to move to other areas of the library.

In addition to our Downtown Branch, PPL's other branches are unique to their neighborhoods with small, designated areas for youth. Adults who are not caregivers or accessing collections or seeking assistance from library staff should use other areas of the branch to allow youth and their families full access to these spaces.

At their discretion, Youth Services supervisors or Branch Managers may allow unaccompanied adults, such as community partners or library school students, to occupy youth spaces.

Access to Youth Programs

Library programs for youth are designed and intended for their respective audiences. Only adults who are accompanying a youth attending a program are permitted to attend library events with a designated audience of **Babies, Preschoolers, Children, or Teenagers**.

In general, programs for **Babies** at PPL are for children aged 0-24 months and their caregivers, programs for **Preschoolers** are for children aged 2-5 and their caregivers, and programs for **Children** are for children aged 5-12 and their caregivers. Caregivers are encouraged to stay with or near their children during library programs and events.

In general, programs for **Teenagers** at PPL are for teenagers aged 12 to 19 / grades 6-12. Some Teen programs may have more specific age-range recommendations. Caregivers are generally not expected to stay with teens during library programs and events, unless a teen is not capable of managing themselves safely without supervision.

At their discretion, Youth Services supervisors or Branch Managers may allow unaccompanied adults, such as community partners or library school students, to attend youth programs and events.

Caregiver Expectations and Responsibilities

Portland Public Library locations are public, shared spaces open to the entire Portland community. Youth may encounter hazards such as stairs, elevators, doors, furniture, electrical equipment, allergens, and other library patrons (strangers). While PPL staff members value the safety of all youth, it is the responsibility of caregivers to determine and provide the supervision their youth need. All library patrons, including youth, must adhere to PPL's [Rules of Conduct](#). If a caregiver determines their youth cannot manage themselves safely or follow the Rules of Conduct on their own, they must provide supervision. Under no circumstance is it appropriate for a caregiver to ask a library staff member to watch a youth for them.

Portland Public Library is not responsible for any consequences of caregivers failing to properly supervise their youth.

Caregivers are responsible for any and all damage that their youth do(es) to the library, its materials and equipment, and/or its staff and other patrons and their belongings.

Staff Role

Library staff members have many duties to fulfill and cannot supervise youth in the library. However, if a staff member is concerned that a youth is incapable of managing themselves safely without adult supervision, or if a youth is violating the Rules of Conduct, staff may take action to correct the situation to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all.

Unattended Youth

If a youth appears incapable of managing themselves safely without supervision, or if a youth is alone and cannot safely leave the library location at closing time:

- Staff will make a concerted effort to locate the youth's caregiver within the library location.
- If staff can locate the caregiver, they will communicate their concern for the youth's safety, then request that the caregiver remain with their youth to help them adhere to the Rules of Conduct.
- If staff cannot locate the youth's caregiver at the library location, staff will make a concerted effort to contact the caregiver and ask them to pick up their youth if contact information is available. If staff are able to reach the caregiver, they will communicate their concern for the youth's safety and explain the Youth Access and Safety Policy and Rules of Conduct.
- If the youth's caregiver cannot be located or contacted within a reasonable time, staff will contact the Portland Police Department non-emergency number (207-874-8479) and will request a member of the Behavioral Health Team be sent to the location for the unattended youth.
- If the library location is closed and the caregiver cannot be located, the Portland Police Department may assume responsibility for the youth.
 - Once the youth is in the protective care of the Portland Police Department, a note will be attached to the library entrance(s) stating, "Unattended youth is in the care of the Portland Police Department." Neither the name of the youth nor caregiver will be listed on the note.
 - The library is not entitled to further information once the PPD assumes responsibility for the youth.
- When next possible, the staff member(s) involved will complete an incident report for the Library Safety Team.

General Guidelines (Unattended Youth)

- Two staff members must remain with the youth until the parent/guardian/caregiver or the Portland Police Department arrives.
- Downtown Branch staff will work collaboratively with the Library Safety Team, and branch staff are encouraged to call the Library Safety Team.
- Staff will neither leave library property with nor transport a youth from the library location.
- The above procedures also apply to unexpected closure of a library location.

Missing Youth

Portland Public Library uses a Code Adam Procedure when a youth is reported missing at one of our locations. **Code Adam** is a special alert issued to library staff that includes procedures to be followed when a caregiver reports a missing youth. If 5 minutes pass from the time a Code Adam is called, library staff will contact the Portland Police Department.