

KANSAS PUBLIC LIBRARY YOUTH SERVICES GUIDELINES

**Kansas State Library
300 SW 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612-1593**

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Vision Statement

Youth will experience a sense of joy and wonder
by exploring the world through their library.

Mission Statement

Libraries will provide dynamic and creative approaches
to serving youth, families and communities
in a welcoming and accepting atmosphere.

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INTRODUCTION

As librarians, whether living in urban or rural communities, we recognize and value children and young adults and actively advocate library services to youth in our libraries, communities, and state. The public library is one of the few places where children's needs are considered to be of equal value to those of adults. These guidelines underscore the importance of recognizing the library's commitment to serve youth.

Youth services librarianship is a noble and brave undertaking. We are often the child's first teacher. We have an important role in children's cognitive growth. We unlock the doors to a lifelong love of reading, books, and learning.

The vision and mission statements of this document can serve as goals for those who work with and support library services to children and young adults.

These guidelines divide services to youth into eight categories:

- Administration (subdivided into Planning and Evaluation, Funding, and Staffing)
- Facilities
- Collections
- Reference and Readers' Advisory Services
- Electronic Resources
- Programming
- Community Partnerships and Outreach
- Public Relations

Each of these sections begins with a definition of that aspect of library service for youth. The definitions and accompanying checklists provide a working description of library services that will guide libraries in serving youth. The checklists can be used by librarians to evaluate their progress toward providing excellent youth services, and to note ideas for possible service development. While each section of this document is complete within itself, it is recommended that the entire document be reviewed, as service areas are interconnected.

These guidelines serve as a tool for libraries and youth services personnel to evaluate where service levels are now and where they may be in the future. It is important to keep in mind the mission and goals of each individual library as these guidelines are used. Library staff, library boards, and governing bodies need a total vision of library service to youth so that they may understand the need for providing those services. Library directors may use these guidelines as a tool for working with staff in developing a long-range plan for youth services. Library boards and library friends groups may use these guidelines to advocate for library services to youth in their communities, especially to governing bodies or funding sources. Continuing education, library workshops, and conference topics are also addressed within these guidelines.

The goal of these guidelines is to enhance library service for youth throughout Kansas, leading to better lives for children and their families. The guidelines are designed to complement the myriad visions and missions developed by Kansas libraries and their communities.

Notes:

Throughout this document, the term “youth” is used to include children and young adults. Youth services are intended for children and young adults and for people who work with youth, such as parents, teachers, and child care providers. While individual libraries may define the age range for “youth” differently, many libraries consider children and youth to be individuals ages birth through 17.

It is recognized that larger libraries have staff members who work specifically in youth services. Smaller libraries may have one or more librarians who work in all areas of their library. These guidelines may be applied to public libraries of all sizes. The guidelines refer throughout to “staff or volunteers working with youth.”

Libraries are urged to consult with the Kansas State Library and their regional library system as they use these guidelines to develop and enhance youth services. These guidelines may be used in support of continuing education workshops.

These guidelines are based on *Youth Services Guidelines*, Oregon Library Association, 1998.

These guidelines were prepared by the Children and Youth Services Guidelines Committee:

Committee Members

Marquita Boehnke, Children’s Consultant, Central Kansas Library System

Bruce Flanders, Director, Lawrence Public Library (Chair)

Jean Hatfield, Program Services Manager, Johnson County Library

Barbara Stransky, Library Services Coordinator, Northeast Kansas Library System

Julie Tomlianovich, System Children’s Consultant, South Central Kansas Library System

State Library Liaison

Shannon Roy, Director of Library Development, Kansas State Library

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New members on Update Committee:

Laura DeBaun, Library Services Coordinator, Northeast Kansas Library System

Erin Downey Howerton, Hays Public Library

Kay Russell, System Consultant, North Central Kansas Library System

ADMINISTRATION

Planning and Evaluation

Planning is an ongoing process in which staff and Library Board members gather and analyze information pertinent to their community in order to assess needs and determine necessary services. Planning includes setting priorities and determining goals and measurable objectives.

Staff or volunteers working with youth are actively involved in developing the long-range and short-term plans that define overall goals and objectives for the library. With these goals and objectives in mind, written plans for youth services specify desired accomplishments, set priorities, and include activities that reflect those priorities. These written plans will evolve and change as the community changes.

Evaluation is a systematic, ongoing assessment of the community's response to library services and programs. Evaluation methods may include recording program attendance, conducting formal and informal interviews and surveys, and gathering materials usage data, community demographics, and anecdotal information.

Checklist: Administration – Planning and Evaluation

- An ongoing analysis of community needs is carried out in regards to youth services. Services are prioritized based on this analysis.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth are involved in developing the library's strategic plan.
- Written youth services goals, objectives, and strategies parallel the directions set for the library as a whole in its strategic plan.
- Youth services goals and objectives are reviewed and updated regularly. The specific needs and interests of infants, toddlers, elementary school age and young adults is considered.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth collect and report statistics and information required by the local library, the library system, the municipal governing body, and the Kansas State Library.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth evaluate services and collections on an ongoing basis.
- System consultants can provide consulting and training in youth services.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth keep the director, library trustees, and other staff apprised of local and national trends that may have budget or program implications or affect community use of the library.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in local planning for library services to youth.

Funding

In addition to being responsible for the allocation and expenditure of funds for materials and programming, staff or volunteers working with youth will collect data and prepare reports on materials usage and program participation. This information may be used as a tool to influence the allocation of the library's revenues. Expenditure of funds will be in keeping with a community needs assessment and collection development plan, based on the overall mission and goals of the library. All youth services fund-raising efforts are coordinated with the library as a whole and support the objectives in the library's plan. Grant writing is an important skill in obtaining private and public funds for the library and for implementing youth services programs and activities. These gifts and grants do not take the place of local tax support for library services but supplement local revenues.

Checklist: Administration – Funding

- The library allocates budget moneys for youth services based on usage statistics, local demand, and the library's strategic plan.
- The library adequately funds purchase of materials for youth based on:
 - the size of the youth population in the service area
 - the need to maintain a current collection
 - the need to correct youth collection weaknesses
 - the need to develop and maintain special collections (including reference)
 - the need to identify and reach the underserved youth population
- The library provides adequate funds to replace lost, worn, outdated, and damaged materials, and to purchase additional copies as needed.
- Accurate and current data on usage and needs is gathered and reports are prepared as necessary in order to affect youth services budget allocation discussions.
- Youth services programming is supported by a separate line item in the library's budget.
- Gifts and grants for youth services programs and activities supplement but not replace the library's budget allocated for youth services.

Staffing

Library administration is responsible for developing and maintaining a staff that includes at least one paid employee who specializes in youth services. A work environment where employees are encouraged to participate fully and creatively will foster excellence in the youth services program.

Clearly defined policies and procedures, an atmosphere that recognizes and rewards staff accomplishments, and well-functioning networks for internal communication will contribute to the creation of an empowering workplace. Administration supports and encourages continuing education and training, mentoring, community networking, and staff involvement in professional organizations on local, statewide, regional, and national levels.

Checklist: Administration – Staffing

- In its policies and procedures related to recruitment and hiring, the library seeks people with an affinity for working with children, enthusiasm, a willingness to learn, and who demonstrate interpersonal skills in meeting with children, parents, staff, and community.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth receive salaries and benefits commensurate with other library employees and other positions that require similar knowledge, skills, and abilities, and that recognize the unique knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to effectively interact with children.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth have clear, written position descriptions and annual evaluations.
- The library annually provides continuing education opportunities for each employee in youth services. Opportunities for training may be provided by regional/urban library systems, the Kansas Library Association, Kansas Association of School Librarians, Kansas State Library, city or county government, higher education, local library in-service, etc. This training may include:
 - evaluation techniques
 - management skills, including needs assessment, planning, and budgeting
 - age-appropriate reference interview and readers' advisory techniques
 - children's and young adult literature and resources
 - child and adolescent development, and developmentally appropriate practices
 - instructional techniques, learning styles, and learning disabilities
 - collection development
 - social issues affecting children and adolescents
 - programming skills
 - intellectual freedom
 - emergency procedures
 - collaboration and networking
 - grant writing techniques
 - emerging technology

Checklist: Administration – Staffing (continued)

- The library financially supports continuing education, conference attendance, and professional opportunities for staff or volunteers working with youth, including paid work time and travel costs for attendance.

- Library staff not assigned to youth services annually participate in continuing education about the unique service needs of children and adolescents.

FACILITIES

The youth services area in a public library is characterized by multiple users and varied uses: from toddlers to story time areas, from scholars to recreational readers, from browsers to workstation users. Often, small groups of home schoolers, family members, or students work collectively in these areas.

The youth services area should be a comfortable, convenient, enjoyable environment with an inviting appearance. It should include access to a quiet study area and a program area. Flexible furnishings should provide ample table space and sufficient seating. Appropriate storage capacity and adequate display spaces are also necessary. Youth service areas should provide size-appropriate accommodations, and furnishings that promote library services. For example, picture book shelves should be shorter to allow for easy browsing by younger children, and display shelving should be arranged for some face-out display of books.

Visibility, safety, and ease of supervision are important considerations in the design and furnishing of youth services areas.

Checklist: Facilities

- The library is a friendly, welcoming public facility for youth.
- The library has a specific area for youth services.
- Youth service areas comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Adequate space for housing and displaying the youth collection exists.
- The youth programming area is equipped with:
 - adequate furniture and equipment for a variety of activities
 - storage
 - sufficient electrical outlets
 - adequate, flexible lighting
 - floor surface chosen to reflect room use
 - telecommunications infrastructure in place, including phone and CATV
 - adequate heating and cooling
 - soundproofing as needed, good acoustics
 - clocks
 - drinking fountains
 - seating for children and adults
 - shelving for the storage and display of non-traditional materials, such as toys, games, multi-media and other special collections

Checklist: Facilities (continued)

- When space is available, the following special facility components should be considered:
 - age-appropriate rest room fixtures
 - a diaper changing station in all restrooms
 - age- and size-appropriate furnishings
 - drinking fountains
 - shelving
 - service desk
 - computer workstations
 - reading tables
 - study carrels

- Safety is a paramount concern with any youth-serving area, as shown by:
 - child-proof electrical outlets
 - sturdy shelving and storage
 - well-maintained, visible entrances and exits
 - all areas visible from youth services desk
 - stairways, balconies, railings designed for children
 - manageable doors
 - safety glass
 - rounded edges, soft furniture

- The youth services areas are designed to adapt to the demands of changing technology.

- The library includes an area for displays of interest to youth.

- The library includes appropriate directional signs and instructions for the use of the youth services collections, catalogs, and other services.
 - Signage is simple, concise, highly visible, and easily maintained.
 - Signage is consistent in color, font, and size.
 - Signage complies with Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.
 - Signage indicates service areas and collection features.
 - Signage for non-English special collections are in the language of that collection.

- The library includes an adequate non-public work area and storage space for youth services staff.

- A specific area for young adults, and young adult services, separate from and typically not adjacent to the children's room, is included in the library.

COLLECTIONS

As the basis of a youth services collection, the library provides a wide range of materials for use by and with youth. It serves current as well as anticipated needs and reflects a diverse and multicultural society. A variety of formats, including print, audiovisual, and electronic, are present in collections for youth to help meet their educational, informational, and recreational needs. Selection, evaluation, maintenance, and organization of materials are all combined to offer a dynamic and diverse collection in a wide range of learning levels, and continually developed and maintained through ongoing planning and evaluation.

Staff or volunteers working with youth may recognize the rights of children and young adults to free and unrestricted access to information and materials by the adoption of ALA's Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement. They advocate the rights of youth to library resources and services through written policies, everyday procedures, and staff training.

Checklist: Collections

- The library has a regularly reviewed and approved written collection policy for youth print, non-print collections, and age appropriate access to electronic information based on the library mission and goals.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth have responsibility for input into the development of the youth services collection.
- The collection policy covers:
 - materials selection
 - collection evaluation
 - retention, replacement, and withdrawal of materials
 - access for youth to materials in a variety of formats
- All youth materials are evaluated on a regular basis for retention, replacement, or withdrawal based on accuracy, timeliness, condition, popularity, and usefulness.
- The library's youth collection:
 - includes print, audiovisual, and electronic formats
 - includes non-traditional materials, such as toys, games, puzzles, etc.
 - represents diverse points of view and interests
 - meets and anticipates community needs
 - includes current information
- The library adequately funds purchase of materials for youth based on:
 - the size of the youth population in the service area
 - the need to maintain a current collection
 - the need to correct youth collection weaknesses
 - the need to develop and maintain special collections (including reference)

Checklist: Collections (continued)

- the need to develop and maintain bilingual or non-English language materials
- The library provides adequate funds to replace lost, damaged, worn, and outdated materials.
- Library staff seek input about selection from the community, especially youth in the community.
- Library staff use standard and alternative review and bibliographic sources for selection.
- Collection development is enhanced through cooperation and communication with schools and community organizations and agencies.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth extend awareness of collections and materials through outreach services.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth regularly evaluate the collection.

REFERENCE AND READERS' ADVISORY SERVICES

Library staff provide information services to all youth wanting assistance in the areas of reference services, reader's advisory services, and library skills instruction. All staff members should recognize their obligation to meet the needs of youth.

The library provides resources and assistance for educational, informational, and recreational needs and requests. The library is a force for education of all youth, laying a foundation for lifelong learning. The library serves an increasingly diverse citizenry, contacting and maintaining liaisons with the many groups composing the local community. Strong liaisons with local educators are a priority.

Checklist: Reference and Readers' Advisory Services

- Youth have access to respectful, unbiased, trained, knowledgeable staff.
- Youth have access to library information resources and services, according to written library policies.
- Information services are effectively provided to:
 - preschool youth
 - child care providers
 - primary- and elementary-age youth
 - middle-school- and high-school-age youth
 - children with disabilities
 - parents, teachers, and caregivers
 - home-schooled youth and their parents
 - patrons and families for whom English is a second language
- Trained staff use reference interviewing skills that are age and grade appropriate.
- Reference resources for youth are age and grade appropriate.
- Reference resources for youth are current and reviewed annually.
- Materials are available to support homework information needs.
- Electronic reference services are provided.
- Information on community resources and services for families and youth is available and up-to-date.
- Access to the Internet is provided, according to written and displayed Internet policies.
- Computer stations with developmentally appropriate educational and recreational resources are available for use within the library.
- Reader's advisory services are provided by trained staff during all library open hours.

Checklist: Reference and Readers' Advisory Services (continued)

- Access to current bibliographies on a variety of subjects is available.
- Readers' advisory service is offered to adults to promote the use of quality materials with youth.
- Library skills instruction for library resources is available to youth.
- Group tours and classes on the use of library resources are promoted.
- Individual instruction and assistance on the use of library resources is available for youth, parents, teachers, child care providers, and other adults who work with youth to keep them informed of library resources and facilities available to children and teens.
- The library catalog is available and conveniently located for use by youth.
- Book displays, bulletin boards, and other promotional graphics are developed and maintained on a regular and frequent basis for the youth services areas.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Electronic resources are invaluable tools in serving the youth who use our libraries. In order for youth to obtain the greatest benefit possible, staff or volunteers working with youth are proactive in making electronic resources available. A youth services perspective in planning for and selecting electronic resources is important.

Staff or volunteers working with youth select electronic resources for youth following collection development criteria and ensure access to electronic resources in keeping with the library's materials access policies. Staff or volunteers working with youth know and understand their library's policies and procedures regarding access to electronic resources.

Checklist: Electronic Resources

- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in planning for electronic resources, including:
 - designing facilities to adapt to the demands of changing technology
 - providing input into budget allocation in keeping with the library's mission
 - selecting and replacing hardware and software programs
 - creating policy for youth consistent with the library policies as a whole
 - maintaining awareness of current/pending laws affecting technology access

- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in the planning and development of the library's electronic resources, including:
 - the online catalog
 - Internet access for staff members and patrons
 - reference and circulation technologies
 - subscription databases
 - electronic resources for patrons for whom English is a second language
 - adaptive technology for special needs users

- Staff or volunteers working with youth develop and maintain electronic resources, including web pages with links to information for youth.

- Staff or volunteers working with youth are familiar with and provide access or referrals to community agencies that offer information in electronic format for youth, their parents, teachers, and caregivers, including:
 - schools
 - municipal agencies
 - county agencies
 - state agencies
 - private agencies

Checklist: Electronic Resources (continued)

- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in ongoing training in the library's electronic resources, including:
 - newly acquired resources
 - updates or refreshers for established resources
 - updates on electronic resource developments
 - workshops provided by the Kansas State Library and regional/urban library systems
- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in planning and carrying out instruction to the public in the legal use of electronic resources in the library.
- Technical support is available through local support or system consultants to keep all electronic resources operational.

PROGRAMMING

Programming for youth is an essential part of library service and is designed to help fulfill the informational, recreational, cultural, and educational needs of youth, their families, and those who work with them. Year-round programming contributes to the visibility of the library, enhances community support, promotes life-long learning, and increases circulation and library use. Programming should reflect community needs and available resources.

Checklist: Programming

- Youth services library programs are free of charge.
- Reasonable accommodations are available upon request to enable persons with disabilities to participate in programs.
- The availability of accommodations for persons with disabilities is noted in program announcements.
- Based on community needs, the library provides developmentally-appropriate programming such as story times, summer reading programs, infant and toddler programs, young adult programs, family programs, other reading incentives, class visits, tours, visits to schools, and special events.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth design, promote, execute, and evaluate programs for children of all ages, based on their developmental needs and interests, and the goals of the library.
- Library youth programs are regularly evaluated for changes and improvement.
- Youth services programs are supported by a separate line item in the library's budget.
- The library provides access to an area that can be used to conduct youth programming.
- The library promotes and markets its programs to the community through various means to reach diverse populations.
- Scheduling of programs reflects the variety of lifestyles in the community and the developmental needs of different youth age groups.
- The library works cooperatively with local agencies and organizations to provide programming for youth.
- Creative programming is developed in consultation with resource people, information resources, and continuing education opportunities outside of the library.
- Programs showcase library collections and services.

- Family programming facilitates the inclusion of a significant adult in a child's life, such as a parent, grandparent, or other guardian.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND OUTREACH

Partnerships between libraries and youth-serving community agencies are essential. Development of cooperative relationships between community organizations and libraries provide a broader base of service to youth.

Outreach services provide an extension of library services outside the confines of the library building. These outreach services may address special needs and attract new users. The following types of outreach services may result from partnerships: cooperative collection development projects, wider circulation of bibliographies on specific issues, sharing of and access to electronic information and technology, promotion of literacy, training of people who work with youth in the use of library resources, book talks and storytelling in schools and child care centers, and in-house and off-site programming to meet special needs. Strong liaisons with local educators are a priority.

Youth services should be targeted to all parts of the community, including those who are not traditionally library users, and those who are not able to come to the library on their own.

Checklist: Community Partnerships and Outreach

- Active partnerships between the library and community youth-serving agencies are in place.
- Community needs are assessed on an ongoing basis.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth are provided time to implement community partnerships and outreach.
- Alliances and goals are developed with:
 - the early child care and education community
 - schools and community agencies that serve elementary-age children
 - schools and community agencies that serve young adults
 - parents, schools, and community agencies that serve youth with disabilities
 - at-risk and disadvantaged youth
 - juvenile correction facilities
 - local school media staff and teachers
 - home school parents and their children
- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in the evaluation of its partnership and outreach activities.
- The library cooperates with other community service agencies to seek funding for projects that benefit youth.
- The use of bookmobiles and deposit collections to provide outreach service is explored.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

A library's public relations efforts build awareness of library resources and services. Promotion of youth services is part of the library's public relations program.

The audiences for public relations efforts include patrons, nonusers, underserved users, trustees, political leaders, schools, social service agencies, municipal departments, businesses, the arts community, professional organizations, churches, and other nonprofit organizations. Staff or volunteers working with youth should also be sensitive to internal communication, and they should establish good working relationships with other library staff.

Checklist: Public Relations

- Staff or volunteers working with youth keep library administration and other staff informed and updated regarding collections, programs and services.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth develop and implement marketing strategies to reach target groups.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth participate in the development of publicity and marketing efforts with schools, community organizations, businesses, public officials and the media.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth present or contribute to continuing calendars of events.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth regularly evaluate public relations activities.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth recognize that friendly, knowledgeable, and welcoming service is an important aspect of public relations.
- Staff or volunteers working with youth maintain contacts with the media (newspapers, radio, and television).