

Youth Services: *Or, Kids Are Library Patrons, Too!*

Libraries provide families a welcoming environment in which to learn, to connect with other parents, and to find other community resources that can help them thrive. From birth through young adulthood, family engagement is necessary for children's literacy, math, and social-emotional development, and libraries are evolving to create more opportunities in which students can develop these skills with the support and encouragement of their families.

Early Literacy

Literacy development begins at birth and is closely linked to a baby's earliest experiences with books, stories, music, and movement. Babies learn language through social literacy experiences when parents interact with them through books. These experiences also serve to associate books with parental affection, attention, and approval.

Early literacy (reading and writing) does not mean early reading instruction or teaching babies to read; it is the natural development of skills through the enjoyment of books, the importance of positive interactions between babies and parents, and the critical role of literacy-rich experiences.

The benefits of a literacy-rich environment for babies and toddlers are well documented, and the library is a go-to place for families with young children. But the actual presence of babies and toddlers in the library creates unique challenges for everyone. You can read more about creating a truly baby-friendly early literacy play space by visiting <http://publiclibrariesonline.org/2014/05/babies-in-the-library-creating-a-truly-baby-friendly-early-literacy-play-space/>.

Your library plays a unique role in helping families prepare children for school through school-readiness programs and services based on the most recent research in child development and school readiness.

A study of three-to-five-year-olds who had been read to at least three times per week found the children:

- Two times more likely to recognize all letters.

- Two times more likely to have word-sight recognition.
- Two times more likely to understand words in context.

The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study found that 62% of parents with a high socioeconomic status read to their children every day compared to only 36% of parents with a low socioeconomic status.

The Idaho Commission for Libraries provides early literacy resources and trainings free of charge. Visit <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/> for more information.

Tweens and Teens

Tweens and Teens services are an important bridge between children’s services and adult services. Keep this fun audience involved in libraries and you’ll create lifelong library users.

The ICfL is committed to providing information, training, technical assistance, and resources for Idaho libraries and their community partners. Our vision is for all teens to become independent readers, lifelong learners, and community leaders.

The ICfL’s Tweens & Teens page offers resources to help you build skills and tools to serve Idaho tweens and teens and help them prepare for the future. Need program ideas? Check out our resources page at <https://libraries.idaho.gov/tweens-teens/>!

Parenting, Privacy, and Intellectual Freedom at the Library

The American Library Association supports equal and equitable access to all library resources and services by users of all ages. Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources and services available to other users are in violation of the American Library Association’s *Library Bill of Rights*. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.

Article V of the *Library Bill of Rights* states, “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.” The right to use a

library includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, apparent maturity, educational level, literacy skills, emancipatory or other legal status of users violates Article V. This includes minors who do not have a parent or guardian available to sign a library card application or permission slip. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness should be able to obtain a library card regardless of library policies related to chronological age.

Resources for Parents and Library Staff Who Serve Children and Young Adults

- **Library Bill of Rights:**
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/sites/ala.org.advocacy/files/content/intfreedom/librarybill/lbor.pdf>
- **Access to Library Resources and Services for Minors: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights:**
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>
- **Privacy: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights:**
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/privacy>
- **Responding to a Concerned Adult:**
<http://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/youthresourcesFAQ>
- **Rating Systems: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights:**
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/rating-systems>
- **Minors and Online Activity: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights:**
<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minorsonlineactivity>
- **Privacy:** <http://www.ala.org/advocacy/privacy>
- **Unattended Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy, Akron-Summit County Public Library:** <https://www.akronlibrary.org/about/policies/unattended-children-vulnerable-adults>