

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE LIBRARY

Youth Services Guidelines

For South Carolina Public Libraries

2014

Guidelines for resources, staffing and facilities for use in planning and evaluating library services for South Carolina children and teens.

Youth Services Guidelines – Introduction

The *Youth Services Guidelines for South Carolina Public Libraries* is a companion document to the *South Carolina Public Library Standards* published by the South Carolina State Library. It replaces all earlier publications (i.e. the *Guidelines for Children’s Services in South Carolina* (1992) and the *Youth Services Guidelines for South Carolina Public Libraries* (2002)).

This document was designed to provide specific guidelines for children’s services, resources, and facilities. It offers a tool for evaluating services for children and teens and an aid for planning for the future. These *Guidelines* can be used in any of the following ways:

- Assess and evaluate the quality of current services to young people and their families
- Identify areas of service needing improvement
- Determine priorities for services in specific communities
- Develop plans for creating or renovating facilities
- Examine the library’s role in the community in providing services to youth beyond the library’s walls

All statements made in these *Guidelines* are offered with the utmost concern for the safety and comfort of young people in the public library and regard for the needs of parents and families. These statements are intended to be supportive, non-judgmental, and responsive to changes in community needs and priorities.

Standards vs Guidelines

The *South Carolina Public Library Standards* were developed largely in response to a need in the library community to produce consistent, authoritative, and dependable quantitative measures to reinforce library planning and budgeting activities in terms comprehensible to government officials. The *Standards* promote, as do other sorts of institutional standards for public services,

“... constant, and consistently articulated, adherence to a common set of principles which speak to the contributions that public libraries make to the lives of South Carolina citizens and the vitality of their communities. Standards establish benchmarks and identify ways of evaluating progress toward excellence in public institutions, including libraries.” -- the *Standards*, Introduction, p. 3.

The *Standards* were presented, wherever possible, in quantitative terms and measures to make such evaluation feasible. These *Guidelines* for Youth Services carry the same intent, presenting normalized concepts to assist libraries in reaching minimum and higher levels of service. The *Youth Services Guidelines* are not, however, amenable to numerical assessment in the same way as the *Standards* are, and they were not conceived with the same regulatory sense. For these reasons we have chosen to refer to them as Guidelines.

Nevertheless, the *Youth Services Guidelines* may be used in any circumstances where a statement must be made about the extent, format, composition, layout or design of specific library services for youth, being careful to relate these statements to the applicable *Public Library Standard* where appropriate. The applicable Standards are noted in each section of the *Guidelines*. The *Guidelines* provide, as the *Standards* do not, supplementary concepts and suggestions for improving services in recognition of needs of the population, particularly the developmental needs of children and teens.

Youth Services – Overview

By successfully balancing library collections, programming, reference and readers' advisory, and outreach, the public library meets the reading and information needs of children and teens and the community members who serve and support them. Public library children's departments serve children from infancy through approximately age 11. Teen services are generally provided for youth aged 12 through high school. Services are also available for parents and other family members, caregivers, and educators, to ensure a spectrum of reading and information activities designed to aid and enrich young people as they learn and grow.

Youth Services are designed and implemented as a natural component of library services to the entire community. Resources and services can draw from and add to other library offerings, extending and broadening, often transparently, the library experience. Youth Services working in harmony with the overall library bring the best the library has to offer to each individual user.

Methodology of the Guidelines

A committee of library personnel representing library systems around the state was formed to study the existing guidelines and to recommend revisions. The State Library's Library Development Services staff moderated and participated in the discussions. The revision process was completed in about six months.

Individual elements of the existing guidelines were thoroughly discussed in the context of contemporary issues and realities. Youth services standards, guidelines, and recommendations for public libraries in other states were studied and considered, and in some cases adopted as appropriate for South Carolina.

Members of the Advisory Committee included two public library directors: Mary Elizabeth Land (Abbeville County) and Charlotte Johnston (Clarendon County); Dr. Patricia Feehan, Associate Professor, USC School of Library and Information Science (SLIS); and public library staff: Andria Amaral (Charleston County), Brianna Baxley (Berkeley County), Tina Chenoweth (Dorchester County), Paula Childers (Florence County), Tammy Kelley (Pickens County), Ellen Stringer (Lexington County), Melinda Vest (Beaufort County), and Diane Williams (York County). The State Library is grateful for their hard work, creativity, depth of knowledge and willingness to contribute to the process. Library Development Services staff participating in the discussions included Denise Lyons, Pamela Hoppock, and Kristi Sligh; the process was coordinated by and the final versions of the *Guidelines* were written by Kathy Sheppard.

Compliance and Reporting

While compliance with the statements found in these new *Youth Services Guidelines for South Carolina Public Libraries* is voluntary, the State Library encourages public libraries to adhere to the *Guidelines* in assessing their performance and effectiveness. Constant appraisal of youth services enables library decision-makers to see ongoing progress, and to identify areas for improvement.

The concept of the “user-centered library” remains a guiding principle in all planning for libraries and in all improvements and additions to library facilities and services. Striving to meet generally accepted standards strengthens, over time, the ability of libraries to meet the ever-changing needs of South Carolina children and teens.

Evaluation and Information Gathering

In all areas of service, library staff must continually evaluate programs and services and examine outcomes for the community and/or for the target audience of each library offering. Evaluation and data gathering is a regular responsibility of youth services staff. This is particularly important in library interactions with children and their families, because these services are so crucial to the development of skills and lifelong learning and reading habits of community members. Library staff in charge of planning and implementing services must also seek ways of incorporating evaluative methods that allow them to gauge the value (including cost effectiveness) of these activities.

Format of the Guidelines

The *Youth Services Guidelines* are divided into eight sections:

- **Administration of Youth Services** - Reflecting organizational principles, management and accountability
- **Youth Services Personnel** – Training, skills, and characteristics of library employees working with young people
- **Youth Collections** – Considerations for selecting materials and resources for children, teens, parents and caregivers
- **Facilities** - Size, safety, accessibility, and technology readiness of library spaces designed for use by children, teens, and families
- **Programming** – Addressing the importance of planned programs for youth
- **Reference and Readers Advisory Services** – Guidelines for designing these services for library audiences
- **Community Partnerships and Outreach** – Guidelines for achieving important collaborative efforts in the local community
- **Marketing, Promotion, and Advocacy for Youth Services** – Guidelines for “telling the story” of youth services at the library

For questions about these *Guidelines*, contact Library Development Services, South Carolina State Library: lds@statelibrary.sc.gov.

--*Library Development Services, SCSL, February 2014*

I. Administration of Youth Services

The administrative standards included in the *Standards for South Carolina Public Libraries*, including those regarding policies and planning, are all effective as well for children's and teen services. Good communication and mutual respect and support between the Youth Services department, other library staff, and the library's administration are essential for the provision of high quality library services.

The head of Youth Services is an advocate for children and teens within the library and acts as a liaison to the wider community on behalf of youth. Depending on the size and organization of the library, the head of Youth Services may coordinate, supervise, or set guidelines for these services throughout the library system.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Governance and Funding

Guidelines for Administration of Youth Services
1. The library's operational plan and budget includes youth services goals and financial support for collections, services and programs.
2. Youth services staff participate in overall library planning and goal-setting.
3. Youth Services supports the Right To Read*, the Library Code of Ethics*, the Right to Privacy, and other relevant policy statements ensuring free and equitable access to library resources to users of all ages.

Best Practices for Administration of Youth Services

1. Funding is generous, allowing for growing and expanding services.
2. Data and statistics about services, collections, programs, and other activities are collected regularly to provide a complete picture of the impact of library services in the community and for the individual child.
3. Youth Services staff keep the library director and other staff apprised of local needs and national trends that may have budget or program implications or affect community use of the library.
4. Policies and procedures specific to Youth Services are reviewed and updated regularly.
5. Youth Services local goals and priorities are evaluated regularly.

Appendices: YALSA statements on advocacy, Right To Read, Library Code of Ethics, Sample policies [Posted online]

II. Youth Services Personnel

The quality of library staff who provide services to community youth governs the quality of those services more than any other factor. Every child in the community is entitled to the expertise of a professional children’s librarian. Youth Services staff must be provided with a work environment that both demands and supports excellent service provision, recognizing the unique needs of this service population.

Youth Services staff genuinely respect and care for young people. They are enthusiastic advocates for children within the library and the community.

Quantitative standards for all library employees are provided in the *Standards for South Carolina Public Libraries*. The *Standards* deal with numbers of staff, competitive and equitable pay, continuing education, staffing policies, etc.; all of these standards apply to Youth Services staff. The standards regarding the number of children’s and teen staff are repeated here.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Staff

Guidelines for Youth Services Personnel
1. Each library facility will have the services of a dedicated on-site MLIS Children’s Services Librarian for at least a portion of the hours the facility is open to the public.*
2. Each library facility will have access to the services of a MLIS Teen Services Librarian (services not necessarily conducted on site.)*
3. The library’s Youth Services Coordinator is included in the library’s upper management group and participates in general library administrative processes.
4. Time and resources are made available for children’s and teen services staff to engage in continuing education for currency and skills improvement.

*From the *Standards for South Carolina Public Libraries, 2012 Revision*. Note: the *Standards* describe a target condition for better service: “Each facility will have a dedicated MLIS Children’s Services Librarian for all hours the facility is open.”

Best Practices for Youth Services Personnel

1. There is recognition in the library that unique knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for working effectively with children and teens.

2. Youth Services staff are included regularly “at the table” in library decision making, policy development and review, and facilities planning.
3. Staff working with children and teens have a fundamental knowledge of child and adolescent development, and are prepared to work with children and teens having special needs.
4. Youth Services staff possess knowledge of children’s and teen literature, and are able to critically evaluate books and other materials.
5. Youth Services staff have the ability to plan and conduct engaging, informative and/or entertaining programs for children of different age groups.
6. Other library staff are familiar with basic child and adolescent developmental characteristics, the appropriate resources to introduce to young people, and the unique service needs of teens.
7. Youth Services staff are willing and able to cooperate and communicate with schools and community organizations and agencies, to ensure the relevance of library materials and services to the community.
8. Youth Services staff receive training in public relations and the library’s policies and procedures concerning promotion of services.

Appendices [Posted online]

- ALSC competencies
- Use and management of volunteers (see Massachusetts and Oregon standards)

III. Library Programming for Children and Teens

Programs that excite, engage, and inform young audiences are an essential component of the library's youth services. Programming is an important tool for introducing children to books and reading, and to extend their experiences with books. By providing activities for children on a variety of topics, libraries help children expand their knowledge and develop new interests.

Library programs may an objective of improving children's skills in reading, information seeking, or technology. Programs that entertain, generally also inform, and may address gaps in existing community services.

Programs draw community members to the library and lead to awareness and use of other library resources. Programming gives the library visibility in the community and contributes to increased circulation, registration and library use.

Teen programs in particular can serve as a bridge between school and adulthood, allowing young people to engage with the library as a community institution and thereby become connected to the wider community.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Services and Community; Library Facilities; Library Materials and Collections

Guidelines for Youth Programming
1. Funds are allocated for programs for youth.
2. Adequate staff hours are provided for planning and implementing youth programs.
3. Equal quality of programs is ensured for all library sites.
4. An active Teen Advisory Group is in place.
5. Teen programming is acknowledged as an essential element in serving the community's youth.
6. Teens are encouraged to provide input into the selection of programs.
7. The library plans and implements an annual Summer Reading Program for all ages.

Best Practices for Programming

1. Program content, delivery mechanism, and scheduling are responsive to community needs, especially documented needs for enrichment and skill building in the target population.
2. Program offerings are sensitive and responsive to children and teens with special needs, and their families.

3. Library programs often supplement deficient community services. Library staff must be aware of and in touch with other service providers to determine the status and availability of these services to community youth.
4. Library staff should be knowledgeable about current research on children and teen's programming. Library staff should incorporate children and teen's programming that current research has proved to be effective in furthering the mission of the library.

Summer Reading Program

South Carolina belongs to the Collaborative Summer Library Program (CSLP), a consortium of states working together to provide high-quality summer reading program materials for children at the lowest cost possible for their public libraries. The participating systems and states develop a unified and high-quality promotional and programming product. Participants have access to artwork, incentives and publicity, in addition to an extensive manual of programming and promotional ideas. The State Library provides the basic CSLP materials for each participating library to conduct a complete summer reading program. Additional presentations and performers are the responsibility of each library, and are encouraged as a way to draw families to the library.

Appendices [Posted online]

- Teen programming guidelines including gaming best practices
- Charlotte Huck, *Ages & Stages of Development* – resource list
- National Association for the Education of Young Children

IV. Youth Collections

Because youth collections are so important to the development of information-seeking skills and the habit of reading, extra care and attention must be paid to building and maintaining these collections. Youth collections also serve parents and other adults who work with children. Youth collections are governed by the overall *Public Library Standards for Materials and Equipment*, including guidelines for number of print items per capita. The following additional standards have been defined specifically for youth collections.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Materials and Collections

Guidelines for Youth Collections
1. At least one designated staff member at each library location has a strong understanding of teen materials and services.
2. Every library staff member has a basic understanding of available youth materials and services.
3. Devices for accessing electronic formats are available to children and teens in the library; staff are familiar with their operation and maintenance.
4. Access to the Internet is provided for children and teens in the library, in accordance with library policies
5. A separate and unique portion of the library's collection, and a corresponding portion of the materials budget, is allocated for teen materials.
6. Youth collections support the needs of both students and educators.

Best Practices for Collections for Children and Teens

1. The makeup of youth collections reflects the community in terms of demographics, literacy levels, language, and economic circumstances.
2. The collection includes materials in a variety of formats based on children's and teens' interests, abilities, ages, and stages of reading development.
3. Youth Services staff is responsible for developing the collection, and participates in library decisions regarding acquisition, cataloging and circulation of materials.
4. Materials selection for youth audiences takes into account the need for strong and durable bindings to withstand frequent and robust usage.
5. Development of youth collections is enhanced through cooperation and communication with schools and community organizations and agencies.

6. Resources on parenting and caregiving are available, preferably in the children's area of the library.
7. Youth collections are balanced between standard titles and high-demand current materials.
8. Youth Services staff are aware of reading initiatives and reading-related events in the library world and locally.
9. The collection includes materials which represent the cultural and social diversity of a changing society and reflect the experience of contemporary children and teens.
10. A portion of the collection budget is made available specifically for replacement copies of materials.
11. Youth collections at the public library complement but do not replace school library collections.
12. Youth Services staff are aware of the needs of the local homeschooling community, and are able to recommend appropriate resources.

Appendices [Posted online]

- Lists of types of age-appropriate materials
- List of standard sources of reviews and selection tools
- Sample procedures for handling materials reconsideration requests/challenges

V. Library Facilities

Children’s and Teen areas of the library are often the first introduction to library services for the youngest community members. These areas should be comfortable and inviting, conveniently located, and designed to appeal to young people and their families. They should promote and provide easy access to collections, services and staff assistance.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Facilities

Guidelines for Library Facilities for Youth
1. Each library facility houses a separate and distinct Children’s area.
2. Each library facility designates a Teen area for reading, studying and socializing, that is distinct from the Children’s area.
3. Considerations for designing spaces for children and teens include the wide range of physical, social and developmental characteristics of youth, the need for additional security and safety measures, and the need for responsiveness and flexibility in the environment to deal with changing trends and resources.
4. Children’s/Teen library staff are involved in all phases of the planning and design of youth spaces.
5. All spaces designated for children and teens are wired for technology.

Best Practices for Children’s and Teen Areas

1. Dedicated space is provided to accommodate an audience for programming.
2. The overall aspect of the space is welcoming, stimulating, bright, and colorful.
3. A staff work area is provided
4. Plenty of storage is available for crafts and program supplies
5. Safety and design notes: Electrical outlets covered; stroller lot; sturdy book racks; line of sight for staff; level floor (no steps); child-height-friendly; parent comfort
6. Shelving in the public area is determined by formats of materials
7. Furniture/equipment should be easily cleanable when possible
8. Movable furnishings can provide flexibility within the space
9. Restrooms for children should be appropriately sized

Appendices: LEED considerations, Oregon #11 for safety concerns [Posted online]

VI. Reference and Readers' Advisory Services

Reference services to young people offer support for their education as well as providing information to meet personal needs and satisfy interest. High quality print and electronic reference resources must be readily accessible to youth, with knowledgeable staff to assist in their use.

Helping children identify books they will enjoy for personal reading through talking about books and authors, suggesting titles and providing booklists is essential if young people are to make full use of the collection and resources available to them. These services are provided with sympathy, with enthusiasm, and with respect for the individual child or teen.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Materials and Collections; Library Services and Community

Guidelines for Reference and Readers' Advisory Services
1. All children and teens receive respectful, prompt, expert and non-judgmental reference and reader's advisory services.
2. Trained staff use reference-interviewing skills that are age and grade appropriate.
3. Youth Services staff adapt their approach to meet the needs of children and teens at different developmental stages.
4. Current technologies are available for learning and skill building; staff are familiar with their operation and maintenance.
5. Computers or other electronic devices are available in the children's and teen areas for accessing online information resources.

Best Practices for Reference and Readers' Advisory Services

5. Readers' Advisory activities include introduction of a variety of formats in an effort to find suitable and enjoyable alternatives for each young person served.
6. Library staff strive to identify and develop appropriate information services for underserved and hard to reach children and teens. This includes children with special needs, at risk children, those who are geographically remote from the library, home schooled children, and children whose primary language is not English.
7. Youth Services staff adapt their approach to meet the needs of youth at children's different developmental stages.
8. An adequate number of computers are designated for young library users to access online information resources, including the library's automated catalog.
9. All library public services staff should have a basic awareness of children's services, and are cross-trained to provide basic services when designated staff are not available.

10. Strong liaisons with local educators are a priority to ensure the provision of library resources to support school-related information needs.
11. Readers' Advisory service is offered to adults (parents, caregivers, educators, etc.) to promote the use of quality materials with youth.
12. A variety of means is used to promote reading interest, including displays, promotional graphics, social media as well as book talks and programming.

Appendices [Posted online]

- List the qualities of librarians (from group discussion)
- Append information on p. 28 of the earlier standards; add new formats: social media, video, virtual library, databases, multiple formats, booklists & Bibliographies
- Reading promotion utilizes the following methods:
 - Booklists and bibliographies
 - Booktalking
 - Exhibits and displays tied to collection
 - Social media outlets to promote upcoming reading-related programs
 - Presentations to community groups
 - Outreach to community groups, schools, daycares, and organizations that serve children and teens
 - Cooperative activities with commercial outlets, such as bookstores to promote reading
 - Workshops and training in information literacy and technology literacy to increase independent access and successful interactions with library resources

VII. Community Partnerships and Outreach

Connecting and working with other community agencies is essential if libraries are to meet the needs of children and teens. Shared understanding and agreement on the needs and problems of a community's young members can help all to better formulate goals and priorities. Cooperative relationships can lead to shared activities, co-promotion of services, and other cost-saving collaborations.

Outreach services enable the library to serve community residents who may not be able to reach the public library during traditional open hours, or who live in remote or rural areas. Outreach service include everything from Bookmobile service for those not served by a brick-and-mortar facility, to providing resources through a variety of delivery mechanisms, to offering training via the Internet. Programs and services outside the library walls enable all citizens to learn about and utilize library resources.

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Services and Community

Guidelines for Community Partnerships and Outreach
1. The library's partnership with <i>South Carolina First Steps</i> is considered a priority, and depends upon the library taking the initiative.
2. Strong liaisons with local educators are essential and should include all facets of the educational landscape – Childcare institutions, school districts, individual schools, teachers and principals.
3. Community partnerships are, when possible, governed by a document (ranging from a written work plan to a formal contract) confirming each party's role in, and contributions to, the collaborative effort.
4. Library Administration acknowledges the importance of outreach efforts in bringing children's and teen services to the entire community.
5. The library makes a significant effort to reach and serve the community's at-risk youth.

Best Practices for Community Partnerships and Outreach

1. Strong liaisons with local educators are essential and should include all facets of the educational landscape – Childcare institutions, school districts, individual schools, teachers and principals.
2. Community needs are assessed on an ongoing basis, including evaluation of the level and success of communication between the library and potential and actual partner agencies.

Appendices [Posted online]

- Bookmobile materials/schedules/program tips, etc.
- List the potential service groups for outreach (Oregon's list)
- List of types of potential community partners and advice on how to engage them

VIII. Marketing, Promotion, and Advocacy

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

Applicable Public Library Standard: Library Services and Community

Guidelines for Marketing, Promotion and Advocacy
1. The library has a current marketing policy and strategy for youth programs and services.
2. Staff time is provided to create, implement and assess marketing activities.
3. Marketing of youth events and services designed for the audience it is intended to reach, in terms of age, language, and literacy level.
4. Youth Services staff receives appropriate training and support for conducting public relations and media communication about library services and resources.
5. Youth Services staff receives appropriate training and support for conducting advocacy activities.
6. The library has in place a policy covering signage, grammar, spelling, etc. as determined for promotional efforts.

Best Practices for Marketing and Promotion

1. Patron-driven promotions via social media are extremely important as more citizens of all ages tap into information about the library via electronic devices.
2. Consideration is given to personal privacy preferences in the design of communication and marketing efforts.
3. Advocacy activities for Youth Services staff must agree in content and intent with the library's overall advocacy plan. While the audience for such efforts may be specifically youth oriented, the message should be the same.
4. The Children's and Teen units of the library must conduct "internal marketing" efforts to ensure that other library staff are aware of current and future activities and services.
5. Recognizing common goals, Youth Services staff acknowledges the challenges of working with the education community and persists in seeking opportunities to collaborate.
6. The business community is explored regularly for potential partnering and support opportunities.

7. Partnerships with community agencies can be defined in terms of complementary services, promotional opportunities, matching funds, and in-kind support, and are verified through contracts and specifically-worded letters of support.
8. The library should utilize people outside its own staff to perform periodic image assessment of its facilities, services, and public message.

Appendices [Posted online]

- List of the audiences for PR efforts
- Guidance on photos taken in the library and photo release and policy samples
- Library Marketing Toolkit – Ned Potter
- Examples of effective marketing pieces