

## **Unattended Children Policy**

Children are always welcome and encouraged to visit the Robert W. Barlow Memorial Library. We want the library to be a welcoming and safe place for children; however, our staff members have many duties to perform in order to serve all patrons in the best way possible. The library is a busy public place, open to all, and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to children. For this reason, staff cannot monitor the whereabouts or behavior of our smallest patrons – your children. A child could be approached by a stranger, become ill, wander outside, or become lost or injured. We are primarily concerned with your child's safety, and we believe that our policy helps assure their well-being. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for unattended, disruptive or abandoned children of any age.

### **Policy**

A child under the age of 9 (nine) years old must be accompanied by a parent/caregiver or responsible adult. The parent/caregiver must remain in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. Children under the age of 9 who are left unattended or appear to be in the library without adult supervision can be a cause of concern. The library staff will follow the procedures listed below when a child in this age group is located in the library. For this policy, a responsible adult would be considered a competent person 13 years of age or older. Library staff may use discretion in determining a youth's ability to control and supervise children under the age of 9.

**During library programs the parent/caregiver is expected to remain in the library during the program and immediately join the child (under age 9) at the end of the program. If a parent/caretaker leaves the building he/she should sign-out at the front desk leaving a name and phone number of where he/she may be reached in an emergency. He/she will need to return in time to join the child after the program.**

Children age 9 and older may use the library unattended, subject to the rules and regulations that apply to all library patrons as outlined under "Conduct in the Library".

If a child age 9 through 12 is found unattended when the library is open and the child has become ill or frightened, has become disruptive and will not respond to verbal warnings from library staff, is upset because of weather conditions, long hours out of contact with the parent/caregiver, or other special circumstances, the staff will make every effort to contact the parent/caregiver. If this fails, law enforcement officials may be called, and the child may be placed in their care.

Occasionally the library may need to close without advance notice as a result of an emergency such as bad weather. Children should be advised about what action the parent/caregiver wishes them to take in the event of an unexpected library closure.

Parents who disregard library policy may be reported to the appropriate social services agency and may lose all library privileges.

## **Procedure**

The following procedure will be used if it is determined that a child under the age of nine is lost or unattended:

1. A staff person will attempt to locate the parent, guardian, or responsible individual within the building through a page on the intercom.
2. If none is found, a staff person will attempt to locate the parents by phone.
3. If no parent or guardian may be found, the child will remain with staff members until the parent returns. Upon his or her return the parent or guardian will be made aware of the library's policy on unattended children and a copy of the policy will be provided for them.
4. If the same child is found unattended in the library a second time, the police will be notified.
5. If the parent or guardian has not returned and the library is closing, two staff members will remain with the child (under the age of 13) for 15 minutes. If no parent/caregiver arrives, the police will be notified. If a child is taken into custody by the police, a note with the child's location, will be left on the library entrance door.
6. Under no circumstances will a staff member leave the library with an unattended child or offer any child a ride home or to any other location.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees -12/5/05

## **Unattended Child Policy Addendum**

During Summer Reading Program (SRP June-Aug) the library will modify its unattended child policy to accommodate parent/caregivers who cannot stay in the library building during specific children's programs.

At SRP only, a parent or caregiver if unable to physically stay in the library should make arrangement for a child/children's safe conduct to and from the library and notify library staff in writing about arrangements.

- Readers Club program
- weekly special entertainment programs ...

Storytime participants, children and caregivers must stay within eyesight in the library due to the young ages of the children.

Approved by the Board of Trustees -11/2012