

UNATTENDED CHILDREN

Policy Statement:

A primary mission of the library is to provide a safe, secure, comfortable and convenient facility for patrons and staff. This is especially true for children who visit the library. Although staff are available to assist and provide general guidance, **the library does not provide childcare services**. Attaining the desired and appropriate environment for children requires the communication and cooperation of both staff and parents.

Definitions:

Unattended Child

An unattended child is any young person unaccompanied by a responsible adult and who is unable to care for his or her self, or use the library responsibly.

Adult, Parent, Caregiver

These terms are used in this policy to designate a person who is legally responsible for the welfare and behavior of their children

Inappropriate Behavior

Examples of inappropriate behavior may include but are not limited to:

- **Disruptive behavior**, such as running, shouting, climbing, rude actions, horseplay, etc.
- **Verbal or physical abuse** of staff or other people in the library, such as cursing, demeaning comments, talking back, rude comments, hitting, biting, kicking, punching, teasing other children, hiding property etc.
- **Damage to property** of the library or others, such as breaking or ruining supplies, improper use of furniture or equipment, theft, etc.

Regulations:

1. Parents or adult caregivers are legally responsible for the welfare and behavior of their children. The library is not responsible for unattended children. Library staff may refer children who are left unattended in the library to appropriate authorities including the police or child welfare agencies.
2. Young children may not be left unattended. Any child, seven years old or less must be accompanied by an adult at all times. An exception exists for children attending a planned, scheduled library program without a parent or caregiver in the room. However, the parent or caregiver is expected to remain in the library building and immediately join the child at the end of the program.
3. Older children, ages eight and up, may need adult supervision to ensure their safety and to maintain appropriate behavior and responsible library use. Staff

members will use their judgment and discretion in determining whether or not an unattended child needs a parent or caregiver to provide supervision.

4. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. Staff will ask children to comply with library rules or instructions. Children whose behavior is disruptive to library rules and instructions will be asked to leave the library grounds. **If a child is not able to leave the library without an adult, he/she should not be in the library alone.** Children will be given the opportunity to make a phone call to a parent or guardian to inform them of the circumstances. A parent or the police may be called to pick up the child.
5. Children should know how to reach an adult at all times. They may use the library business phone in case of an emergency.
6. At closing time or in the event of an emergency (closing for weather or a power outage), staff will assist unattended children in calling a parent or responsible adult to pick them up. If someone cannot be contacted within 30 minutes of a child being left alone or at the library's closing time, reference staff will call the police who will assume responsibility for the child.
7. Parents should be aware of circumstances for unexpected closings of the library (storms, power outages, etc.). Library hours of operation are posted on signs and handouts. Emergency closings are announced on KMAN (1350 AM) radio station as soon as possible.