

## Minor Children in the Library Policy

The purpose of the minor children in the library policy is to maintain a safe and secure environment for children using the Library and to reinforce that parents or guardians are responsible for the supervision and behavior of their children at all times.

The public library is a unique institution that welcomes patrons of all ages to use its facilities, services and resources. Children and their safety are of great concern to libraries. We encourage families and youth to use libraries and, while doing so, also affirm *parents' responsibility* for their children's safety and upbringing.

Children, like all library patrons, are expected to behave appropriately. An unattended child is a child of any age who is apparently unaccompanied by a parent or caregiver. Children who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves may not be left alone in the library, and must have adequate supervision from a caregiver.

It is the policy of the Library Board that:

- Parents and caregivers take responsibility for and attend to children under the age of 10. By providing direct, continuous supervision (in the same area of the library and within eyesight) of children younger than 10 years of age.
- Parents/guardians ensure that any caregivers with whom they leave their children are sufficiently responsible to provide care and are at least 13 years of age.
- Children between the ages of 7 and 10 may attend library programs without a caregiver but the caregiver is expected to remain in the building and join the child immediately following the program. Caregivers are also expected to remain immediately reachable should an issue arise during any library programs.
- Caregivers ensure that vulnerable adults receive the care and supervision they require to be safe and healthy while visiting the library.
- Caregivers encourage positive behavior of any patron in their care while in the library.
- The library has the ability to suspend this policy for specific programs and outreach opportunities where library staff accepts a greater responsibility to monitor the safety and well-being of children.
  - This action requires the approval of the Library Director for these limited opportunities.

The Library Board respects the rights and privacy of all library patrons. Library staff will only intervene if children are left unattended and problems of safety, disruptive behavior, or well-being occur. If a child is left unattended, is disruptive, or needs supervision, staff will locate the person responsible for the child and review expectations for supervision and conduct. If staff

cannot locate the person responsible for the child, they will attempt to reach the parent or guardian by phone. Library staff may refer to appropriate authorities those children who are left unattended in the library.

Parents and caregivers must be advised that libraries are public places. Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving the library with persons who are not appropriate caregivers. The library cannot be responsible for any consequences of caregivers forfeiting their responsibilities.

*Reviewed and adopted August 13, 2024*