

# Unattended Children Policy

## UNATTENDED CHILDREN

The Washington County Public Library welcomes all children to use our facilities and services. However, responsibility for children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or assigned chaperone - not with library personnel. Staff members are concerned when parents leave their young children alone or in the care of an older sibling or friend. Young children left unattended, even for a few minutes, can become frightened. An older child left in charge can be easily burdened by this responsibility. Sometimes children stay at the library for many hours or wait here after school until a parent picks them up. Often they become bored and restless. This leads to disruptive behavior, which interferes with the legitimate library business of other patrons and staff. Staff members cannot be placed in a position of supervising children who are too young to be unattended, or whose behavior indicates that they have stayed at the library for too long a time. For the safety and protection of youth, and for the benefit of all, the Washington County Public Library Board of Trustees has developed the following rules:

### **CHILDREN ARE WELCOME TO USE THE LIBRARY AS LONG AS THEIR BEHAVIOR IS NOT DISRUPTIVE.**

The library assumes no responsibility for an unattended child. Parents should not view the library as an alternative to daycare. Unlike a daycare facility, the library is not a closed environment. Staff members cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all adult patrons are free to use any public area within the library. For safety's sake, any child ten (10) years and under must have a supervising adult (18 & older) in the library with them at all times. Parents should be advised that if their children misbehave, they might be told to leave the library and the library grounds. Parents should further realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior. At any time that the staff feels that a person(s) or property is endanger of being injured or damaged, respectively, the proper authorities are to be contacted immediately.

### **BANNING OF DISRUPTIVE CHILDREN**

Any children that are being repetitively disruptive will be asked to leave the library building and the library grounds for the rest of that day. If the same child continues to display inappropriate behavior while visiting the library, they will be asked to not return to the library for a time of one (1) week. A letter will be generated stating the time period that the child is not allowed in the library building or on library grounds. Copies of this letter will be sent to the child's parent/guardian; if known, one will be kept at the library to be given to the child if he comes into the library during the time frame of his ban and one will be kept in a file with the Director. Any further behavior issues after the child's return will require a parent/guardian and the child to meet with the Director in order to be allowed back on to the premises.

### **CHILDREN MUST LEAVE THE LIBRARY AT CLOSING TIME**

Children left to wait outside the building for a ride after the library has closed are placed in a vulnerable position. Staff members are not responsible for the safety of a child once the library has closed. Under no circumstances will a staff member ever take a child out of the library or give a child a ride home. However, staff members will attempt to contact parents. If they are unsuccessful, the police will be summoned to assist the child.

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