

Unattended And/Or Unsupervised Children Policy

(Adopted February 2014; revised March 2015; revised July 2017)

Definitions: For the purposes of this policy, a child is anyone eight years old or younger; a caregiver is any individual thirteen years of age or older who has been given the authority and responsibility to care for a child by the child's parent or legal guardian.

The best guidance to be offered a child comes from parents. Parents are strongly encouraged to:

- Explore the library with their children;
- Provide clear guidelines and set limits for their children;
- Learn how to evaluate the content of library materials and websites for appropriateness;
- Ask a Librarian for assistance in selecting appropriate materials for families and children;

Children aged nine and over are free to use the library's facilities and resources provided their behavior conforms to the Patron Code of Conduct Policy and does not disrupt other library users or staff members. If their behavior is disruptive, children aged nine and over may be asked to leave the building. Children aged 8 and under must be attended and supervised by a parent or caregiver at all times while on library premises. Children of all ages using the Library facilities should know or carry a copy of his/her phone number and address.

The Library does not act *in loco parentis* (in place of parents) and Library staff does not have the authority to take responsibility for children. All public places may be dangerous for a child who is left unattended and/or unsupervised by a parent or caregiver, and library staff are not equipped or licensed to provide long or short-term childcare services including adult supervision, nutrition, or emergency care.

Using the following guidelines, the library deems an unattended and/or unsupervised child as any child:

- Found frightened or crying in the library
- Perceived to be endangering him or herself
- Perceived as vulnerable to potential harm from another person in the library
- Exhibiting inappropriate behavior in the library
- Has not been met by a responsible caregiver at closing time

If at any time a child aged 8 or under is found unattended, the following steps will occur:

1. The parent or caregiver will be paged in order to determine if he or she is in the library. If the parent or caregiver is in the library, he or she will be directed to stay with and supervise the child.
2. If it is determined that the child is in the library without a parent or caregiver 13 years of age or older, a staff member will call the parent or guardian to request that he or she pick up the child. If the responsible adult cannot be contacted or does not respond within 30 minutes, the police will be asked to assume responsibility for the child.

3. Any parent, legal guardian, or caregiver not complying with this policy will receive a warning from the Library staff and be advised of the next course of action should non-compliance continue.

When visiting the Library without an adult, children aged 9-14 should have definite arrangements to be picked up at closing time or in emergencies. If a child is left stranded at closing, the following steps will occur:

1. A staff member will first call a parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian cannot be contacted or does not arrive within 15 minutes, the police will be asked to assume responsibility for the child.
2. Two Library staff members will stay with the child inside the Library until the parent or the police arrive.
3. Any parent, legal guardian, or caregiver not complying with this policy will receive a warning from the library staff and be advised of the Library's next course of action should non-compliance continue.

Library staff may notify the appropriate authorities if they have reason to suspect abuse or neglect.

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SFVPLD Programming Policy

SFVPLD Vulnerable Adults Policy