

## **Unattended Children in the Library**

All library staff strive to create a safe, educational and nurturing environment for children. Please remember that the library is a public building and as such, it can be a dangerous place for children who are left alone. Library staff are never responsible for children left unsupervised by a caregiver. The responsibility for children using the library rests solely with the parent, guardian or caregiver of that child. Parents, guardians and caregivers must accompany and supervise children in their care at all times. This means children who are eight (8) years old or younger must be within sight of their caregiver while in the library, this includes the children's room, main library area and bathrooms.

### **Guidelines are intended to keep everyone safe:**

- Children eight (8) years old or younger must be supervised *at all times* by a responsible caregiver. (defined as an adult or teenager age 18 or over who has responsibility for that child). The only exception to this policy is when children are attending an official library program where caregivers are specifically told they may drop off their child. During these programs' caregivers will be told that they must stay within the building if their charge is eight (8) or under.
- Children nine (9) years old and older who use the library unattended or unsupervised are subject to the same rules and regulations outlined in our Patron Behavior Policy and must behave appropriately while unsupervised.
- Caregivers are responsible for the conduct and safety of all of the children in their supervision.
- If a child nine (9) years old or older left unsupervised becomes anxious, they will be reassured by a staff member, then the staff will immediately try to locate the person responsible for the child and explain the need for his/her presence.
- Children age nine (9) or older using the library unsupervised who have become disruptive will be asked to stop the behavior. If the behavior continues after a second warning, the child's parent, guardian or caregiver will be notified immediately.
- Anyone under the age of 18 left unattended 15 minutes before closing time should be reminded of the time and asked if they need to call for a ride.
- If anyone under 18 is left unattended at the close of business hours, two staff members will remain with them after calling the Marshfield Police to come to the library and monitor the patron. Staff may leave when the police arrive.

**Definitions:**

**Child:** Anyone eight (8) years old or under who is accompanied by an adult or attending an official library program.

**Unattended Minor:** Anyone using the library who is under 18 years old and without a caregiver.

**Proper Behavior:** Proper behavior includes doing homework, writing reports, researching, browsing for books, thinking or daydreaming, reading, quiet conversation, attending programs, volunteering, and using the computers.

**Disruptive Behavior:** includes that which represents physical danger to the child or others, or may serve to interfere with legitimate library business by other patrons or staff. Disruptive behavior is behavior that would be considered inappropriate in a setting where business is being conducted.