

UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY

The Library Board of Trustees and staff view service to children as an important part of the Library's mission. Children are encouraged to use the Library facilities and services. However, parents, guardians or persons having custody or control, or providing supervision of any child ("Parent/Guardian") should be mindful that the Library is a public building open to all individuals, and that unattended children are vulnerable. Responsibility for children using the library rests with the Parent/Guardian not with library personnel. The following policy has been designed to communicate the Library's concern for the safety and welfare of the children it serves. **Responsibility for the care, safety, and behavior of minors using the Library rests with their Parents/Guardians at all times, accompanied or unaccompanied.**

Children under the age of 12:

- By Connecticut State Law, children under the age of 12 may not be left unsupervised in a place of public accommodation for a period of time that may represent substantial risk to the child's health or safety. (Connecticut General Statutes, Section 53-21a) Exceptions may be made during scheduled library programs, at which time the person responsible for the child's supervision may be absent for the duration of the program, but must remain in the building.

Children age 12 and older:

- Children 12 years and older may use the Library unaccompanied by an adult. Parents/Guardians are expected to be aware of the opening and closing times of the library, and that the operating hours might change unexpectedly. The staff does not monitor children leaving the premises, nor is it their responsibility to know with whom a child is leaving.
- If a child is left at the library at closing time, the police may be called. It is beyond the scope of employment for any employee or volunteer to transport any unattended minor home.
- For safety reasons, children should not be dropped off at the library before opening hours.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for the conduct and safety of their children in the library. Children, like all library patrons, are required to respect library property and act in a manner appropriate to the use and function of the library (see the Patron Behavior Policy.) Children who are not using the library appropriately, or who require excessive staff attention or intervention, may be asked to leave. The Parents/Guardians of these

children may be notified, and if necessary, asked to stay with their children while visiting the library.

- These same rules apply for children attending any events at the library, whether held by the library or an outside group

Procedures for staff:

During Library Hours:

If a child under 6 is perceived to be alone in the library, the Library Director or the person in charge should be informed. An attempt will then be made to call the Parent/Guardian and request that the child be picked up. If the library staff is unable to reach the Parent/Guardian within one hour, or if the Parent/Guardian does not respond within the same hour, the Library staff member shall call the Connecticut State Police to assume responsibility for the child. If a child under 12 is found to be left unattended in the Library for long periods of time or on a regular basis, the Library Director shall attempt to call the Parent/Guardian to discuss the Library's Policy and State Law regarding unattended children.

At Closing/Early Closing due to weather or other emergency:

If an unattended child under 12 is in the library at closing, the Library Director or the person in charge will attempt to call the Parent/Guardian. If the attempt is unsuccessful, or the Parent/Guardian cannot pick-up the child within a half hour, the person in charge shall contact the Connecticut State Police to assume responsibility for the child. Two staff members will remain with the child until either the Parent/Guardian or a representative of the Connecticut state Police arrives. The State Police shall be advised if the Parent/Guardian precedes their representative's arrival.

When contact is made with the Parent/Guardian, Library Policy will be explained to the Parent/Guardian and a copy of the Policy will be given to them. Under no circumstances will Library staff or volunteers transport the child from the Library building as part of their job.