Shorewood-Troy Public Library

Unattended and/or Unsupervised Children Policy

Approved by the Board Action 9/21/2019; Draft 03/13/2025

Parents or legal guardians are responsible for their children at all times, regardless of the parent or guardian's presence in the library.

The Shorewood-Troy Public Library welcomes and encourages children and their families to use its services and facilities. Staff members are library professionals committed to helping children and their families find materials to meet their needs, providing a welcoming environment to learn and play, and planning/presenting programs that enrich, inform, and entertain.

However, staff members cannot guarantee an entirely risk-free environment or take responsibility for children outside of a set library program. All public places may be dangerous for a child who a parent or caregiver leaves unattended and/or unsupervised, and library staff are not equipped or licensed to provide long or short-term childcare services including adult supervision, nutrition, or emergency care.

A child left at the library without a parent or caregiver may also engage in behavior related to boredom, fatigue, or fear, disrupting the library staff's services for the community. Parents and caregivers must manage and/or prevent any behavior that interferes with the library's regular operation or disturbs library users and staff.

It is out of genuine concern that the library encourages parents and caregivers to consider the safety and well-being of their children in a public place, and to respect the privileges of other library users and the professional roles of the library staff.

Children aged 12 and over can use the library's facilities and resources alone, provided their behavior conforms to the General Rules of Conduct. It does not disrupt other library users or staff members. If their behavior is disruptive, staff members can call a parent or guardian to request they pick up the child. Children aged 11 and under must be attended and supervised by a parent or a caregiver 16 years or older while on library premises. Children of all ages using the library facilities should know or carry a copy of their phone number and address.

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, or
- has not been met by a responsible caregiver at closing time.

If at any time a child age 10 or under is found unattended and/or unsupervised, the following steps will occur:

1. The parent or caregiver will be paged to determine whether they are in the library. If they are, they 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 16 years of age or older, a staff member will call the parent or guardian to request that they 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 Unattended and/or Unsupervised Children Policy will receive a warning from the library staff and be told of the library's next course of action should non-compliance continue.

When visiting the Library without an adult, children 11 to 17, unless the minor child has access to transportation on their own, 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 Unattended and/or Unsupervised Children 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.