

## Safe Child Policy

The Pittsylvania County Public Library welcomes children and strives to provide a safe and stimulating environment for their educational and cultural needs. The goal of the staff is to insure that children feel safe and secure and enjoy visiting the library without interfering with other patrons' use of library services and facilities.

The library, however, cannot be responsible for the welfare of children who are left unattended on library property. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children rests with parents/caregivers. The library is not equipped—and it is not the library's role—to provide long- or short-term child care.

Parents are reminded that numerous unexpected events may occur if their children are here unattended. The safety of children is a serious concern. Young children left on their own often become frightened or anxious. It is with these facts in mind that we institute the following policy:

1. Children through age eight shall be accompanied by a responsible caregiver who is at least sixteen years of age, who will remain in the building within eyesight of the child, and who will maintain responsibility for the child.
2. While it is always preferable to have a parent present, children ages nine and older may use the library independently provided they follow the library's policies set for all patrons. Parents remain responsible for the actions of their minor children.
3. Additionally, the library advises parents/guardians/caregivers to accompany children of any age who have emotional, mental, or physical problems that render supervision necessary. The library staff will assist and accommodate those with special needs as much as it is able, but library staff cannot assist them to the degree that those familiar with their needs are able to do.

If a staff member finds an unattended child, the following steps will be taken:

- The staff member will determine if the parent is on library property. If so, the staff member and child will attempt to locate the parent.
- If the parent is not on library property, the staff member will attempt to contact the parent at home or work using the information provided by the child, the patron database, or the telephone directory. If contacted, the parent will be told that their child must be picked up immediately.
- If the parent cannot be located, or if a contacted parent has not picked up their child within thirty minutes of being called, the staff member will call law enforcement personnel.
- Under no circumstances will a staff member ever take a child off library property or give a child a ride home.
- The library in no way assumes any responsibility for any child left unattended on library property. Staff members will use their judgment when dealing with unattended children.

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If children are found without an adult at closing time, staff will attempt to locate the parent or adult caregiver. If the parent or caregiver cannot be located on library property or at home within twenty minutes of the first attempt, law enforcement personnel will be contacted to pick up the child. Library staff members will stay with the child after closing until law enforcement personnel arrive.

Library staff will maintain a record of incidents regarding unattended children. Repeated incidents may lead to restricted or suspended library access. Parents/caregivers will be notified should restriction/suspension be invoked.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees on June 9, 2008; changes approved on April 11, 2011; re-approved, April, 2015; re-approved, June 2019; submitted for first reading with minor changes, November 2020*