

Unattended Children Policy

Definitions:

- An “unattended” child is any young person under the age of 12 using the library facility unaccompanied by a responsible adult.
- A “vulnerable” child is any unattended child twelve years of age or younger whose safety or well being would be endangered if he/she were sent out of the building or any child left unattended for more than 2 hours. Examples of vulnerability might include the child being too young to be on his/her own, the child being sent out into an unsafe area, or being left alone, in the dark, outside the facility after business hours. A “disruptive” child is one whose actions disturb others or damage items belonging to the library or to others.

The Hopkins County-Madisonville Public Library welcomes all children to use our facilities and services. However, responsibility for children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or assigned chaperone - not with library personnel. Staff members are concerned when parents leave their young children alone or in the care of an older sibling or friend. Young children left unattended, even for a few minutes, can become frightened. An older child left in charge can be easily burdened by this responsibility. Sometimes children stay at the library for many hours or wait here after school until a parent picks them up. Often they become bored and restless. This leads to disruptive behavior which interferes with the legitimate library business of other patrons and staff. Staff members cannot be placed in a position of supervising children who are too young to be unattended or whose behavior indicates that they have stayed at the library for too long a time. For the safety and protection of youth and for the benefit of all, the Hopkins County-Madisonville Public Library Board of Trustees has developed the following rules:

CHILDREN ARE WELCOME TO USE THE LIBRARY AS LONG AS THEIR BEHAVIOR IS NOT DISRUPTIVE AND THEY ARE SUPERVISED.

- The library assumes no responsibility for an unattended child. This includes medical emergencies.
- Parents should not view the library as an alternative to daycare. Unlike a daycare facility the library is not a closed environment. Staff members cannot monitor everyone who enters and all adult patrons are free to use any public area within the library. In addition, the library staff provides a wide variety of materials and services to children, but does not assume parental responsibility.
- In no instance may a child under the age of 12 be left in the library without a caregiver physically present in the building. A responsible adult (18 and older) should accompany young children while they are using the library.
- Children ages 12 and older may use the library unattended providing they are able to follow library rules and observe proper conduct. Children, like all library users, are required to respect library property and act in a manner appropriate to the use and function of the library. (See Behavior Policy)
- When using library services (including the Internet), parents/guardians are still responsible for the supervision of their children.
- Children of any age with mental, physical or emotional disabilities which affect decision-making skills or render supervision necessary must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or assigned chaperone at all times.

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- Parents should be advised that if their children misbehave, they might be told to leave the library and the library grounds. Parents should further realize that even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior.

CHILDREN MUST LEAVE THE LIBRARY AT CLOSING TIME.

Children left to wait outside the building for a ride after the library has closed are placed in a vulnerable position. Staff members are not responsible for the safety of a child once the library has closed. Under no circumstances will a staff member ever take a child out of the library or give a child a ride home. However, staff members will attempt to contact parents/guardians. If they are unsuccessful within 5-10 minutes of closing time, the police will be summoned to assist the child. Incident reports will be documented and filed. Social Services will be contacted when children are frequently left unattended at the library.

Violations of this policy may result in loss of some or all library privileges.