

Salem Public Library
Unattended Child Policy & Procedures
Revised and approved December 21, 2018

Purpose:

The care and behavior of minor children visiting the Salem Public Library are the responsibility of the parent/guardian. The library does not act *in loco parentis*. Library staff welcomes children to enjoy the library and library materials but cannot accept responsibility for their safety and supervision. While many people think of a public library as a safe environment, this is not always the case. The Unattended Child Policy is an effort on the part of the Salem Public Library to ensure the safety and well-being of children visiting the library.

Policy:

A responsible adult or caregiver over the age of 16 should accompany children to the library. No child under the age of nine may be unattended at any time while in the library or at a library program. The library does not assume responsibility for any child left unattended.

At the age of nine (or older), some children are better able to handle themselves without supervision than others. A child of appropriate maturity should CLEARLY exhibit the following abilities:

- understands and follows the rules of the library
- demonstrates comfort in being left alone
- knows at least one family member's telephone number in case of an emergency

Procedure:

If a child under the age of nine is without a parent or caregiver, staff will first attempt to locate or contact them. If a parent or caregiver cannot be located or contacted, staff will call law enforcement personnel to pick up the child. A library staff member will remain with the child until law enforcement or the parent/guardian arrives.

Unattended children ages nine and older are welcome to use the library's resources as long as needed provided they follow the library's Code of Conduct. If a library staff member observes any child violating the library rules, the staff member will issue one warning. After the second occurrence, staff will dismiss the child from the library property and contact a parent or caregiver if necessary. The library staff may use their discretion in involving law enforcement authorities to remove a patron of any age who is violating library rules.

Children who use the library independently must have definite arrangements to be picked up by closing time. A library staff member will remain with a child until a parent or caregiver arrives for up to 30 minutes, at which point law enforcement will be called. In this event, staff will leave a note on the door of the library notifying the parent or caregiver that law enforcement personnel picked up the child from the library. Staff members do not drive children home.