

SAFE CHILD POLICY

The Marion Public Library is dedicated to provide a welcoming and exciting environment for people of all ages. It encourages children to explore the world of books and other materials and encourages participation in its various programs.

Children in the library should be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. If left alone, a child can become restless, bored, or frightened. There are also hazards in the building such as stairs, furniture, and doors. Safety of children left alone is a concern of the library staff. **The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parents or caregiver and not with library personnel. Library personnel cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or who demonstrate inappropriate behavior.**

Please note the following guidelines for children in the library.

Children age 8 and under must be attended and supervised in the library.

A parent or caregiver should be in the immediate vicinity of the child. The caregiver should be at least 10 years of age and should have emergency contact information for the younger child. While at the library, the caregiver needs to be with the child and not occupied at a computer.

Children ages 9 to 12 may be at the library on their own for up to two hours but only if they are able to leave the library without an adult. They must also be mature enough to stay alone and observe proper conduct. Children using inappropriate behavior will be informed of the rules and can be asked to leave.

Children of any age with mental, physical, or emotional problems which render supervision necessary must be accompanied by a parent or other caregiver at all times.

Children ages 13 and older may use the library alone but are not encouraged to remain in the building for extended periods of time unless doing research, homework, or reading. Disruptive children will be asked to leave the library after receiving a warning from staff. Parents may be contacted concerning disruptive behavior.

Repeated violations of this rule may result of loss of library privileges to the child and the parent/guardian or assigned caregiver.

PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS, NOT LIBRARY STAFF, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIONS AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN VISITING THE LIBRARY.

Procedures

Disruptive children:

Children running, eating or drinking, playing on furniture, and being excessively loud or noisy create a dangerous and disruptive situation at the library. Misuse of furniture or library equipment cannot be allowed. Please note the following procedures:

1. Children who are disruptive will be asked by staff to behave. If a parent or caregiver is attending them, they might be contacted.
2. If the behavior continues and the children are accompanied by an adult, the parent or caregiver will be asked to contact the child. If the behavior continues beyond that, the family might be asked to leave the library.
3. If the disruptive child is not accompanied by an adult, and lives within walking distance of the library, the child will be told to leave for the rest of the day (staff should consider the child's age, time of day, and the weather conditions). Children too young to travel alone or who do not live nearby should be asked for their telephone number and a parent or adult should be contacted. Call the parent to report the problem and ask that the child be removed. If a parent cannot be contacted, call the police if necessary.
4. Do not touch a child unless the child is in immediate danger of harming him or herself.
5. If the disruptive behavior occurs during the day, contact Security. If the disruptive behavior occurs in the evening and a security guard is present, please alert him for assistance. If security is not available, contact the Director of a department head.
6. File an Incident Report for cases of disruptive behavior and when an adult or the police must be contacted and for situations that required dismissal of a child from the library.

Unattended children:

The library welcomes children to use its facilities and services. Responsibility for the behavior and well-being of the children rest with the parent or caregiver and not with library personnel.

Library personnel cannot supervise children in the library. The library is not staffed to be a day care center for children.

Staff members are asked to use their best judgment when dealing with unattended or disruptive children.

Unattended Preschoolers: Adults who do not attend a program or storytime with a young child must remain in the building and return to the children's area at the end of the program.

Youth in a public place: Some children, due to differences in child development, may not be able to cope with being unattended. A public place, such as the Library, cannot guarantee the safety of a child. It is recommended that young children be accompanied by a parent or caregiver or adult while in the library. If a child above the age of 8 is left unattended, library staff should use their best judgment and consider the following: Is the child using the library the way it is intended? Non-disruptive children should be allowed to remain at the library for a period of time if they are reading, studying, or behaving. Even the best children who are left alone for too long can become restless, bored and impatient. If this occurs, a parent should be contacted. If a child is left unattended on a continuing basis and the library staff notes that a day care pattern is being established, a parent should be contacted and concern for the child's safety should be expressed.

If a child under 9 years old is left unattended or is lost in the library, the staff person will make an attempt to contact the parents or caregiver in the building by page or intercom. If a parent or caregiver cannot be found, the staff will attempt to ascertain the child's name and will attempt to call the child's home. If a child walked to the library on his or her own, please consider the time of day when asking the child to return home. Under no circumstances shall a staff member leave the building with a child. If the parent cannot be reached, the police will be contacted.

Occasionally, very young children come to the library on their own. If their behavior is not presenting a problem, allow them to stay but send home a note to their parents explaining our policy.

Occasionally, children are dropped off at the library by parents. If the child is under 9 behaving please allow the child to remain and then send a note home to the parents stating that children 8 and under should not be left unattended. If the child is older and behaving allow the child to remain and contact the parent only if behavior warrants it.

In any case involving youth, and specifically, whenever parents, caregivers, or the police have been contacted, staff is required to complete an Incident Report.

At all times, in all situations, staff members should exercise their BEST JUDGMENT with the safety of the child as priority.

Closing time:

1. Children should not be left alone outside the building at closing time.
2. Prior to closing, staff should check with unaccompanied children to verify that someone will be there to pick them up by closing.
3. At 10 minutes to closing, if a parent or caregiver has not arrived, the staff member should contact the parent or responsible party.
4. If a parent or adult cannot be reached, please call the police. NEVER drive a child home.
5. File an Incident Report for children who are left alone at closing time.

Adopted by the Marion Public Library Board of Trustees 1998
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