

Salem Public Library
Unattended Child Policy & Procedures
Revised April 27, 2023

Purpose:

The care and behavior of children visiting the Salem Public Library are the responsibility of the parent/guardian. The library does not act *in loco parentis*. Library staff welcome 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 minors visiting the library.

Policy:

A responsible adult or caregiver who is at least 18 years old must accompany minors to the library. No child under the age of 11 may be unattended at any time while in the library or at a library program.

Library card-carrying minors between 11-17 years of age may visit the library without an adult after they present their library card at the front desk so staff can verify emergency contact information. Minors without a library card must be accompanied by an adult. The library does not assume responsibility for any child left unattended.

At the age of 11 (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 11 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, library card-carrying minors ages 11 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 minor violating the library rules, the staff member will dismiss the minor 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.

Minors who use the library independently must have definite arrangements to be picked up before closing time. A library staff member will remain with a child until a parent or caregiver arrives for up to 15 minutes, at which point law enforcement will be called. Staff members do not drive children home.