



## UNATTENDED YOUTH POLICY

*Adopted by the Board of Trustees, October 2013*

*The Middlesex Public Library prides itself on providing a warm and welcoming environment for people of all ages. We encourage the community to use our library often and to enjoy all the services it has to offer.*

*The Library, however, is also a public building and as in all public buildings, "stranger danger" is a real concern. **Library staff cannot and should not be expected to prevent children from interacting with or leaving the library with a person who is not an appropriate chaperone. Responsibility for a youth using the library rests with the parent/guardian, not with Library personnel.***

### POLICY

#### *Definitions:*

*For the purposes of this policy the term "parent/guardian" shall mean the parent, legal guardian, caregiver or other adult who is responsible for a particular child or children. The term "adult" shall mean a person 18 years of age or older.*

Therefore, the Library Board of Trustees has adopted an Unattended Children Policy designed to promote the safety of the library's youngest patrons. Young children unable to care for themselves should not be left alone in the library. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to supervise their children while they are using the library. The Library is not responsible for any consequences of a parent/guardian ignoring their responsibility.

An unattended child is defined as a child who is (1) unable to care for himself/herself when left alone in the library without another adult in sight/sound range, (2) any child left alone for long period of time, or (3) any child not picked up at closing time.

We ask that all parents/guardians, for the safety of the children entrusted to them, follow the Unattended Children Policy adopted by the Middlesex Public Library Board of Trustees.

- Children under the age of 8 must have a parent/guardian with them at all times. The adult must remain in sight and conversation distance of the child at all times.
- Children ages 8-10 may be left unattended for short periods of time but must have a responsible parent/guardian in the library at all times for the duration of the visit. The parent/guardian must be at least 18 years old and have a phone number of where a parent or legal guardian can be reached in case of emergency.
- Children age 11 and older are welcome to use the library unattended but not for extended periods of time. We expect parents/guardians to set limits for their child's library visits. **In general, the library considers more than two hours in the library without a parent/guardian present excessive and inappropriate.** Parents/guardians should be certain to provide their children with an emergency number where they can be reached at all times.
- A child under the age of 18 with no means of getting home at the time the library closes is considered a stranded minor. The police will be notified to take custody of the stranded minor if he/she has no means of getting home when the library closes to the public.
- If a child is left in the care of someone deemed not responsible by library staff, parents/guardians will be notified and asked to pick up the child immediately from the library.
- If a child is left unattended in the library for an extended period of time, the library staff will also contact the parent/guardian responsible for the child. If no one is available, the staff reserves the right to notify the police if deemed necessary.

- Parents/guardians are still responsible for their children's actions while they are using the library. Children must follow the rules of appropriate behavior in the library and must heed all instructions and any warnings by staff. **Children of any age will be asked to leave the Library if they are behaving inappropriately. While the Library's Code of Conduct addresses specific unacceptable Library behavior, it is at the discretion of library staff to determine the appropriateness of any behavior that is not specifically referred to in our Code of Conduct.**
  - If a child's behavior is such that they are asked to leave on three separate days within a span of seven days, or if the child refuses to comply and leave library property on one day, the child will be asked to leave for one week and the child's parent will be notified via mail or phone. If a child is asked to leave the library on multiple occasions outside a span of seven days, parents will be notified at the discretion of library staff.
  - In a case of extreme severity, at the discretion of library staff, or if a child is asked to leave the library an unacceptable number of times, either within or longer than a span of seven days, the child may be asked to leave until a parent comes in with him or her. A case of extreme severity includes, but is not limited to, verbal statements or physical actions that appear to library staff to be serious threats.
- Parents should be aware of the library hours and ideally arrive at the library 10 minutes before closing to be certain their child is picked up before the library closes for the evening.
- As with any public building, the Library is subject to fire codes and population capacity limits. Once the Children's Room has reached its maximum safe capacity, additional visitors must be turned away. It is important for parents/guardians to note that the Library is being utilized now more than ever between the hours of 2pm – 5pm, and there may not always be room to accommodate their child at a given time.

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