

## **Lodi Memorial Library Unattended Child Policy**

### **Rationale**

Lodi Memorial Library strives to serve children of all ages and to create a welcoming environment that encourages a love of reading and an opportunity for learning. To accomplish this, the safety and well-being of children must first be addressed. Children left unattended may become frightened, bored, disruptive and susceptible to danger since the library is a public facility. An unattended child is defined as any child under the age of 18 who is using the library unaccompanied by a parent or designated adult caregiver.

Library staff legally cannot provide care or supervision to unattended children. NJSA 30:5b-1-15 prohibits the library from functioning as a child care center unless licensed by the State of New Jersey. NJSA 9:6-8.21 prohibits parents from endangering the welfare of children. Library staff members do not know the specific needs of individual children in the library. Staff members cannot know if children are leaving the building without proper supervision, with their parents or with strangers. It is with this background and upon these assumptions that the following policies and procedures were developed.

### **Unattended Child Policy for Lodi Memorial Library**

#### ***Children in 5<sup>th</sup> Grade & younger:***

Must be accompanied by a parent or a responsible adult caregiver at all times

#### ***Children in 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade:***

Must either be accompanied by a parent/responsible adult caregiver, or present a current acceptable form of identification to enter the library on their own. Identification must be presented each time the unaccompanied teen (ages 12-18 years) enters the library.

#### **Acceptable Forms of Identification :**

Current Student Photo ID with student name and ID#,

Driver's License or other Photo ID with name;

Current Student Schedule with student name and ID#;

Current Student Planner with student name and ID#.

The Students' ID will be returned when they are ready to leave the library. Students without identification can contact their schools to obtain replacement identification.

**Acceptable Library Behaviors for Children up to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

Read ; Check out books ; Do homework ; Use a computer; Ask library staff for help with a project ; Participate in library programs; Be a library volunteer (ages 12-18 with approval).

**Unacceptable Library Behaviors for Children up to 12<sup>th</sup> Grade:**

Loud, profane, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior; Use of sports equipment, scooters or other vehicles inside the library; Use of cell phones; Consumption of food or beverages; Obstructing the Library Entrance either outside or inside the building; Mistreatment/vandalism of library property; “Just Hanging Out”--Children must do one of the acceptable library activities to remain in the library.

**Warnings and 3 Strikes Policy**

We follow a “3 strikes & you’re out” policy for disruptive behavior in the library. Children who engage in disruptive behavior will be given a warning by Lodi Library staff. Children who disregard the warning and persist in unacceptable behavior will be instructed to leave the library for that day. If a child is asked by library staff to leave the library 3 times, their parents and school will be notified. The child will no longer be allowed in the library for a period of time, and a meeting with the child and his or her parent will be required before the child can return.

Staff will attempt to notify parents or guardians if the child’s behavior or well-being warrants such notification. When, in the judgment of library staff, the matter is urgent, the police will be notified. Parents or guardians are strongly advised to leave their contact information with a library staff member. Since parents are responsible for their children, they must be accessible. Parents who leave children in this age group unattended must pick them up no later than 20 minutes before closing time.

***Procedures for Providing Safety for Unattended Children:***

When the policies outlined above are not followed, a library staff member will:

- Remain with the child and find the parent or guardian, if her or she is in the building.
- If the parent or guardian is not in the building, the staff member will attempt to contact the parent or guardian using information provided by the child, telephone directory or library database. The staff member will explain the situation and request that the child be picked up. The staff member will file an incident report with the library director.

- If the parent or guardian cannot be contacted, does not arrive or make arrangements for the child to be picked up within thirty minutes or, if the situation is deemed to be an emergency, the staff member will notify the police and request that they assume responsibility for the child. Two staff members will remain with the child at the library until the police arrive. Library staff can not walk or drive children home.

***Closing Time or an Emergency Closing:***

The library closes promptly at its posted times and, occasionally, must close due to an emergency. Children who require parental or guardian supervision to leave the library, must be picked up by a parent or guardian twenty minutes before closing time. If a child remains in the library twenty minutes before closing time, the staff will attempt to contact the parent or guardian. If the child is not picked up by closing time, the police will be notified and asked to assume responsibility for the child. Two staff members will remain with the child at the library until the police arrive. Library staff can not walk or drive children home.

A copy of this policy is posted in Lodi Library's lobby and in the Children's Area.

**Approved by the Lodi Memorial Library Board of Trustees July 19, 2011**

**Revised version Approved by the Lodi Memorial Library Board of Trustees March 20, 2013**