

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 5th Grade & younger:

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

Acceptable Library Behaviors for Children up to 12th 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 12th 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.

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 on 3 separate visits, a meeting with the child and his or her parent/guardian will be required before the child can return. When, in the judgment of library staff, the matter is urgent, the police will be notified.

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 he 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 cannot 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 no later than 20 minutes before closing time. If a child remains in the library at 20 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 cannot 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

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