

CATEGORY:	EXTERNAL
POLICY TITLE:	Safe Child Policy
FIRST ADOPTED:	May 28, 2015
EFFECTIVE as of:	December 7, 2023
APPLICATION:	Patrons
RESPONSIBILITY:	Director and staff

Safe Child Policy

The goal of the Board of Trustees and the staff is for children to feel safe and enjoy visiting the library, without interfering with other patrons' use of library services and facilities. This policy is intended to inform the public and to guide Library staff when they encounter children who are misbehaving or who are unattended. The Library recognizes that such circumstances may have widely varying facts and conditions. The Library staff will exercise sound judgment considering all relevant facts.

The Library requests that parents, legal guardians, caregivers, and custodians (hereafter referred to as "parents/guardians") consider the safety and well-being of their children and the needs of other library users by cooperating with the following:

- 1) Parents/guardians, whether or not physically present, are responsible for the safety, behavior and supervision of their children (age 17 and under) at all times on library property. Children are expected to respect the materials in the library and adhere to the Rules of Conduct policy. Parents/guardians will also be responsible for any incidents, accidents, disturbance or damages arising from the actions of their child.
- 2) The Library does not act in place of parents/guardians (*in loco parentis*).
- 3) The Library is not designed or licensed to provide basic childcare needs and should not be viewed as an alternative to daycare or babysitting. Unlike a daycare facility, the Library is not a closed environment. Staff members cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all adult patrons are free to use any public area within the Library.
- 4) Library staff are available to help and support children. Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for a child's safety and comfort, especially when that child is unattended. Please note that staff:
 - do not monitor the arrival or departure of any child from a program or the building.

- are not obligated to answer phone inquiries regarding children’s locations on library property.
- will not physically prevent a child from leaving the Library, assume responsibility for a child or accompany an unrelated child off library property.
- are not responsible for the safety of a child once the Library has closed.
- are not permitted to transport children.
- who observe unacceptable behavior will
 - inform the child and the parent/guardian, if present, of this policy; and
 - if such behavior continues, ask the child to leave the Library.
- will attempt to contact a parent/guardian when an unattended child:
 - is involved in a situation that is potentially harmful to the health or safety of the child and/or others;
 - exhibits behavior that is disruptive to other library users, staff, or the normal operations of library business and that child has been asked to leave the Library; and/or
 - has not been met by a parent/guardian at closing time.

Such situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, Library staff will contact law enforcement officials to take charge of the situation involving the unattended child.

5) All children age 17 and under who use the Library should have contact information for someone who can assist them if needed.

6) Library Closing (normal business hours, inclement weather or other emergency): If a child age 17 and under is left unattended at the time of closing, staff will attempt to reach a parent/guardian and will wait 10 minutes for the parent/guardian to arrive. If they are unsuccessful in reaching someone or the 10 minutes has passed, the Kirkland Town Police Department will be called to take responsibility for the child. Staff members are not responsible for the safety of a child once the library has closed.

7) The Library assumes no responsibility for the whereabouts of an unattended child and is also not responsible for children outside the building.

8) Parents/guardians and children who are in violation of this policy are subject to suspension of library privileges.

Children under the age of 9

Children under the age of 9 may not be left unattended in the library and must be accompanied by a parent/guardian 14 years or older, with no exceptions including attending library programs. Accompanied is defined as "within sight." It is strongly recommended that all children are accompanied by someone who can take responsibility should an emergency occur.

If a child in this age group violates the Library Rules of Conduct, the child and the parent/guardian will be informed of this policy. If inappropriate behavior continues, the family may be asked to leave the Library.

If a child in this age group is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/guardian in the Library and inform them of this policy. If the parent/guardian cannot be found, the police will be called for assistance to locate the child's parent/guardian.

Children ages 9-13

Children ages 9-13 who can understand and follow the Rules of Conduct may use the library unattended for an amount of time appropriate to their age and maturity. However the parent/guardian is still responsible for the behavior and wellbeing of the child.

A child may attend a library program alone; however, the parent/guardian must meet that child promptly when the program ends or have made arrangements clear with the child regarding leaving the Library on their own or with a designated caregiver.

Unattended children age 9 and older using inappropriate or disruptive behavior may be asked to leave the library. In such instances, parents/guardians will be contacted or, if the parent/guardian is unavailable, police custody will be utilized. If the same child continues to display inappropriate behavior while at the Library, they may be asked not to return for a specific time frame, or the parent/guardian and child may be required to meet with the Director in order to be allowed back on the premises.

If an unattended child of apparent school age is in the Library during school hours, the Library staff will call the appropriate Clinton Central School and will inform the child that the school will be notified of his or her presence at the Library during school hours.

Teenagers ages 14-17

Teenagers ages 14-17 are expected to follow the Rules of Conduct and are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents/guardians.