

## **DeKalb Public Library Policy on Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults**

### **POLICY STATEMENT:**

The DeKalb Public Library strives to provide a welcoming and safe environment for all community members. While the library is particularly concerned for the safety of children and vulnerable adults on library premises, the library does not act in loco parentis (in place of parents), and library staff are unable to provide parental-type oversight or guidance to children or vulnerable adults. A parent or caregiver is responsible for monitoring the activities and managing the behavior of children or vulnerable adults during library visits. Parents are responsible for their children whether or not the parent is present.

The library is an open, public building and the well-being and safety of young children left alone or unattended is a serious concern. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children and vulnerable adults in the library rests with the parent or caregiver and not with library staff. Library employees cannot be responsible for children or vulnerable adults who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior.

The Board of Trustees authorizes the Library Director to establish reasonable procedures governing the use of the library, including by children and vulnerable adults.

*Approved by the DeKalb Public Library Board of Trustees 09/13/2017.*

### **DeKalb Public Library Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedures**

#### **PROCEDURES:**

- All visitors to the library are required to follow the library's Code of Conduct.
- For the purposes of this policy a vulnerable adult is considered to be a person of any age who is functionally, mentally, or physically unable to care for themselves. Any person who requires staff help beyond generally offered library services may fit this description, and must be accompanied by a caregiver while using the library, including while attending library programs.
- Caregivers of children aged 11 and under must be at least 14 years of age. Caregivers aged 14-17 may not supervise more than three children at one time.
- Children aged 7 and under and vulnerable adults must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity of (and in visual contact with) the child or vulnerable adult at all times when visiting the library.
- Children aged 8-10 must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver to visit the library, but once in the building the parent or caregiver may separate from the child for short periods of time, provided the child's behavior is not disruptive.
- Children ages 11 and up may use the Library unattended. However, the parent or caregiver is still responsible for the behavior and the wellbeing of the child.
- Teenagers are considered adult users. However, they are the legal responsibility of their parent or legal guardian and should have an emergency contact available.
- When attending programs, children under the age of 3 must have a parent or caregiver with them at all times without exception. Children ages 3-7 must have a parent or caregiver remain present throughout the program, unless otherwise specified by library staff leading the program. Children ages 8-10 may be dropped off at library programs by a parent or caregiver, who must remain in the building during the program. In cases where a parent or caregiver is allowed to drop off a child at a program, the parent or caregiver must be present as soon as the program concludes.

- Children whose behavior is disruptive, whether attended or unattended, will be asked by library staff members to follow the library's Code of Conduct. If the disruptive behavior continues, they may be asked to leave the building. The library assumes no responsibility for the whereabouts of an unattended child who has been asked to leave library property.
- All children and vulnerable adults should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.
- In the case of lost or missing children library staff will search the library building and grounds and review security cameras in an attempt to locate them prior to calling the police. Children will not be allowed to leave the building during the search for the missing child.
- During library hours, when the safety of an unattended child or vulnerable adult is in doubt, library staff will attempt to contact the caregiver before calling the police. In the case of an immediate safety concern, staff will contact the police immediately and then attempt to contact the caregiver. Staff will stay with the child or vulnerable adult until help arrives.
- The library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children or vulnerable adults prior to opening or after closing. If a child under the age of 11 or vulnerable adult is still at the library after normal open hours library staff will attempt to contact a caregiver or parent for 10 minutes and then call the police. In no instance will library staff transport a child or vulnerable adult off library property.
- In any situation involving the safety of children or vulnerable adults, and specifically whenever the parent or caregiver or police are contacted, staff will complete an Incident Report.

Unattended Children at the Library & Customers without Rides

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1. Unattended Children at the Library

- A. Children are welcome in the DeKalb Public Library; however, the staff and board are concerned about their safety and welfare. Parents and caregivers are responsible to monitor the activities and regulate behavior of the children while in the library.
- B. Children under the age of 7 may not be left unattended anywhere in the Library. Children under the age of 7 must be accompanied and directly supervised by a responsible adult at all times, in all areas of the Library, and on its grounds.
- C. Unattended children over the age of 7 are free to utilize the Library as long as needed, provided their behavior is not disruptive to other patrons or staff members. Parents or caregivers are responsible for their children's behavior on Library premises. The Youth Services staff is committed to help children with activities related to the Library. Library staff cannot, however, nor is it their responsibility to, serve as baby-sitters, teachers or disciplinarians.
- D. If a parent or adult caregiver of a child cannot be located or if the Library is closing, Library staff is to follow the policy below.

2. Customers without Rides

- A. At closing, the person with building responsibility shall insure that there are no children waiting outside the library building without rides.
- B. If there are children waiting for rides, the parent need to be called. Library staff, not the child, shall make the call. The caller needs to state that the library is closing and the child needs to be picked up.
- C. It is not necessary for all staff to remain until the child is picked up **but it is critical that at least two (2) staff remain.** One of the two should be the person with building responsibility. Whenever possible there should be one person of the same sex as the child waiting.
- D. The child can wait outside, unless there is inclement weather, with the library staff waiting together inside the building in a location where the child can be seen.
- E. If no contact can be made with the child's parent, library staff should wait fifteen (15) minutes after closing. If the child is still without a ride, the staff member with building responsibility should notify the police that there is a child without a ride, giving the name and age of the child and advise police the library is closing. Request that the police come to the library and pick up the child. Continue to remain until the police arrive.
- F. **Under no circumstances should library staff give the child a ride.**
- G. **Under no circumstance should only one staff member wait with the child.**
- H. This procedure is not limited to children but applies to individuals of all ages. It may be appropriate to close the building with a group of teens waiting at the front. It is questionable whether it is appropriate to leave a teen alone waiting at the front. If an adult is left waiting for a ride, use discretion as to whether or not the person should be left alone. If not, follow the above procedures.
- I. **In all cases, consider the safety of the individual paramount.**

Adopted 6/4/2009

**PARENTS:--CURRENT**

Please remember that the DeKalb Public Library, although a fun place to be, is a busy public building.

**PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN  
UNSUPERVISED IN THE LIBRARY.**

Children are welcome in the DeKalb Public Library; however, the staff and Board of Trustees are concerned about their safety and welfare. Parents and caregivers are

responsible for monitoring the activities of their children as well as regulating their behavior while in the Library and on its grounds.

Children age 7 and under may not be left unattended anywhere inside the Library. Children under the age of 8 must be accompanied and directly supervised by a responsible caregiver at all times, in ALL areas of the Library and on its grounds.

Unattended children over the age of 8 are free to utilize the Library as long as needed, provided their behavior is not disruptive to other patrons or staff members.

**It is not the responsibility of the Library staff to serve as babysitters, teachers, or disciplinarians or to ensure the absolute safety of the children.**

If a caregiver of a child cannot be located, or if the Library is closing, Library staff will call the police. At closing, staff will wait 10 minutes with the child(ren) before calling the police. Two (2) Library staff members will wait with the child until the police arrive.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees*

*May 9, 2012*

*February 8, 2017*