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 12/2019

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 will be asked by Library staff members to follow the Library's Code of Conduct. If the disruptive behavior continues, staff may attempt to contact a caregiver, and the child and caregiver may be asked to leave the building.
- 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.