

DeKalb Public Library Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

The DeKalb Public Library strives to provide a welcoming and safe environment for all community members. The Library is particularly concerned for the safety of children and vulnerable adults on Library premises and at Library events. While the Library is concerned for the safety of children and vulnerable adults, the Library does not act in loco parentis (in place of parents). The Library cannot, or is it their responsibility, to serve as babysitters, teachers, or disciplinarians. While children or vulnerable adults are on Library grounds or participating in off-site events or programs sponsored by the Library, a parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver is responsible for monitoring their activities, behavior, and ensuring their safety, whether or not a parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver stays with a child or vulnerable adult at the Library or at the off-site location of the Library sponsored event or program. Violations of this policy are grounds for suspending library privileges.

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 05/2023

DeKalb Public Library Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedures

1. All visitors to the Library, regardless of age, are required to follow the Library's Code of Conduct.
2. 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 parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver while using the Library, including while attending Library programs.
3. Children aged 0-7 and vulnerable adults must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver, who must be in the immediate vicinity of (and in visual contact with) the child or vulnerable adult at all times when visiting the Library or while participating in an off-site Library program.
4. 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 aged 8-10 must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver to participate in any off-site Library program.
5. Children ages 11 and up may use the Library unattended and attend off-site Library programs unattended. However, the parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver still has legal responsibility for the behavior and the wellbeing of the child. Unaccompanied children may be asked to provide emergency contact information or to sign forms acknowledging behavioral expectations while in Library spaces or while attending Library programs. Children are subject to the Library's rules and policies concerning behavior, conduct, and demeanor.
6. Caregivers of children aged 10 and under must be at least 14 years of age. Caregivers aged 14-17 may not supervise more than three children at one time.
7. 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 the child may be asked to leave the building or the off-site Library program.

8. All children and vulnerable adults should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.
9. In the case of lost or missing children or vulnerable adults, 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 and vulnerable adults will not be allowed to leave the building during the search for the missing individual.
10. During Library hours, when the safety of an unattended child or vulnerable adult is in doubt, Library staff will attempt to contact the parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or 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 parent, legal guardian, custodian, or caregiver. When possible, staff will stay with the child or vulnerable adult until help arrives.
11. The Library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children or vulnerable adults prior to opening or after closing of the Library building or prior to or after any Library event or program. If a child under the age of 11 or vulnerable adult is still at the Library after normal open hours, or after the conclusion of an off-site Library program, Library staff will attempt to contact a caregiver or parent and wait for 10 minutes before calling the police. In no instance will Library staff transport a child or vulnerable adult off Library property or away from the location of an off-site Library program.
12. In any situation involving the safety of children or vulnerable adults, and specifically whenever the parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, caregiver or police are contacted, staff will complete an Incident Report.