

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, and particularly prioritizes 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 or guardians). The Library cannot, nor is it its responsibility, to serve as a babysitter, teacher, or disciplinarian. Furthermore, Library facilities are not licensed or intended to provide basic care for children or vulnerable adults, such as supervision, nutrition, personal hygiene services, health care, or emergency care.

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 and behavior, and for ensuring their safety whether or not they are physically present with the child or vulnerable adult. 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 07/2025

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 within the scope of ordinary library use. Any person who requires staff help beyond generally offered library services, or is unable to reasonably care for themselves, 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 kept in the immediate vicinity of, and in visual contact with a parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver 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 Code of Conduct.
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. Unaccompanied 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. If behavior further continues or escalates the police may be contacted to assume responsibility of the child.

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. As a safety precaution during an active search for lost or missing children or vulnerable adults no children or vulnerable adults will be allowed to leave the building without verbal confirmation that they are not the missing individual by that person's parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver.
10. During Library hours, when staff have a reasonable belief that there is a health or safety concern related to an unattended child or vulnerable adult, Library staff will attempt to contact the parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver before calling the police. In the case of an immediate health or safety concern, staff will contact the emergency responders or 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. When visiting the Library or attending a Library program without a parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian, or caregiver, children and vulnerable adults should have definite arrangements to be picked up at closing time or in case of emergencies. 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 20 minutes before calling the police. Under no circumstances 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.