

SUBJECT: CHILDREN POLICY

1. **PURPOSE:** To ensure that the libraries services are available to children and adults in a safe environment with as few distractions as possible.
2. **SCOPE:** For the purpose of this policy the words child and children refer to anyone 17 years old or younger. Children and their guardians must ensure that they are maintaining proper library etiquette while utilizing library resources. There are times, such as story hour and/or children's programming, where it is encouraged for children to learn, engage, and participate. During these times it is expected for children to be louder than what would otherwise be acceptable. As the standard of behavior is situationally dependent, library staff will decide what level of behavior is acceptable.
3. **GENERAL:** Providing resources to children in order to learn and for leisure is a cornerstone of the library's mission. It is paramount to allow children access to resources and materials while maintaining a welcoming environment for all patrons. Patron safety, particularly child safety, is the libraries first priority.

**NOTE: Librarians cannot act in loco parentis. The legal obligation that schools and daycare facilities have, to provide adequate supervision to children is not imposed on public libraries. Library facilities are neither designed for nor licensed to provide childcare.**

4. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**
  - a. Library Board of Trustees will:
    - i. Develop and approve library Children Policy
  - b. Library Director will:
    - i. Ensure all staff, volunteers, and patrons are informed of library Children Policies and/or Procedures
    - ii. Discuss policy purpose and intent with patrons as necessary
  - c. Library Staff will:
    - i. Alert the Director to any concerns regarding children's behavior or policy issues
    - ii. Monitor children's behavior to the greatest extent possible and alert the child and/or guardian of infractions
5. **UNATTENDED CHILDREN:**
  - a. Children who are too young to know and spell their name, know a caregiver's name and phone number, or who cannot use the bathroom alone are too young to

be in the library without an adult or caregiver. Children under the age of 8 should have a caregiver present if in the library longer than 15 minutes.

- i. Children attending special programs are exempt, however, guardians are expected to use their best judgement depending on the child's age and likelihood of disrupting program activities.
- b. Unattended children are expected to abide by all library policies and follow instructions as provided by staff in regards to acceptable or unacceptable behavior.
- c. Unattended children left unattended at closing:
  - i. If the parent/guardian cannot be located within 15 minutes after the library closes, the police will be contacted to take charge of the child
  - ii. Library staff will not take the child out of the building
- d. Children that do not act or behave in an appropriate manner as determined by library staff will be asked to leave.
  - i. Situationally dependent and based on the severity of the child's behavior, library staff may choose to warn children/guardians of the offending behavior or eject them upon the initial offense.
  - ii. If the child will not leave or if leaving would provide a potential hazard to the child (i.e. inclement weather) library staff will contact law enforcement.
  - iii. Parents/guardians, not library staff, are responsible for the actions and safety of the children visiting the library, however, staff members will inform accompanying adults of problem behavior should the adult fail to notice or volunteer correction.

#### 6. MONITORING INTERNET/MATERIAL USAGE:

- a. Library staff WILL NOT form behavior-based contracts with parents such as:
  - i. Taking over any parental/caregiving responsibilities
  - ii. Denying access to the internet, video games, or other library resources
  - iii. Monitor Wi-Fi usage

#### 7. ABUSE:

- a. Per Iowa Code section 232.69, library employees are not designated "mandatory reporters" required to report suspected child abuse to the Department of Human Services.
- b. However, just like any other concerned citizen, library staff can, and likely will, report the suspected abuse of any minor under the age of 18, as well as the suspected abuse of any dependent adult, to local law enforcement, local or state DHS offices, or to the Child Abuse Hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 1-800-362-2178.