

MADISON COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
Children-Young Adult / Policies and Procedures

Welcome Statement

In an effort to provide a library environment that allows all patrons to utilize library materials in a safe, relaxed manner, the Library Board of Trustees has adopted a policy statement concerning unattended or disruptive children.

Definitions

The term *young people* comprises both children and young adults. The term *children* is understood to refer to children from birth to eleven years inclusive. The term *young adult* is understood to refer to young people from twelve to seventeen years inclusive.

A child is *unattended* when out of sight of a parent or caregiver.

I. Unattended Children

Libraries offer a range of services, which support the information, literacy, and education needs of young people. Libraries *DO NOT* provide childcare. Libraries are not a substitute for childcare agencies, and any parent/caregiver who uses libraries as such is putting their child at risk. Libraries do not have the facilities or appropriate licenses to attend to children who are left unattended.

The Board ensures that the library is safe for children from an occupational health and safety point of view, and library staff takes care to ensure that the library is a safe and welcoming place for all patrons. Responsibility for a child's use of the library, however, lies with the parent/caregiver at all times.

Unsupervised children can be at risk in any public place, including public libraries. Library staff cannot supervise children in the library, so there is the risk that unattended children may leave the library at any time, hurt themselves, or be approached by strangers. Libraries are busy public places, open to all, and staff cannot judge which members of the public present a possible danger to children. In addition, libraries do not have the facilities to attend to children who are sick, injured, or hungry.

- A. *Children age 11 and under* must have a parent/caregiver in the same area of the library as the child. If taking the place of a parent, the caregiver must be at least *15 years old* and must have emergency contact information.
- B. *Young adults ages 12 through 17* may use the library on their own. Parents, however, are still responsible for the actions and safety of their children. All young people will be subject to the same policies as other library users.

II. When Your Child Visits the Library Alone:

Youth, *ages 12-16*, will sign themselves in at the circulation desk. Youth will provide the following information:

- Name
- Emergency contact phone number
- Time in, time out

III. Violation of Policy/Policies

- A. If a child, *age 11 or under*, is found unattended inside the library or anywhere on the premises, library staff will document the incident and notify the parent or caregiver by phone or in person.
- B. In the event of a second occurrence of this nature, library staff will document the incident and notify the parent or caregiver in writing. The notification will include a copy of the Children-Young Adult Policies and Procedures.
- C. In the event of a third occurrence of this nature, the library staff will document the incident and the young person will be barred by the Library Supervisor from the premises of any branch of the Madison County Library System for a period of one month by the Library Supervisor. The parent or caregiver will be notified in writing.
- D. If a *young person of any age* violates a library policy, library staff will document the incident and notify the parent or caregiver in person or by phone.
- E. In the event of a second occurrence of a policy violation, the library staff will document the incident and notify the parent or caregiver by mail. The notification will include a copy of the Children-Young Adult Policies and Procedures.
- F. In the event of a third occurrence of a policy violation, the young person will be barred from the premises of any branch of the Madison County Library System for a designated period of time. Length of suspension from the library will be determined by the Library Supervisor. The length of suspension should be in accordance with the severity of the policy violation. Notification will be sent to the parent or caregiver by mail. The local police department and the Madison County Youth Court will also receive copy of the notification and documentation.
- G. If the young person returns to any library premises during the suspension time, the young person will be considered to be trespassing on library property. At this time, library staff will contact the local police.

IV. Violation of LAW

- A. If a young person of any age violates the law anywhere on library premises, library staff will contact the local police department immediately. Library Staff will document the incident as soon as possible, noting all incidences, allegations, and names and addresses of potential witnesses or potential witnesses for referral to the Madison County Youth Court for prosecution. Documentation will be sent in writing to the parent or caregiver.
- B. In the event of a law violation, the young person will be barred from the premises of any branch of the Madison County Library System for a time designated by the Library Supervisor in accordance with the severity of the violation.

V. Unattended Young People at Closing Time

- A. The Madison County Library System assumes no responsibility for young people *of any age* left unattended on library premises, including prior to or following all scheduled events.
- B. Unattended young people must be picked up at least *15 minutes* before closing time.
- C. In the case of a child who is unattended at closing time (including emergencies), the library staff will try to call emergency contact numbers. If the parent or caregiver cannot be located within *15 minutes*, the local police will be called.
- D. No young person will be left alone in the library or on the library grounds. *Two* library staff members, if available, will wait with the young person until the young person's parent, adult caregiver, or police arrive.
- E. Under no circumstances will a staff member transport young people home or to any other destination.