

Policy on Unattended Children

Statement of Policy

Children age 5 and under must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or responsible older child of at least 13 years of age at all times when in the library, even when attending a library program. Children ages 6-9 may be left unattended at the library only during a scheduled library program providing that their parent or caregiver remains in the library during the program. While children ages 10 and over may use the library unattended, adult supervision is recommended for all elementary school children as they use the library, in accordance with Orange County Child Protective Services guidelines.

Parents assume the responsibility for their children's behavior in the library whether the child is accompanied or unaccompanied. There is no substitute for an accompanying parent. Library staff cannot control or be accountable for children who are left unattended at the library.

Appropriate library behavior (as explained in policies 4.1 and 4.3) is expected of all library patrons, regardless of age. Patrons of any age who display inappropriate or disruptive behavior may be asked to leave the library.

If a child under age 13 is left unattended at closing time, or if the library closes early due to an emergency, the library staff will attempt to reach the parents. If this is not possible, staff will contact the local law enforcement authorities and have them take charge of the child.

Rationale for policy

It is our desire to provide a positive library environment for everyone, including children. The public library, however, is just that, a public building. As such, anybody can come into it—law abiding or otherwise.

Library staff members have many duties to perform and they cannot monitor the behavior or whereabouts of individual patrons, including children. Library staff cannot and do not assume parental responsibilities for children who use our library.

There are risks to the child when he/she is left unattended at the public library. A child could be tempted to go off with a stranger. He/she could become ill. An emergency situation or early closing due to inclement weather could require evacuation of the building prior to our normal closing time. A child could be asked to leave the building due to disruptive behavior.

It is for the safety of each child that this policy has been adopted.

(Approved by Library Board of Trustees 1/98, amended 10/2001, 10/2002, 4/2003; 1/2019)