

Unattended Children Policy

Purpose:

The Avon Free Public Library ("the Library") provides a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit the library, attend programs, and use the Library's collection and computers. However, parents and caregivers should be mindful that the Library is a public building open to all, and that unattended children may be vulnerable.

This policy provides guidelines for the supervision and behavior of children while at the Library. Its goal is a safe, orderly and pleasant environment for all.

Scope:

This policy applies to all children and young adults using the Library, and to those responsible for them: parents, guardians and caregivers.

Key Definitions:

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as anyone who is under the age of 18 and a caregiver is defined as any responsible person over the age of 12 who provides direct care and supervision to a younger child or children.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The final responsibility for the health, safety, well-being and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent or caregiver and not with library personnel. Parents should be sure their children, whether accompanied or alone, understand and abide by the policies of the Library.

1. No child under age 12 may be left alone in the Library for any reason. A parent or caregiver must be in the immediate vicinity and in visual contact with the child.
2. An exception is made for children under age 12 who are enrolled in the 7th grade at Avon Middle School and wish to take part in the Teen 4G after-school program.
3. Preschool children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.
4. During story times and other library programs children age two and below must be accompanied by an adult during the program.
5. Pre-schoolers age three and above may attend story times and certain other library programs without the presence of a parent or caregiver, however those adults must remain in the Children's Department and join their child immediately following the program.
6. Parents and guardians should be aware of the Library's opening and closing times and arrange to meet and transport children ages 12 and older who have been left unattended at the Library. Parents must also be aware that the Library's opening and closing times may be subject to change due to weather or other circumstances and be prepared to provide transportation in such an event.

7. The Library is not responsible for children who are awaiting transportation or are socializing outside of the building.

Procedures:

1. Children who are at the library at closing time will be permitted to call their parents from the Library's phone. To ensure the safety of the children, the Avon Police Department may be called if the parent has not come for the child by closing time.
2. All children who use the Library are expected to respect its property and fellow patrons. Those who do not may be asked to leave, and parents and/or the Avon Police Department will be notified as deemed necessary by the staff. In the case of younger children, the parent or caregiver is expected to remove the child from the building until the situation is resolved. If the parent fails to do so, both the parent and child will be asked to leave the premises.
3. If an unattended child is asked to leave the Library due to behavior issues, it is the parent or guardian's responsibility to arrange for transportation home.
4. All patrons are asked to observe "EXPECTATIONS: BEHAVIOR IN THE LIBRARY", a notice which is posted at the entrance to the building and in the Children's & Teen Services Department.

Enforcement and Appeal:

The judgment of the Library staff prevails when requesting the removal from the building of a misbehaving or disruptive child.

Applicable CT State and Federal Laws:

This policy is in accordance with CT State law pertaining to unaccompanied minors, CT General Statute Sec 53-21a:

"Any parent, guardian, or person having custody or control or providing supervision, of any child under the age of 12 years who knowingly leaves that child unsupervised in a place of public accommodation or a motor vehicle for a period of time that presents risk to the child's health or safety, shall be guilty of a class A Misdemeanor."

Location:

This policy is housed on the Avon Free Public Library Website:

<https://www.avonctlibrary.info/policies/>

A copy is maintained in the Library's administration office.

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