

Guidelines for Provision of Safe, Efficient Library Service for Children

Behavior at Children's Programs

We have included some of these guidelines in flyers we give to preschool story time parents and in the summer event guide.

- We expect parents/caregivers to remain in the library during programs if their child is under 9 years of age.
- Children who are old enough to be in the library by themselves may attend programs without a parent or caretaker, unless otherwise indicated in the event guide.
- Parents are encouraged to remain in the building during the programming in case an emergency should arise.
- Parents should promptly pick up children upon conclusion of the program.
- We expect parents/caregivers to help their children arrive on time for programs.
- We expect parents/caregivers to keep sick children at home and not bring them to the library, especially during children's programs when illness may easily be spread to other children.

Child Care Centers

Staff should obtain the name and phone number of a center when children arrive so that the information will be available for later use. If a child is separated from the group and left at the library, call the center immediately.

Youth with Disabilities

Youth of any age with mental, physical or emotional disabilities who require supervision must be accompanied by a parent or caretaker at all times.

Guidelines for Unaccompanied Children in Primary Grades

We expect parents/caregivers to keep children ages birth through age 8 within the sight and supervision of the parent. An exception would be children ages 4 to 8 that may attend a library program without a parent/caregiver in the room. However, the parent/caretaker must remain in the library building and immediately join the child at the end of the program.

A caretaker should be at least a teenager and carry emergency contact information.

If a child is found unattended, library staff will follow procedures in the TCCL Emergency Procedures Handbook for "Lost Child."

Guidelines for Unaccompanied Children in Elementary Grades

- Children are welcome in the library for a period of time to research an assignment, complete a homework task, attend a library program, or for a period of time to select books and read in the library. We expect parents/caregivers to set reasonable time limits for their children's library visits. We will call a parent/caregiver to pick up a child when children have been left unattended at the Library for extended periods of time or if their behavior becomes disruptive. Children over the age of 9 should not be left unattended more than two hours, unless they are attending a scheduled library program. Children must know how to reach a caregiver in case of an emergency, and both child and caregiver should be aware of library hours.

Lost Child

When staff find a child that has lost his/her parent or caregiver or is unattended, follow the procedures under ***Lost Child*** in the ***TCCL Emergency Procedure Manual (on the Intranet under TCCL Information.)*** Procedure reprinted here.

Lost Child – Central

If a child has lost his parent/caregiver in the library, keep the child at your desk and call security. Security will then come and escort the child around the library looking for the parent or caregiver. If possible, get the description of the caregiver and assist in the search. Also, alert your co-workers to the description of the parent. If the parent or caregiver is not found in a timely manner, security will call the appropriate authorities.

Lost Child – Branch

If a child has lost his parent/caregiver in the library, keep the child with you. If you have security, ask for their assistance or the assistance of another employee. You may take the child around the library looking for the caregiver or keep the child at the desk while co-workers search for the parent.

If the parent or caregiver is not found in a reasonable period of time, the police should be notified. The amount of time that should elapse varies greatly by branch, but should not exceed 30 minutes.

If police take the child into custody, a note should be posted on the front door of the Library for parents/caregivers regarding where to pick up the child. Staff should always fill out an incident report under these circumstances whether or not the child is taken into custody.

Unattended Children at Closing Time

When a child is left at the library at closing time, follow the procedure in the TCCL Emergency Handbook under "Abandoned Child."

Abandoned Child – Central

If a child is left at the library at closing, call security. Security will stay with the child until parents or authorities arrive.

Abandoned Child – Branch

If a child is left at a branch library at closing, stay with the child inside the library. Offer to call parents or relatives. Do not let the child leave the library alone or send the child to another location. Stay near a phone in case the parent has had an emergency and tries to call. Do not engage the answering machine. If the child is not picked up within 20 minutes after the library has closed, notify the police.

When possible, ask two employees to stay while waiting for a child's parents to arrive so that employees are not left alone in the closed library with a child.

Child Abuse/Child Neglect

We are compelled by state law to report suspected child abuse or neglect:

"Every...other person having reason to believe that a child under the age of eighteen (18) years is a victim of abuse or neglect, shall report the matter promptly to the county office of the Department of Human Services in the county wherein the suspected abuse or neglect occurred."

If you suspect child abuse or neglect of a child in the library, immediately contact security or your supervisor or manager. Child abuse or neglect can be reported directly to DHS (584-1222) or the local police department. In making a report to the Department of Human Services or police department, only name and address information of the customer can be divulged. Circulation information is protected and can only be obtained by subpoena or warrant.

If the threat to a child is imminent, call 911 or 8-911 (if on the city system.)