

HERITAGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

Policy: Policy on Unattended Children

Date Issued: June 10, 2017

The Mission of Heritage Public Library is to provide quality materials and services, which fulfill the educational, informational, cultural and recreational needs of the community we serve in an atmosphere that is welcoming, respectful and businesslike.

The Heritage Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit the Library, use Library collections and services, and attend Library programs. Library staff members are available to assist and support children with their use of Library resources. However, the Library is not responsible for children who are left unattended on Library premises. Library staff who regularly interact with children are Mandated Reporters under Pennsylvania state law.

Unattended children are children of any age who are apparently unaccompanied by a parent, guardian, and/or responsible caregiver in the Library. As in all public places, "stranger danger" is a real concern for unattended children. Parents, guardians and/or caregivers who allow children to come to or remain at the Library unattended must understand that Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving with persons who are not the appropriate chaperone.

Parents, guardians and/or caregivers are solely responsible for the safety and behavior of their children. They are advised that children, like all Library users, are expected to comply with the Library's Policy on Patron Behavior and an older child who violates those rules may be asked to leave Library premises.

Alternately, if a younger child violates those rules, Library staff will attempt to contact the child's parents, guardians and/or caregivers to remove the child if necessary, or if the parents, guardians and/or caregivers cannot be reached, the police may be called.

Parents, guardians and/or caregivers must remain aware of Library opening and closing times and also be aware that the Library sometimes may open late or close unexpectedly due to emergencies, safety issues, or business reasons. It is the responsibility of parents, guardians and/or caregivers to let their children know what they should do if they must leave the Library.

At closing, Library staff will deal with an unattended child who is too young to go home alone safely by calling the police if the parent or legal guardian cannot be located, and by having two staff members remain with that child until the police arrive. Under no circumstances will Library staff drive or escort a child home.

Staff may refer children who are left unattended in the Library and whose basic needs for food, rest, parental supervision or attention are not being fulfilled, to the appropriate child welfare agency.

The Library is not responsible for any consequences of parents, guardians and/or caregivers forfeiting their responsibilities. Violation of this policy may lead to suspension of Library privileges, as applicable, for the offending parent, guardian, caregiver or child.