

Unattended Children Policy

The Barrington Public Library exists to serve the current informational, recreational, intellectual and cultural needs of the community by providing information, materials, and service, which is timely, accurate and useful. The library serves all citizens of the town of Barrington, without regard to age, gender, ethnicity, or handicap.

The Board of Trustees hopes that the children who use the library will find it a warm and inviting place to develop a love of books and reading. Many programs are offered to make the library enticing to children, but when children are left unattended for several hours they often become disruptive. The Board of Trustees believes that library patrons have the right to use library materials and services without being disturbed or impeded by other library users. In order to better serve all our patrons, and ensure the safety of patrons of all ages, the following rules have been established.

1) No child under the age of 6 may be left unattended in the Barrington Public Library.

- Children under age 6 must be attended by an adult at all times (this means the child is within the parent's sight), including while they are in the children's room and visiting the lavatories.

2) Children between the ages of 6 and 8 who are engaged in a library-sponsored program may be left unattended for the duration of the program only.

- Parents should be aware of the duration of the program and be at the library to meet their child at the time the program is scheduled to end.

3) Children aged 9 and up may be left unattended, at the discretion of a responsible adult.

- Children may be left alone for a period of time deemed necessary to research an assignment, complete a homework task, attend a library program or to select books and read in the library.
- Children will be expected to display appropriate behavior conducive to maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in the building for all patrons.
- Both parents and children should be aware that the library cannot be used as an alternative to after-school care, and that the library does not provide supervision to children left unattended. If the adult feels it is unsafe for the child to leave the building without adult supervision, the child should not be in the library unattended.
- Even in their absence, parents or guardians are responsible for the conduct and safety of their children on library premises. Children are expected to adhere to the same standards of conduct as adults.
- Children who are not using the library appropriately or who require excessive staff attention will have a parent or guardian called to pick them up immediately. If a child is asked to leave the library, they will not be allowed to come back to the library without adult supervision until a parent or guardian has talked with the library director and the parent and child have signed and returned a copy of the library's Appropriate Behavior Policy.
- Library staff is not responsible for the safety or well being of children left unattended.
- Children left unattended should know how to reach a parent or guardian, and parents should be aware of the closing time of the library.

4) Children must leave the library at closing time.

- Children left to wait outside for a ride after the library closes are placed in a vulnerable position. Staff cannot be responsible for the safety of a child once the library has closed. However, staff will attempt to contact a parent or guardian.
- For his or her own safety, any child left unattended after dark will not be left to wait outside the building alone. A parent or guardian will be called to pick up the child, and a fee of \$25 per hour fee will be assessed if staff members must stay to supervise the child. (This fee will only be assessed after a parent has been given this policy and second incident occurs). Should a parent be unable to come and get the child within a reasonable time, the local police will be called to take protective custody of the child. Two staff members will stay if necessary.
- Under no circumstances will a member of the library staff take a child away from the building or transport children to another location unless written parental permission is previously given (i.e. for a library field trip).

5) Disruptive behavior that is prohibited in the library includes, but is not limited to:

- **Running, shouting and/or roughhousing**
- **Cursing, obscene or abusive language**
- **Throwing objects of any kind**
- **Eating or drinking in prohibited areas of the library or leaving trash from food around.**
- **Vandalizing library property or facilities**
- **Fighting or challenging to fight**
- **Threatening another patron or staff member**
- **Any misconduct or inappropriate behavior that disturbs others or hinders them in their use of the library or library materials**

6) Parents or guardians who have a grievance with the public library must inform the Library Director in writing within 30 days. They will be scheduled to attend the next Board of Trustees meeting to discuss their grievance.