

Unattended and Disruptive Children Policy

The staff of the Mary E. Bartlett Library is dedicated to creating a warm, inviting and fun environment for children. The library offers many programs and services that encourage children to develop a love of reading, books and learning. However, the safety and well being of children at the library is of serious concern. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Mary E. Bartlett Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children while they are in the Library and on Library property. The Mary E. Bartlett Library staff is committed to helping children with activities related to the Library. However, it is not the Library staff's responsibility to serve as baby-sitters, teachers, or disciplinarians. As it is for adults, violations of library's **Code of Conduct** are grounds for suspension of library privileges. When deemed appropriate by the Library, the Library will notify the parent of incidents involving an unattended or disruptive child.

Unattended Children

Children under age 9 must be accompanied in the library. (Accompanied is defined as "within sight".) It is strongly recommended that children of all ages be accompanied by someone who can take responsibility should an emergency occur.

If a child in this age group violates the Library **Code of Conduct**, the child and the parent/caregiver will be informed of the rules. If inappropriate behavior continues, the family may be asked to leave the library.

If a child in this age group is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the rules. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, the police will be called for assistance to locate the child's parent/caregiver.

Children age 9 and older may use the library on their own. However, parents are still responsible for the actions and the well being of their child or children. Children using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. Responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned chaperone. Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for a child's safety and comfort when the child is unattended. Staff may need to contact authorities such as the police either to assist with the enforcement of discipline in the library or to ensure the safety of an unattended child.

Parents should not use the Library as an alternative to daycare. For safety's sake, parents should make sure that their children who are age 9 and older are sufficiently mature before allowing them to visit the Library by themselves. Parents should also realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior.

The Library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children prior to opening or after closing. The Library is also not responsible for children outside the building who await transportation or who are socializing. Adults responsible for unattended school-age children using the Library should be aware of the Library's hours and should make arrangements to meet the children on time.

This is a particular concern in inclement weather and after dark. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, or the parent or responsible caregiver cannot be located, or if the Library is closing, library staff is authorized to call the police and stay with the child until the police arrive.

Teenagers are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

Disruptive Children

Disruptive Behavior is considered to be behavior that represents physical danger to the child or others, or behavior that interferes with other library users or staff. Disruptive behavior is behavior that is inappropriate in a library setting. Disruptive behavior that is unacceptable in the Library includes, but is not limited to:

- Running, chasing, horseplay
- Screaming, shouting, yelling, loud laughing or other noise
- Abusive or excessive uses of the courtesy phone for calls other than to parents or guardians.
- Abnormal, erratic behavior that hinders normal library use
- Continued or frequent loud talking in study areas
- Pushing, hitting, fighting, biting
- Throwing books or other objects
- Prolonged crying or temper tantrums
- Bullying or bothering other people
- Jumping on furniture
- Dangerous use of toys (pushing toys down the slide, ramming trucks, etc.)
- Harassment of others
- Violation of the Library's policy or Code of Conduct
- Such other disruptive behavior as determined by the Library

Library staff will approach disruptive children in the following manner:

Give a verbal warning to the child indicating that such behavior is disruptive to other library users and is unacceptable.

If the disruptive behavior continues, approach the parent or guardian with the same warning. If the child is unattended, give the child a second warning.

If the disruptive behavior continues, request the parent or guardian to escort the child from the library premises. Unattended disruptive children, older than 8 years may be asked to leave the library after one warning. In such instances, parents will be contacted or, if the parent is unavailable, police assistance will be utilized.