

# DOUGLAS COUNTY LIBRARY

## POLICY ON UNATTENDED/DISRUPTIVE CHILDREN

### 1. Introduction

The happiness and safety of young children left alone at the Public Library can be a serious concern. Young children left on their own at the library often become frightened or anxious. Young children may be able to occupy their time for a short while, but, being children, soon become bored and restless, disturbing the enjoyment of others.

### 2. Policy

The Douglas County Library welcomes children to use its facilities and services. However, responsibility for the safety, welfare and behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or assigned chaperon, not with library personnel.

### 3. Definitions

#### a. Unattended child

Young child under the age of thirteen (13), and unable to care for itself left in the library unattended for long periods of time, on a regular basis, or not picked up at closing time.

#### b. Disruptive behavior

Any noisy, boisterous or acting out behavior which is inappropriate in a setting where business is being conducted. This behavior may represent a physical danger to the child or others, or may interfere with the legitimate library business of other patrons or staff.

##### 1. Appropriate activities include:

Doing homework, writing reports, researching, browsing for books, using the computers, thinking, daydreaming, and reading. If games, puzzles, or listening/viewing stations are available, they are to be used quietly so as not to disturb others.

##### 2. Inappropriate activities include:

Running, throwing, eating, loud or abusive talking, fighting, excessive socializing, or any other activities which disrupt the library. Vandalism will not be tolerated

### 4. Staff Procedures

#### a. Child left unattended

1. Children left unattended are often frightened and crying, and should be comforted by staff.
2. If it is determined that a child is lost or left unattended, a staff member should bring the child to the person on duty at the circulation desk.
3. Staff should try to identify and locate the parents or responsible child care provider:

- a. The staff will walk around the library with the child, looking for the parent.
- b. The staff will page the child's parent using the parent's name, if known, or the child's name, if know. If no name is available, describe the child's physical appearance.
- c. When the parent is located, the staff will explain firmly the library policy on unattended children. If the parent or childcare provider will not comply, they and their child will be asked to leave the building.
- d. If the parent is not found in the building, a staff member should stay with the child until the parent can be located through searching the library's records, phone book, city directory, etc. When the parent or responsible child care provider is located, they will be informed of the library's policy and asked either to join the child at the library or to pick up the child immediately. If they are unable to come immediately, they will be told their child may stay until they come this time, but that the police will be called upon to take responsibility for the child at the next occurrence.
- e. If the parents have not been located within an hour, or if the library is closing, staff shall call the police who will assume responsibility for the child.

#### b. Disruptive Behavior

1. Tell the person that he or she is causing a disturbance, and that this is a warning. Explain what behavior must cease, and that the next action taken will result in the person being evicted from the library for the remainder of the day.
2. If the person is a child between the ages of eight and fourteen, and the parent is in the library, that parent should be located and informed of the disruption and any action taken. If the parent is not in the library and/or the disruptive behavior continues or resumes, tell the child to leave the building for the remainder of the day. Follow through to ensure that he or she does leave the building.
3. If the person is a child under the age of eight, the parent should be located within the library and told of the disruption. If necessary, the parent should be reminded of the parental responsibility policy. Should the parent not be present in the building, the procedures for a child left unattended should be followed.
4. Under extreme circumstances, disruptive children may be barred from the library for an amount of time to be determined by the agency supervisor. If that patron is a child under the age of fourteen, the parent should be informed of this action in writing. If the child's address cannot be ascertained, the letter may be given to the child to deliver by hand.