



Section 5:2
Patrons

5:2 Policy on Unattended Children

The AHRL strives to provide a safe environment for all patrons. Children of all ages are welcome to use the facilities and services of the Alleghany Highlands Regional Library. However, the Library does not accept responsibility for the safety, care, supervision, or entertainment of children on library premises, nor will library staff be responsible for preventing children from leaving the Library. The AHRL staff will not monitor the whereabouts of its patrons, including children, and will not assume parental responsibilities or act as *loco parentis* for children in the Library.

For the protection, safety, and well-being of children who visit our library, the following policy has been established by the Board of Trustees of the Alleghany Highlands Regional Library.

- Children under the age of 12 may not be left unattended by an adult or responsible caregiver in any part of the Library at any time. A responsible caregiver must be at least 15 years old and able to provide the appropriate supervision that an adult would provide. During story times or other programs, adults or responsible caregivers must remain in the building.
 - If the child is age 8 or younger, the adult or caregiver is asked to remain within sight and conversation distance of the child at all times.
- Youth ages 12, 13 and 14 may not be left unattended in the Library for more than three (3) hours. Parents are encouraged to make sure their children know how to contact them when they are left unattended in the Library. The parent or caregiver must have definite arrangements to pick up the youth at least 30 minutes before closing time.
- Teens ages 15, 16 and 17 may use the Library unattended provided they maintain proper behavior and comply with the AHRL Policy on General Behavior.

Appropriate library behavior is expected of all patrons regardless of age. Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children in the Library whether the child is accompanied or unaccompanied. Patrons of any age who display inappropriate or disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the Library. For this reason, it is important that children have contact information for their parent when they are left unattended in the Library. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible to pick up the unattended child at any time.

If unattended children are still in the Library within one half hour of closing time or if the Library closes early due to an emergency or weather issue, the following procedures will be followed:

- Approximately thirty minutes before closing, staff should check to see if there appears to be any unattended children in the Library.
 - A staff member will question the child about his/her pick-up arrangements.
- As a courtesy, a library staff member will allow the child to use the Library phone in order to contact his/her parent/guardian/caregiver to make transportation arrangements.
- If the parent, guardian, or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive within 15 minutes after the Library closes, the Covington Police Department will be contacted and the child will be turned over to them.
- Two (2) staff members will remain with the child/children until a parent/guardian/caregiver and/or the police arrive.
- Remaining with the child is a courtesy, and does not mean the Library staff members are responsible for the child's safety. Under no circumstances shall a staff member provide transportation or physically restrain the child from leaving the building.

Adopted: 9-24-08

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