

Hillside Public Library Unattended Child Policy

The Hillside Public Library welcomes children of all ages to use the Library's resources to meet their informational, recreational, and educational needs. This policy governs the safety and well-being of children in the Library.

Library facilities are not licensed or designed to provide basic childcare needs, such as exercise, nutrition, or emergency care, nor are they to be used as an alternative shelter for children. Any public place may be dangerous for an unattended child. It is impossible for Library staff to constantly monitor the safety and whereabouts of each child visiting the Library. Library staff do not act *in loco parentis*.

The Library encourages parents and legal guardians to consider the safety and well-being of their children, as well as the needs of other Library users of all ages. Children aged 8 or under must be accompanied by a parent or other responsible person at least 14 years old who is actively supervising them.

Unattended children aged 9 and over are free to use the Library's resources as long as needed, provided that their behavior is not disruptive to other patrons or staff members. Parents are responsible for their children's behavior in the Library, regardless of whether the parent is in attendance.

If at any time a child aged 8 or under is determined to be unattended, the following will occur:

1. Staff will verify if the parent or caregiver is in the Library. If the parent or caregiver is in the Library, they will be asked to stay with and supervise the child.
2. If it is determined that the child is on Library grounds without a responsible caregiver, a staff member will call the parents and request that they pick up the child. If the parents cannot be reached within 10 minutes, or if they do not respond, Library staff will contact the Hillside Police Department to ensure the safety and well-being of the child.

Parents are expected to be aware of the Library's operating hours and pick up children before closing. Staff members will remind children of closing time and allow them to call for transportation or to locate family members using the Library telephone.

Staff will call a parent or adult caregiver if a child aged 14 or under is left unattended at closing time. At least two staff members will wait with the child. If a parent or caregiver does not arrive within 10 minutes, library staff will contact the Hillside Police Department to take custody of the child. Staff members are forbidden to take children into their own vehicles and may not drive them home.

Approved by the Board of Trustees
August 16, 2023