

Unattended Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy

Hillside Public Library

Introduction

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

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

Children Visiting the Library

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

Unattended children aged nine and over can use the library's resources as long as needed, provided 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 eight 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 immediately. If the parents cannot be reached within 10 minutes or do not respond, library staff will contact the Hillside Police Department to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

Vulnerable Adults Visiting the Library

Vulnerable adults who can understand and follow the Patron Code of Conduct and who can care for themselves are free to use the library unattended. They should have contact information for someone who can assist them in an emergency.

Adults 18 years and older who are functionally, mentally, or physically unable to care for themselves during an emergency should not be left unattended in the library. A caregiver must accompany anyone unable or unwilling to provide for their own personal care.

The library will attempt to contact a parent, legal guardian, or caregiver when:

1. An individual's safety is in doubt.
2. Behavior disturbs other library users and has caused staff to ask the individual to leave the library.

If a parent, legal guardian, or caregiver cannot be reached and immediate attention is needed, staff will contact the Hillside Police Department to ensure the patron's safety and well-being.

Children and Vulnerable Adults After Hours

Parents and caregivers are expected to know the library's operating hours and pick up children or vulnerable adults before closing. Staff members will remind children or vulnerable adults 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 or any vulnerable person is left unattended at closing time. At least two staff members will wait with the person until their ride home arrives. 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 or vulnerable adult. Staff members are prohibited from taking children or vulnerable adults into their personal vehicles and may not drive them home.

Approval

Approved by the Hillside Public Library Board of Trustees
July 17, 2024