

SUBJECT: Unattended Children

BOARD

Approved: 05/16/2013

Revised: 07/20/2023, 2/15/2024

POLICY

The Rolla Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow Library policies established by Library Board of Trustees and posted in each library building and on the library website.

The Rolla Public Library encourages children to use its facilities and services. Children (under the age of 12) in the library must always be accompanied by a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver that is at least 16 years of age.

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library personnel. Library employees cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior. The following guidelines will be followed concerning the care and behavior of young library users.

1. Children under the age of 8 must have a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. Children between the ages of 8 and 12 must have a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver that is at least 16 years of age in the building at all times. If a child under the age of 8 is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/guardian or caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the rules. An exception would be children attending a library program without a parent/guardian or caregiver in the room. However, the parent/caregiver is expected to remain in the library building and immediately join the child at the end of the program.
2. If an unattended child has been found without a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver that is at least 16 years of age in the building, library staff will attempt to contact a responsible party. If a responsible party cannot be contacted, library staff will call the local police to pick up the child. An incident report will be filed.

If a library staff member is unable to contact a responsible party within 15 minutes after closing time, local police will be called to pick up the child. An incident report will be filed. Unattended children waiting to be picked up after closing time should be accompanied by at least two library staff members. If the wait time is too long, local police will be called to pick up the child and a note for the parent/guardian or caregiver will be left on the library door(s).

At no time nor under any circumstance is a child to be taken from library property by library staff.

3. If a parent or guardian is concerned about unlimited access to the library and its materials for children between the ages of 12 and 17, they should accompany their child to the library. It is not the responsibility of the library, its Board of Trustees, staff or volunteers, to determine what item in the library collection is suitable for an individual. If a parent or guardian would like to assure that their child

has limited access, they should not provide a library card for their minor and they should accompany their child on library visits.