

Alpha Park Public Library District

Unattended and Disruptive Children Policy



Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children while they are in the library. The Alpha Park Public Library staff is committed to help children with activities related to the library. However, library staff cannot, nor is it their responsibility to serve as babysitters, teachers, or disciplinarians. Violations of this policy are grounds for suspension of library privileges. Whenever advisable, the library will notify the parent of incidents involving an unattended child.

Children under the age of ten (10) must be accompanied and directly supervised at all times by a parent or other responsible caregiver. When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, or the parent or responsible caregiver cannot be located or if the library is closing, library staff is authorized to call the police and stay with the child until the police arrive.

Children ten (10) years or older may use the library unattended by an adult, subject to other library rules and policies concerning behavior, conduct, and demeanor.

From time to time, the Alpha Park Public Library schedules or provides programs which are designed and suitable for attendance by children without parental supervision. Such program announcements will so indicate. If no indication is included, supervision is required. When indicated, if the parent or caregiver intends to be absent, they must leave word at the Youth Services Department or at the Circulation Desk as to their whereabouts and, if possible, a phone number where they or a responsible adult can be contacted.

In the absence of the Library Director, the Manager on Duty (MOD) will be considered the top authority present in the building and will be responsible for the decisions necessary to successfully handle any individual incident. As needed, that person will notify and consult with the Library Director. If conditions warrant, staff members are advised to seek the assistance of a second staff person in dealing with a situation involving an unattended or disruptive child.

Police involvement in case of unattended, abandoned, or disruptive children will be seen as a last resort. Staff will make every effort to work with children to contact a responsible adult, as needed. If police assistance is required, it will be with the understanding that officers will take the child/children into protective custody. Staff will carefully explain to children that the police are being called for their (the children's) safety and protection, and not for the sake of punishment.

In the specific case of children left at the library at closing time, staff will check outside the front door of the building for children of any age waiting for rides. In the event a child is left at closing, the MOD and one other staff member will wait with the child until they are picked up. Every effort will be made by the library staff to contact the parents or another responsible adult while waiting. Staff will wait for up to twenty (20) minutes before involving the police. Under no circumstances will staff be allowed to take a young person home. The MOD may submit an official incident report to the Library Director, as circumstances dictate.

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Behavior related to the outside of the building and grounds

- No loitering is permitted, except for legitimate waiting for rides
- No climbing is allowed on the earth berms, the sides of the building, or its roof
- Bicycles shall be parked in bike racks only; vehicles shall be parked in marked spaces
- No use of skates, skateboards, or bicycles is allowed in the parking areas or on the sidewalks
- Patrons are expected to leave plants and/or animals on library property undisturbed and/or unharmed

Patrons observed violating these guidelines will be asked to stop. If they refuse, police may be involved at staff discretion. A follow-up letter may be sent by the MOD or Library Director to the parent(s) or legal guardian(s), outlining library policies and requesting cooperation for future visits.

Limitation of library privileges

Limiting of library privileges may be considered by the Library Director for documented chronic offenders, when children are unattended or disruptive both inside and outside the building.

Adult patrons and their children have a right to ask for and receive a written copy of this policy. Appeals for remedy for disciplinary action may be addressed to the Library Director. If satisfaction is not received, patrons may appeal in writing to the Board of Trustees. Contact information is available upon request as well as on our website at www.alphapark.org. Any issues relating to disciplinary action, unattended children, and/or their families may be referred to the library's legal counsel, if matters cannot be settled between and among library administration, parents/guardians, and/or children themselves.

Sample letter to parents/guardians of unattended/disruptive children accompanies this policy.