



UNATTENDED CHILD POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT:

Children under 18 years of age should not be left unsupervised at the library for an extended period of time. Parents/legal guardians are responsible for the behavior of their children while they are in the library and/or on library property.

PROCEDURES:

- If a child 6 years old and younger is without responsible parental or caregiver supervision, library staff will call the police and stay with the child until the police arrive.
- Approximately 15 minutes before closing, staff will investigate if there are any patrons under 18 years old in the building without a ride home. If so, staff should make every effort to contact the parent/legal guardian. If the parent/legal guardian is unreachable by closing time, staff will call the police and stay with the child until the police arrive.
- A copy of the Parental Notification Letter will be sent to parent or guardian.
- All staff involved with the unattended child will fill out an incident report describing the situation and return it to their supervisor.

The Library Board of Trustees of the Rock Island Public Library authorizes any/all personnel to enact the following methods of dealing with behavioral problems of children under 18 years of age in the library:

- **Calling Security** – Staff should always call the security guard on duty before handling an incident, unless the incident is an emergency situation.
- **Warning Process** - Unless the behavior is of a criminal nature or poses a threat to others, patrons under the age of 18 acting inappropriately will be given one warning. If their inappropriate behavior continues, they will be asked to leave the library for the rest of the day. If they repeatedly engage in the same behavior on three separate instances, the child will be issued a temporary suspension.

Inappropriate behavior is anything listed in the regulations section of the Behavior Policy. More generally stated, it when a person's behavior is inappropriate to the use of the library building, equipment, and materials for the purposes for which it is legally constituted.

- **Suspension** - Patrons under the age of 18 who refuse to behave after the warning process has been enacted on three separate occasions will be temporarily suspended from the library. Suspensions can be issued on three, six, or twelve month increments, depending upon the situation. The parent/legal guardian of the banned ~~patron~~ child may petition the Library Board to be reinstated.
- **Trespass** – Trespassing a patron is a permanent ban, and requires police intervention. Children under 18 years of age should never be trespassed unless the behavior is criminal in nature or poses a serious threat to others. Staff has the autonomy to trespass the child without going through warning and suspension process.
- **Calling the Police** – In cases where a child poses a clear danger to self or others, or where he/she deliberately violates the law, or where he/she refuses to leave the library after being required to do so, staff and/or security personnel should call the police department for assistance.
- **Write an Incident Report** – Each staff or security person witnessing an incident will write an incident report and submit it to their supervisor. Incident reports will then be passed on to the Library Director for review, who will also share it with the management team. Any instances of the warning process will be included in the incident report.

REGULATIONS:

- Children age 6 and under must be accompanied and directly supervised at all times by a responsible adult or caregiver 14 years or older, with no exceptions.
- Children ages 7-12 may use the library without direct supervision, as long as a parent or other responsible caregiver is in the building.
- Teenagers are allowed to use the library without parental or caregiver supervision, as long as their behavior is not disruptive. Disruptive behavior is any form of behavior that seriously or constantly disturbs patrons or staff; damages library property; interferes with library service; or endangers the well-being of the disruptive child or others.
- Parents/legal guardians are responsible for the action of their children in the library, whether or not the parent/legal guardian is present. Parents/legal guardians will also be responsible for any disturbance or damage done to the library by their child.
- The library must not be used as a childcare service. Any child under 18 years of age unaccompanied by a responsible adult or caregiver for an extended period of time may be approached for information concerning his/her parent's/legal guardian's availability.
- If a library employee has reason to believe a child under 18 years of age is being abused or neglected, they will call the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline at 800-25-ABUSE, a division of Illinois DCFS.

- All regulations of the library's Behavior Policy will be enforced, regardless of age.

GUIDELINES:

If it is determined that a child is lost or left unattended, a staff member should bring the child to the Children's Room Desk at the Main Library, or to the checkout desk at the Branches.

Any/all library employees involved with a lost child incident should try to identify and locate the parent/legal guardian or responsible adults:

- When the parent is located, explain the library's Unattended Child Policy.
- If the parent or caregiver has not been located by the time the library closes, the Children's Room Desk worker or Branch Aide should call the police.
- Staff members should not, under any circumstances, take the child out of the building or take the child home.

REVISED: MARCH 2013

BOARD APPROVED: 4/16/2013

REVISED: JANUARY 2017

PARENTAL NOTIFICATION LETTER – EXAMPLES (depends on the situation)

Dear _____,

Your child, _____, violated one or more of the library’s Behavior/Unattended Child policies. These incidents occurred on the following dates:

(Examples)

- Violation of any local, state, or federal laws, as it pertains to the library (4/1/2016)
- Theft or vandalism (4/15/2016)
- Inappropriate use of library facilities (4/21/2016)
- Theft of library materials or the personal property of others (4/21/2016)

Your child has previously been warned and counseled about their behavior. Despite these steps, your child continues to behave inappropriately at the library.

The safety and proper operation of our library is our first priority. Effective immediately, _____ is not welcome in the library until a parent/legal guardian discusses the behavior issues with the Library Director, who can be reached at 309-732-7300. This suspension will last _____ months, or unless other arrangements with the library director can be made. Please see the attached policies for more information.

or...

The Rock Island Public Library has recently experienced an incident involving your child, _____, where they were on library grounds unattended by you or a responsible caregiver. A copy of the library’s policy on Unattended Children is enclosed for your attention. We ask that you review the policy and make every effort to follow it. We do not wish to suspend library privileges for you or your family, but the safety of children as well as the proper operation of the library is our first responsibility. If you have any questions regarding this policy or its enforcement, please contact the undersigned.
Sincerely,

Board President or Library Director