

Westwood Public Library Unattended Children Policy

The Westwood Public Library strives to provide a safe and welcoming environment for all visitors, including children of all ages. To ensure the well-being of children, as well as the comfort and safety of all Library patrons and staff, the following guidelines have been established to guide parents, caregivers, and Library staff about children's use of the Library.

Children Under 10 Must Be Accompanied

Children younger than 10 years old must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible caregiver who is at least 14 years old. The caregiver is expected to remain with the child at all times while on Library premises. For certain Library programs, however, children may participate independently if their caregiver remains in the Library building, as determined by Library staff.

Children Aged 10 to 12 May Visit Independently

Children between the ages of 10 and 12 are welcome to use the Library independently for an appropriate period of time as determined by the Library in its sole discretion. Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring their child understands and follows Library rules. Library staff may contact the child's parents or guardian if any issues arise. If a parent or guardian is unavailable and the situation warrants, the Library staff may contact the appropriate authorities.

Teens Aged 13 and Older

Teens aged 13 and older may use the Library without adult supervision, and are expected to comply with the Library's Appropriate Library Behavior Policy. If they violate the Appropriate Library Behavior Policy, the Library may ask them to leave and/or contact their parent(s) or guardian.. Should they refuse to comply, Library staff may contact law enforcement to assist, and the Library will not assume responsibility for their safety.

Children with Medical Conditions

A child of any age who has a medical condition that requires assistance or monitoring by another individual must not be left alone in the Library. A responsible parent, guardian, or caregiver must be in attendance in the same section of the Library as the child and must maintain an awareness of the child's location and activity at all times and be able to render assistance if and when needed.

Parents Are Responsible for Pickup at Closing Time

Parents and guardians must ensure that children who require transportation are picked up prior to closing time. Parents and guardians should be aware of the Library's hours, which may change due to holiday schedules or unanticipated circumstances, such as power outage, inclement weather, or other emergencies. If a child is left at the Library after closing and Library staff cannot reach a parent or caregiver, local authorities may be contacted to assist.

Once the local authorities take charge of the child, the Library's involvement with the child shall end for that day.

Library Staff Responsibility

Library staff will make every effort to assist children in need, but they cannot assume custodial responsibility for any child. The Library does not have an *in loco parentis* role or responsibility towards any children in the Library. Parents and guardians are fully responsible for their children's safety, behavior, and actions while in the Library.

Behavior and Use of the Children's Area

Parents and guardians are responsible for the behavior of their children. All children are expected to follow and comply with the Library's Appropriate Library Behavior Policy. If any child violates the Appropriate Library Behavior Policy, the Library may contact the child's parent(s) or guardian, ask the child to leave the Library, or take other appropriate action.

Adults may only visit the children's section of the Library if they are supervising a child or using resources specifically for children. Adults without a valid purpose in this area will be asked to use other parts of the Library.

The Westwood Public Library appreciates the cooperation of parents, guardians, and caregivers in making the Library a safe and enjoyable place for everyone.

Approved 2/24/25

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