

## **LEGAL ISSUES FOR LIBRARIES:**

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**Collections of Fines**

**Regulations**

1. To encourage the prompt return of materials, the library charges a per day overdue fine based on the type of item:

<u>Library Material Type</u>	<u>Daily Overdue Fine</u>	<u>Maximum Fine</u>	<u>Default Replacement Fee for Material (subject to adjustment)<sup>1</sup></u>
<b>Print Materials</b>			
Books	25¢	\$10	\$20
Circulating periodicals	25¢	\$3	\$5
Interlibrary loans	\$1	\$25	\$50
<b>Non-Print Materials</b>			
Audiocassettes/books on CD	25¢	\$25	\$50
Book kits	25¢	\$10	\$20
Book discussion kits	\$1	\$100	\$200
Music CDs	25¢	\$10	\$15
DVDs	\$1	\$15	\$30
DVDs nonfiction	\$1	\$10	\$30
Hooked on Phonics & LeapFrog	\$1	\$100	\$200
Low vision aids	25¢	\$10	\$50
Puppets	25¢	\$10	\$20
Story kits	\$1	\$100	\$200
Video game	\$1	\$10	\$20
VHS	25¢	\$10	\$20

## Fines and Fees Policy

2. On the day after the due date, all materials will be considered overdue if they have not been renewed or returned.
  3. No fines will accrue on days that the library is closed.
  4. The library's computer system will notify customers of the overdue materials via email, automated telephone calls or United States Postal Service in compliance with state law.<sup>2</sup>
  5. When the maximum fine level shown above has been reached, the item status will change and the Default Replacement Fee for Material will automatically be added to the customer account balance.
  6. Any customer with an account balance of \$5 or more shall forfeit borrowing, renewing, Internet, wireless, proctoring and meeting room privileges until materials are returned and fines are paid. Customers experiencing unusual difficulty in returning their materials or paying their fines should contact the library circulation staff.
  7. Accounts with a balance of \$15 for more than 30 days shall be turned over to a collection agency. Notification will be sent to customers before the account is turned over to the library's collection agency. A \$10 nonrefundable service fee will be automatically added.
  8. The library shall require that no accounts turned over for collection be reported to credit reporting agencies unless they are at least \$75 or more. Notices to patrons concerning overdue fines in addition to advising that they may be turned over to collection, shall specifically state that overdue fine amounts in excess of \$75 may be reported to the credit reporting agencies.
  9. Customers should resolve disputed fees before paying for them. Once payment for library fees has been accepted, monetary refunds will not be issued.
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## **Unattended Children Policies**

### **Guidelines for Developing a Policy on Unattended Children in Libraries**

“Local community standards play a primary role in the creation of any library policy. As public entities, libraries are available for use by all residents – young and old alike, with no limit on age. Policies are best that are simple and flexible enough to allow library staff to judge situations as they occur. Libraries must formulate policies that will suit the needs of the communities they serve. As a result, no one model policy is recommended. Rather, issues for consideration are outlined below.”

- NJLA Statement on Children and Libraries

### **At what age is it okay to leave my children home alone?**

- The state of New York has no laws stipulating when a child can be left alone.
- OCFS is often asked questions regarding the appropriate age to leave a child alone, or what age is appropriate to allow a child to begin babysitting. There are no straightforward answers to these questions. All children develop at their own rate, and with their own special needs and abilities. Some children are responsible, intelligent, and independent enough to be left alone at 12 or 13 years of age. Likewise, there are some teenagers who are too irresponsible or who have special needs that limit their ability to be safe if they are left alone. Parents and guardians need to make intelligent, reasoned decisions regarding these matters. –NY OCFS

### **SAMPLE POLICIES**

#### **New York Public Library, New York**

The New York Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit the Library, use Library collections and services, and attend Library programs. Library staff are available to assist and support children with their use of Library resources. However, the Library is not responsible for children who are left unattended on Library premises. Unattended children are children of any age who are apparently unaccompanied by a parent, guardian, and/or responsible caregiver in the Library.

Parents, guardians and/or caregivers are solely responsible for the safety and behavior of their children. They are advised that children, like all Library users, are expected to comply with

the Library's "General Rules and Regulations" and a child who violates those rules may be asked to leave Library premises. Parents, guardians and/or caregivers must inform themselves as to scheduled Library closing times and be aware that a Library facility sometimes may have to close unexpectedly due to emergencies or safety issues. It is the responsibility of parents, guardians and/or caregivers to let their children know what they should do if they must leave the Library.

Library staff may call the police or other appropriate City agency if a child is left unattended when a Library facility closes or if a child otherwise appears to be at risk.

### New Jersey Library Association

The New Jersey Library Association and the New Jersey Library Trustee Association provided funding for Grayson Barber, Esq. to develop this document regarding unattended children in New Jersey public libraries. This document is provided as background information on this topic and for the benefit of the members of NJLA and NJLTA. Every public library is encouraged to adopt its own policy regarding unattended children and have the local policy reviewed by the library's attorney.

- The public library is a unique institution that welcomes customers of all ages to use its facilities, services and resources.
- Children and their safety are of great concern to libraries. We encourage families and youth to use libraries and, while doing so, also affirm parents' responsibility for their children's safety and upbringing.
- Children, like all library patrons, are expected to behave appropriately. Parents and caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior and supervision of their children in the library.
- An unattended child is a child of any age who is apparently unaccompanied by a parent or caregiver. Children who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves may not be left alone in the library, and must have adequate supervision from a caregiver.
- Parents and caregivers must be advised that libraries are public places. In libraries, as in all public places, "stranger danger" is a real concern. Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving the library with persons who are not appropriate caregivers.
- The library cannot be responsible for any consequences of caregivers forfeiting their responsibilities. Library staff may refer to appropriate authorities those children who are left unattended in the library.

#### *Conduct by the public: adults and children*

First and foremost, libraries need to adopt codes of conduct that apply to everyone who uses their facilities, are tailored to the library's mission and focus on using the library for its intended purposes. The guiding principle is that no customer is allowed to disrupt others using the library or the proper operation of the library.

Libraries need clear and positive statements to define appropriate and inappropriate behavior in the library and to outline the responsibilities of parents and caregivers with regard to children. Procedures must be developed to detail the actions that will be taken if rules are broken and describe the avenues of recourse available to parents and children if they think they have been treated unfairly.

*Age at which a child can be left unattended:*

In New Jersey, the law does not prescribe a certain age at which a child may be left alone. The New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) uses age 7 as an estimate of the youngest age at which a child can be left safely at home. (Note: Children who are alone in a library are not considered to be legally “neglected” or “abandoned.” These terms imply a long term situation that puts the child’s mental or physical health in danger.)

In any situation, a host of factors influence whether it is appropriate for a child to be alone in a library, unattended by a responsible caregiver. These factors include:

- The child’s age, developmental level, social awareness and general health
- The length of time the child is left unattended
- How often the child is left alone
- Whether the child knows how to contact a parent, neighbor, adult friend or relative, if necessary

Note, too, that library staff cannot verify the ages of children who come into the facility. If a well-behaved five-year-old plays quietly in a part of the library, staff may not notice that she is unattended. Also, depending on the circumstances, an eight-year-old may require less supervision than a 14-year-old or a disruptive adult.

Legal research performed for NJLA and NJLTA indicates that a minimum age is difficult to identify. Libraries must closely review the numerous scenarios that may occur and adapt responses to the varying needs of the child.

- Length of time – is the child visiting a department and behaving appropriately, or is the child in the library for hours at a time, obviously distressed, behaving poorly? Does the child have appropriate nourishment?
- Visiting the library alone – has the child been dropped off or did he make his way to the library alone? Can a parent be contacted, if needed?
- Parent or caregiver in another area – If the child is able to behave appropriately in one department, can a parent or caregiver be identified and summoned from another area in the library, if needed?
- Line of sight - If a very young child is reading independently or otherwise occupied (e.g. using a computer, playing with a puzzle), are the caregiver and child in view of each other?
- Special community considerations - Is this an urban area or a suburban area? Would the library staff consider or feel discomfort with allowing a child to leave the building after dark or in a snowstorm?

***Age at which a child can be presumed capable of caring for another child:***

The American Red Cross offers babysitting classes to children at age 11. While this is not an approved indicator of maturity, it is an age when some children are entrusted with the care of younger children.

***When a child without a parent or guardian wants or needs to leave the library:***

Libraries need to adopt clear statements regarding children who remain unattended at closing time, who are asked by library staff to leave when they are misbehaving, or who leave when it is dark, inclement, etc. Procedures should define what should be considered a problem and exactly how staff should proceed. Examples should include statements about who should accept responsibility for contacting a parent, how long staff should wait for a parent (if they have or have not been able to contact them,) who among the staff should wait (including how many staff,) if police should be called after waiting for what length of time, etc. There should also be a policy outlining the consequences for patrons if such problems occur.

***Exposure to litigation:***

A library has a legal duty to create a safe environment to protect against reasonably foreseeable harm. Although the law recognizes that it is not possible to ensure perfect safety, a library does have the duty to supervise its premises adequately so that people lawfully using the library are not unreasonably exposed to danger.

Problems can arise when parents confuse the feeling of safety in a library with the objective reality of the library as a public place. Libraries cannot guarantee absolute safety to everyone using the library, nor do they want to deny access to customers who want to use it in a lawful manner.

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**Carmel Clay Public Library, Indiana**

All children must be supervised while on library property and in the library building. Children under (10) must have a responsible caregiver 16 or older on the premises, and children 5 or under must be accompanied at all times.

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**Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

An unattended child is a child of any age who is apparently unaccompanied by an adult. Parents, guardians, teachers and caregivers may not leave children alone or in the care of other children who are unable or unwilling to provide adequate care. Supervising adults must be close at hand.

As in all public places, "stranger danger" is a real concern. Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving with persons who are not the appropriate chaperone.

Staff may refer to Allegheny County Children and Family Services for those children who are left unattended in the Library and whose basic needs for food, rest, parental supervision or attention are not being fulfilled.

If the Library is closing, at regular time or in an emergency situation, and a parent or guardian of a child cannot be located in the building, the City of Pittsburgh Police Department will be called.

The Library is not responsible for any consequences of parents forfeiting their responsibilities.

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### **Franklin Township Public Library, New Jersey**

The library is a public space, like the mall or the train station.

Leaving a youth, age 10 or younger, unattended inside or outside of the library at any time is not in keeping with the reasonable use of the library as it is intended. Responsibility for a youth using the library rests with the guardian, not with Library personnel. The staff cannot know if a youth is with a guardian, friends, or strangers.

Any youth who is unable to care for himself or herself, and who is left in the library without a guardian for any period of time and/or who is not picked up at closing time is considered abandoned by the Library as set forth in New Jersey Statutes Annotated 9:6-1:

Abandonment of a child shall consist in any of the following acts by anyone having the custody or control of the child: (a) willfully forsaking a child; (b) failing to care for and keep the control and custody of a child so that the child shall be exposed to physical or moral risk without proper and sufficient protection ...

The library reserves the right to contact the appropriate authorities to take custody of any youth that library staff members, in their sole discretion, feel is abandoned under the definition set forth by the statute.

"The staff cannot know if a youth is with a guardian, friends, or strangers."

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### Delphi Public Library, Indiana

If a child under the age of 8 is found unattended while the library is open, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care.

If a child age 8 through 12 has not been picked up by a parent/caregiver within 15 minutes of closing, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care.

If a child age 8 through 12 is found unattended when the library is open and the child has become ill or frightened, has become disruptive and will not respond to verbal warnings from library staff, is upset because of weather conditions, long hours out of contact with the parent/caregiver, or other special circumstances, law enforcement officials may be called, and the child may be placed in their care.

After a child has been placed in the care of law enforcement personnel, the staff will leave notes about the child's whereabouts at the front desk and on the front door of the library.

Under no circumstances will a staff member give a child a ride home, take a child outside the building, or remain in the building alone with an unattended child.

Parents who disregard library policy regarding this matter may be reported to the appropriate social services agency and may lose all library privileges.

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### Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland

The Enoch Pratt Free Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit the Library, attend programs, and use the Library collection and computers. Library staff is available to assist and support children in using the Library. However, Library staff is not responsible for children who are left unattended on Library premises. According to Maryland Code Section 5-801:

*A person who is charged with the care of a child under the age of 8 years may not allow the child to be locked or confined in a dwelling, building, enclosure, or motor vehicle while the person charged is absent and the dwelling, building, enclosure, or motor vehicle is out of the sight of the person charged unless the person charged provides a reliable person at least 13 years old to remain with the child to protect the child.*

**Supervision:** Children under the age of 8 should be attended and directly supervised by a parent, guardian, caregiver, and/or teacher who is at least 13 years old. Library staff cannot provide child

care, be placed in the position of supervising unattended children, or assume responsibility for the safety of children. Parents, guardians, caregivers, and/or teachers are solely responsible for the safety and behavior of their children.

**Behavior:** Like all Library users, children - both attended and unattended - are expected to behave appropriately and abide by the Library's Rules of Conduct. Disruptive children who violate the Rules of Conduct will be asked to leave the Library premises.

**Truancy:** Unless accompanied by an adult or guardian, children or young adults ages 6-15 must present written proof from school authorities excusing them from school in order to enter the library on school days from 9 AM to 2:30 PM. Library staff will report instances of truancy to the Baltimore City Public Schools Office of Attendance and Truancy.

**Closing time:** Parents, guardians, caregivers, and/or teachers are solely responsible for ensuring that children have transportation home once the Library closes. Library staff are not permitted to drive or transport children home using a personal vehicle. If there are any unattended children left in the library at closing time without transportation, staff will attempt to contact the parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the matter will be referred to the Baltimore City Police Department.

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### **Hawaii State Public Library System, Hawaii**

The public library shall not be responsible for the care of any child left unattended in a public library. The parent or guardian shall be responsible at all times for a child on public library property. A child aged five and below left unattended by a parent, guardian, adult, or other responsible person may be reported to the police or other appropriate public agency

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### **Huron Public Library, Ohio**

#### *Responsibility for Minors in Library*

The Library welcomes children to use its facilities and services. However, the responsibility for the care, safety, and behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or caregiver. A caregiver must be at least 12 years of age. Library Staff members have many duties and can neither supervise children nor act as a substitute for daycare.

#### *Responsibility for children 7 or younger*

Children through age 7 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity unless they are participating in a Library program. Parents or caregivers for children age 5 or under who do not attend the program with the child should remain in the building. Parents remain responsible for the actions of their children during Library programs.

### *Responsibility for children 8-12*

Children in this age group may use the Library unattended for an amount of time appropriate to their age and maturity. It is important for staff to take note of disruptions caused by children who apparently are unaccompanied. Parents remain responsible for the actions of their children. Children using inappropriate behavior will be informed of the rules. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child shall be asked to leave the Library. If a child in this age group is behaving inappropriately and is unaccompanied by an adult or appropriate-aged caregiver, the staff will follow the directions below for children found on Library premises without a parent or caregiver. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. The Library Staff may not take responsibility for the care of a minor or an incompetent adult.

### *Responsibility for Children without Caretakers*

If a child is found without a parent or caregiver, the staff will:

- a. Attempt to comfort the child, if necessary,
- b. Locate the parent or caregiver in the Library and explain the Child Safety Policy.
- c. Make every effort to contact the parent or caregiver who is not in the Library to come and pick up the child. Staff will express the Library's concern for the child's safety and explain the Child Safety Policy.
- d. Call the Huron City Police to pick up the child, if the parent or caregiver cannot be located within 30 minutes. Staff will notify Director that police have been called.
- e. Encourage an unattended child to contact the parent or guardian if it is within 15 minutes of closing time. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive within 15 minutes of closing, Library Staff will call the Huron City Police to pick up the child. Staff will notify Director that police have been called.
- f. Remain with the child until the parent or caregiver or police arrive. This is compensated time for the two staff members who remain with the child.
- g. Leave a note on the Library door stating "Unattended child is in the custody of the Huron City Police, 413 Main Street, (419) 433-4114" once the child is in the care of the police. Names will not be stated on the sign.
- h. Do not transport any child from the Library to another location.

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### **Jacksonville Public Library, Florida**

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

The Jacksonville Public Library wants children to use its facilities and services. Children in the library should always be accompanied by a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver.

When children are left alone they may become frightened or anxious. If they wander through the building they may encounter hazards such as stairs, doors, furniture or electrical equipment. They may also become bored and restless and could disturb the enjoyment and work of others.

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.

*Children under the age of 8* must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. The assigned caregiver must be a responsible person and must carry emergency contact information. An exception would be children attending a library program without a parent/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.

If a child in this age group is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the rules. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child is found unattended again, the police will be called for assistance.

*Children age 8 and older* may use the library on their own except during regular school hours. (See **Truancy, Home Schooled Students**). However, parents are still responsible for the actions and well-being of their child(ren). In accordance with JPL's Code of Conduct, customers, including children, using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. *If a child 8 and older is not able to leave the library on his/her own then he/she should not be in the library without a parent/caregiver.* All unaccompanied children at the library should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.

#### ***Truancy***

During school hours children 17 and under must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. The Jacksonville Public Library will do its best to uphold Florida State laws on truancy, including *Florida Statutes Section 984.13* which states:

*"A child may be taken into custody by a law enforcement officer when the officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the child has run away from home or is absent from school without authorization or is suspended or expelled and is not in the presence of his or her parent or legal guardian during school hours. The officer may deliver a truant to an approved attendance center. A suspended or expelled student may be delivered to an approved alternative to suspension or expulsion program or to the parent or legal guardian."*

If the child is truant, he/she will be informed of this law before officers are called and will have the opportunity to use the phone to call a parent/guardian for a ride if needed.

### ***Home Schooled Students***

In order to use the public library alone during school hours, those who are ages 8 to 17 and are home schooled will be required to have a letter with them from the parent/guardian stating the child is home schooled. The letter must include emergency contact information. The parent/guardian will be called by staff to confirm the home school status. The school district may also be contacted to confirm home school status. If the child has a Virtual School, or other online school ID, they may log into their account as proof of home school status.

### ***Closing Time***

Children who do not have transportation home at closing time will be asked for telephone numbers of people who can pick them up at the library. If a child 17 or younger is not picked up at closing, library staff will call the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO). Two staff members are required to stay with children until they are picked up.

City of Jacksonville policy requires employees to report known or suspected abuse or neglect of children and elderly adults, if such knowledge is a result of employment with the City of Jacksonville.

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### **Juneau Public Libraries, Alaska**

Children under seven must be closely supervised in the library by an adult over 18 years of age.

Parents of children over seven are reminded that the same caution is warranted regarding a child's unaccompanied use of the public library as would be the case in any other public place. Staff has many responsibilities and cannot give unattended children undivided attention. Children may use any area of the library; therefore, staff may not always be able to observe them and their interaction with other library users.

In order to maintain a comfortable environment for all library users, staff must enforce conduct rules for both children and adults. A problem is created for both parent and child when staff must require that a disruptive child leave the library if that child has been instructed to remain at the library until a parent returns. Parents who leave an older child unattended must provide contact information in case the child must leave the library.

The primary purpose of the children's area in the library is to provide a safe and comfortable place for children and their caregivers to enjoy the library together. Adults who are unaccompanied by children are not absolutely precluded from using juvenile areas of the library, as long as such use is seen as appropriate by staff. It is library policy that staff asks

unaccompanied adults to use other areas of the library for activities such as magazine reading and computer use that are not specifically tied to the use of materials in the juvenile area.

This policy is not meant to imply that unaccompanied children are unwelcome in the library; however parents and guardians must work with library staff to assure that the library experience is safe and positive for children and all library users.

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### **Kansas City Public Library, Kansas**

#### *Child Safety and Behavior*

Parents are responsible for the safety and behavior of their children while they are in the library.

#### *Children Under Nine*

All children age eight or younger shall be attended and adequately supervised by a parent or another responsible adult at all times. For the safety and welfare of the child, parents should not request or expect library personnel to babysit or monitor their children. Minors eight years of age or younger shall not remain at the library unsupervised.

#### *Children with Special Needs*

Children who have special needs because of disabling conditions such as impaired physical and mental ability, disruptive behavior, emotional problems, inadequate attention span, incomplete social skills, etc., shall be attended by a responsible person at all times.

#### *Children in Need of Care/Reporting of Same*

When library staff have reason to suspect that a child eight years old or younger or a child with a special need is in need of care due to abandonment, lack of supervision or neglect based on a failure to comply with or utter disregard of this policy, shall be reported promptly to the State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services or other law enforcement agency officials in compliance with KSA 38-1522©.

#### *Children Age Nine and Above*

Children age nine and above may use the library unattended subject to other rules and regulations of the library pertaining to behavior, conduct and demeanor. Prior to allowing their child of nine years old or above to use the library, parents and their children should review library conduct rules. Copies of library rules may be obtained from any library information or reference desk.

#### *Appropriate Child Behavior*

Parents should encourage their children to respect library property and the rights of others who use the library in regard to play, noise and safety. Although the library is a fun place for children, playground behavior is not appropriate in the library building. The library reserves the right to limit the use of the library by children and parents who, in the judgment of the library staff, are infringing upon the rights of other library users by inappropriate behavior.

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### Ohoopsee Regional Library System, Georgia

The library is not responsible for the care of unattended Minors or Vulnerable Adults. The library is not intended to be a daycare, after school or other care facility, summer camp or babysitting service. The following rules provide an outline of reasonable guidelines, but are not inclusive.

**Minor:** youth under the age of 18.

1. Children under the age of 8 (eight) may not be left unattended in the library.

Care providers for children under the age of 8 (eight) must be at least 16 (sixteen) years of age. Care providers must supervise and provide guidance and control for their charges at all times.

2. Children under the age of 6 (six), using the children's computers, must have the care provider present at the computer terminal at all times.

3. Children between the ages of 8 (eight) and 15 (fifteen) should not be left unattended in the library for extended periods of time.

Attendance at library programs, browsing for recreational reading, and after school use of the library for homework and study are encouraged and considered appropriate. Library staff will provide minimal supervision, reference and research assistance. After extended periods of time, or in case of a problem, the Branch Manager, or other library staff, (after consultation with the Director or Assistant Director), and/or the Librarian-on-Duty may determine what is a reasonable length of time for the minors to be left unattended. Parents will be notified and asked to pick up and/or provide supervision for their child.

*In general, the library considers more than 2-3 (two – three) hours (depending upon the age and conduct of the child) to be excessive and inappropriate.*

4. Those unattended minors who do not abide by library rules and policies, or who exhibit unacceptable behavior, will be asked to leave, and/or the parents will be called. If the library is

unable to reach the parents, or if a ride does not come, they may be considered abandoned and the authorities (police and/or DHS/DFACS) called. The library is not responsible for providing minors with access to a telephone.

5. The library is not responsible for minors without a ride home at library closing. Minors without a ride home at closing may be considered abandoned and the authorities (police and/or DHS/DFACS) called.

6. Youth between the ages of 16-18 (sixteen-eighteen) using the library independently are assumed to be able to conduct themselves in the library in an appropriate manner without constant supervision or guidance. They are also assumed to have their own means of transportation. If they fail to abide by library rules and policies, or exhibit unacceptable behavior, they will be asked to leave. Continued inappropriate behavior will result in the requirement that they be attended by a parent or legal guardian.

7. The library is not responsible for a minor's selection of library materials. The library believes it is the right and responsibility of a parent or guardian to determine what is appropriate material in order to meet personal family standards and guidelines. Therefore, parents are encouraged to accompany their children and to select material with their children or review their children's selections.

8. All children under age 18 (eighteen) must have written permission from a parent or legal guardian, signed on the library permission form in the presence of a library employee, to access the Internet. Children under 17 (seventeen) must have a parent or legal guardian present at the computer terminal at all times. Children between the ages of 17-18 (seventeen – eighteen), with written parental permission as above, may access the Internet without parental supervision. Children between the ages of 11 and 17, (eleven and seventeen) with written parental permission as above, may use those computers set up solely for GALILEO (Georgia Library Learning Online, the online reference resource of the University System of Georgia) access without parental supervision.

*The library meets federal and state laws for internet filtering, however no filtering system is foolproof, and the Internet is an unregulated medium. The library is not responsible for the content or appropriateness of any materials accessed or viewed on the Internet.*

9. Adults who are using the Internet or other library services and programs must supervise or provide guidance and behavior control for minors accompanying them. The library reserves the right to prohibit Internet use, and/or ask the adults and minor children to leave if unacceptable behavior, (including continual crying or other infant activities), that disturbs other patrons, persists.



10. The Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia considers a library card application a legal, binding contract. Georgia Library PINES policy requires the signature of a parent or legal guardian approving the application for a library card for anyone under the age of 18. The parent or legal guardian must sign in front of the library employee, and if deemed necessary by library staff, provide reasonable proof of parentage or guardianship.

11. The Oohoopee Regional Library System requires the parent or guardian of a minor child to be responsible for all overdue, lost or damaged materials, fines, fees and other debts accrued by a minor child. The library uses the services of a debt collection agency, as well as other legal means as stated in Georgia law, for the collection of nonreturned materials and fines. Debts accrued by a minor child remain attached to the parent/guardian record even after the child reaches age 18.

12. The Oohoopee Regional Library System will release circulation records of a minor child to a parent or guardian upon presentation of the child's library card or card number, or if the materials are lost, damaged or overdue. The reference questions of minor children shall be considered privileged information as determined by state law and professional ethics.

13. The Oohoopee Regional Library System will accept appropriate legal proof, including but not limited to, marriage license or other court document, for patrons under 18 who claim *emancipated minor* status.

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### **Seattle Public Library, Washington**

The Seattle Public Library welcomes library use by children. Staff members are available to assist children with library materials or services. The Library desires to provide a safe and appropriate environment for visitors of all ages. The Library, however, is a public building with staff trained to provide public library services. The Library is not equipped-and it is not the Library's role-to provide long- or short-term child care.

For the safety and comfort of children, a responsible adult or caregiver should accompany children while they are using the Library. While in the Library, parents and caregivers are responsible for monitoring and regulating the behavior of their children.

Library staff members will be guided by this policy in situations, such as

- An unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library
- An unattended child is perceived to be endangering him or herself, or that another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child

- Seattle Public Library Policy #6d: Free Use of Library Services
- An unattended child exhibits specific inappropriate behavior
- An unattended child has not been met by a responsible caregiver at closing time

After evaluating the situation, Library staff members will attempt to contact the parent or guardian of an unattended child. In the event that the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the child will be placed in the care of the Seattle Police Department.

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### **Virginia Beach Public Library, Virginia**

To ensure your child's safety and sense of security, please follow these guidelines:

- Know when the library closes!
  - Pick up your child 15 minutes before the library closes.
  - Have a way for your child to reach you if the library should close earlier
- An "unattended child" is defined as any child below the age of 18 whose safety and well-being is threatened by being left unattended for an inappropriate length of time considering the child's age, maturity and level of development.

Children, aged 11 or younger, may not be in the library without being accompanied by someone who is 16 or older.

Please verify operating hours prior to leaving a child at any public facility. Parents are advised that staff cannot take responsibility for children left unattended. If a child is left at closing more than once, parents will be charged for the overtime paid to staff waiting with the child.

If the problem persists, the right to use the facility may be revoked. If children are left at the facility 30 minutes after closing, the Virginia Beach Police Department will be called for assistance.

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### **Warrenville Public Library District, Illinois**

The Warrenville Public Library District welcomes children of all ages. It is a doorway through which life-long learning take place. The public library is however, just that, a public building. As such, anybody can come into it, law-abiding or otherwise.

Library staff has many duties to perform in order to serve all citizens of Warrenville and are not able to monitor the behavior or whereabouts of each patron, including children. Parents are

responsible for their children in the Library. A child could be tempted to go off with a stranger, become ill, or become lost. The following policy has been adopted:

A. Children seven years of age and younger may not be left unattended in the Library. They must be under the direct supervision (within sight) of a parent or other adult when in the Library including when using a computer or playing in the puzzle area. Exceptions to this policy occur when programming requires children to attend on their own. At these times, children should be brought to the meeting room door prior to the program and be met outside the door at its conclusion. Do not expect one child to supervise another in the Library.

B. Children ages 8-12 may be left in the Library unattended for brief periods of time provided they demonstrate purposeful intent to use Library resources, and that their behavior is not disruptive to other patrons or Library staff. Staff will warn children if their behavior is not acceptable and they may be ordered to leave the building if behavior does not improve.

C. Parents are responsible for the conduct of minor children (under 18 years of age) in the Library or on Library grounds.

D. If the Library is closing and an unattended child is left at the Library without transportation home, Library staff will allow the child to call home to remind their parents to pick them up. If the child is unable to contact his/her parents, Library Staff will remain no longer than 15 minutes after closing. At that time, local law authorities will be contacted and the child will be placed in their care. Under no circumstances shall a staff member drive a child home. Every effort will be made by staff to make certain all children have a ride arranged prior to closing.

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### **Warren- Newport Public Library, Illinois**

Parents or legal guardians are responsible for their children's safety and well-being while their children are visiting the library or the bookmobile. The Library District cannot and does not assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of unattended children. The library staff cannot observe all patron contacts made on the premises. To help ensure the safety and comfort of children using the library or the bookmobile and to maintain an atmosphere conducive to reading and study, the Board of Trustees of the Warren-Newport Public Library

District has adopted the following policy:

1. The Warren-Newport Public Library District is not responsible for children left unattended.

2. Parents or legal guardians are responsible for their children's behavior in the library or on the bookmobile. The library staff will assist children with using the library and bookmobile, but will not supervise or baby-sit for children.

3. Children under eight (8) years old must not be left alone in the library. A responsible person (parent, guardian, sibling, or baby-sitter, age 12 or older) must be in attendance in the same department of the library as the children and must maintain an awareness of the children's location and activity.

4. A child of any age who has a medical condition that requires substantial monitoring must not be left alone in the library. A responsible adult (parent, guardian, sibling, or babysitter) must be in attendance in the same department of the library as the child and must maintain an awareness of the child's location and activity.

5. Children over eight (8) years old, if left alone, must be involved in a library program or have library-related study or research needs.

6. Unattended children must have money for the pay telephone and the ability to contact a responsible person for transportation needs.

7. Parents or guardians are responsible for picking up their children prior to the library closing. Under no circumstances will a staff member drive any children home.

8. If the library is closing and if the parents of unattended children under the age of twelve (12) cannot be located, the staff will call the police who will assume responsibility for the child(ren).

9. The use of the library on a regular basis as a required place for children in lieu of daycare services is discouraged.

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**Wayne County Public Library, Idaho**

The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent, guardian or custodian and not with library personnel.

Library staff cannot be responsible for any child (regardless of age) who is in the library with or without adult supervision or for children who are demonstrating inappropriate behavior.

It is recommended, therefore, that children under the age of twelve should always be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or custodian.