

## Unattended Child Policy

The McLean County Public Library welcomes all children to use our facilities and services. However, responsibility for children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or assigned chaperone-not with library personnel. Staff members are concerned when parents leave their young children alone or in the care of an older sibling or friends. Young children left unattended, even for a few minutes, can become frightened. An older child left in charge can be easily burdened by this responsibility. Sometimes children stay at the library for many hours or wait here after school until a parent picks them up. Often they become bored and restless. This leads to disruptive behavior, which interferes with the legitimate library business of other patrons and staff. Staff members cannot be placed in a position of supervising children who are too young to be **unattended**, or whose behavior indicates that they have stayed at the library for too long a time. For the safety and protection of youth, and for the benefit of all, the McLean County Public Library Board of Trustees has developed the following rules:

### The term “unattended” includes, but is not limited to:

- A child that has been dropped off at the library without a responsible caregiver
- A child that is in the library without supervision
- A child that is in the library with an older child that is not yet mature enough to qualify as a responsible caregiver.
- A child that is out of attentive range of the parent or caregiver
- A child that is in range of the parent or caregiver, but is not receiving appropriate attention

Children under the age of 7 must be accompanied by a responsible parent or caregiver at all times. Library staff cannot monitor unattended children or be responsible for the safety and security of unattended children.

Children under the age of 9 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity unless they are participating in a library program. Parents or caregivers for those ages 7 and under who do not attend the program with their children should remain in the building. Parents are responsible for the actions of their children.

Children of ages 10-13 may use the library unattended for a period of up to three (3) hours. Children using inappropriate behavior will be informed of the rules. If misbehavior continues, the child shall be asked to leave the library and library property.

All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. The library staff will not take responsibility for the care of any child, regardless of age.

Children are welcome to use the library as long as their behavior is not disruptive. The library assumes no responsibility for an unattended child. Parents should not view the library as an alternative to daycare. Unlike a daycare facility, the library is not a closed environment. Staff members cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all adult patrons are free to use any public area within the library. For safety's sake, parents should make sure that their children are sufficiently mature before allowing them to visit the library by themselves. Parents should be advised that if their children misbehave, they

will be told to leave the library and the library grounds. Parents should further realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior.

Children must leave the library at closing time. All children are encouraged to communicate to their parent/guardian/caregivers the need to arrive 15 minutes before closing time in order to pick them up in a timely manner. Children left to wait outside the building for a ride after the library has closed are placed in a vulnerable position. Staff members are not responsible for the safety of a child once the library has closed. Under no circumstances will a staff member ever take a child out of the library or give a child a ride home. However, staff members will attempt to contact parents on the child's behalf. If they are unsuccessful in contacting the parents, law enforcement will be contacted to assist the child.