

NORTH HAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY ON UNATTENDED CHILDREN

The North Hampton Public Library welcomes children as library users. They are encouraged to read, to explore print and non-print resources, to attend programs and to make full use of the library's services.

The Library is, however, a public building. For the safety of minor children and the enjoyment of all patrons using the Library, North Hampton Public Library has developed and follows this policy regarding unattended children. If you have questions on this policy please do not hesitate to ask a staff member to explain.

- For the purposes of this policy a minor child is defined as one under the age of 18, in concurrence with New Hampshire law.
- An unattended child is any child who is unable to care for himself/herself and is not under the direct supervision of a parent, guardian or responsible care-giver. If the parent/guardian feels it is unsafe for the child to leave the building without adult supervision, the child should not be in the Library unattended.
- As used in this policy, the term "parent" may include legal guardians or other persons having custody or control of a minor.
- All children under the age of 10 shall be attended and adequately supervised by a parent or parent-designate (sibling aged 16 or older, or caregiver).
- Children age 10 to 13 may be left unattended for no more than two hours. The person responsible for the child must leave a telephone number with the child where he/she may be reached, or the telephone number of another responsible person who can transport the child home if necessary.
- Parents are responsible for the behavior of minor children at all times, even if they are not in the library with the child. Library staff does not serve in loco parentis. If a child's behavior is not appropriate for the library and he or she does not respond to guidance by the library staff, the parent will be contacted to remove the child from the library. If the parent cannot be reached and the child's behavior is deemed dangerous or unduly disruptive, the police will be called.
- A parent or other designated adult must stay in the library during preschool story times. No child will be able to leave the library without the parent or designated adult.
- If a child is left at the library without a way home at closing time, library staff will ask the child to call the parent. If the parent does not come within 10 minutes or cannot be reached, the police will then be called to bring the child to the station to await pick up by the parent. No staff member will transport any child.

- Parents are reminded that under appropriate circumstance, the following State Laws may apply:
 - RSA 169-B:41-43 Intentional Contribution to Delinquency (of a minor)
 - RSA 169-B:45 Parental Responsibility for Vandalism by Minors
 - RSA 169-C:3(1) and (3) Neglect of Children Through Abandonment

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 1999, Amended 2000, July, 2004

Staff Procedure

- If an unattended child is less than 10 years old, try to find out where the parent/guardian is and when they are expected back at the library. If you cannot get this information, let the Director know. We will probably have to call the police.
- If a child is between 10 and 13 and has been left at the library unattended for more than two hours, ask if the child knows when the parent/guardian will be picking them up. If not, is there a telephone number to call? If not, and as long as the child is not a behavior problem, wait until the parent comes, then make him/her aware of our policy in this regard. If the child is a behavior problem, let the Director know. We will probably call the police.
- One-half hour before closing time check that all minor children present have rides home. Offer the use of our phone if necessary to call parents. Inform each child that if a parent/guardian is not here at closing time we will have to call the police, and that they will be taken to wait for their ride at the police station. Follow through if necessary.
- Please document any instances where the police are called, either by informing the Director, or by leaving a note about the situation. The Trustees want to be kept aware of this type of situation.

February, 2000, July 2004, reviewed 2008