

Unattended Child Policy Hartford City Public Library

Values and Philosophy of the Policy

1. The Hartford City Public Library welcomes those of all ages to enjoy our library facilities. The library holds the expectation of all patrons to use the library in a responsible manner that does not disrupt other patrons or the functions of the library.
2. Safety of all patrons, especially children, is a great concern. But, as the library is a public place and does present hazards, the safety of unattended children cannot be guaranteed. Not all people who enter the building can be monitored at all times and staff cannot be expected to supervise children at all times.
3. The library affirms parental responsibility for the safety, upbringing, and behavior of children. In so doing, the library is not responsible for the behavior of children using the library. Parents should ensure that their child is mature enough to visit the library alone. Parents are still ultimately responsible for their children's behavior even if the parent is not accompanying the child in the building.
4. The library staff is expected to use their best judgment in making decisions on individual cases with the function of the library and safety of the children involved as the priorities.
5. While the library staff is expected to create a safe and inviting atmosphere, it is necessary for parents to do their part in the process. The library encourages use of the library by young children, but staff cannot be expected to serve as caregivers while working.

Unattended Child Policy

1. **Age 7 and Under** – Children under the age of eight must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible caregiver over the age of 16 at all times while in the library. Parents must remain in the building during library programs to allow staff to promptly locate a parent when the need arises.
2. **Age 8 -12** – Children of this age are free to use the library on their own. Children must be mature enough to stay alone and conduct themselves properly. Children behaving inappropriately will be informed of the rules and may be asked to leave if the behavior is not corrected.
3. **Age 13 – 17** – Children of this age will be treated as adult patrons and encouraged to use the library for extended periods of time for homework, research, or reading. Those behaving inappropriately will be informed of the rules and may be asked to leave if the behavior is not corrected.

Definition of Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate behavior can be defined as: loud conversation, laughter, or noise which is disturbing to others; engaging in disorderly conduct, committing a nuisance, or unreasonably disturbing others in the library; engaging in any other behavior inappropriate in a library setting.

Staff Procedures

1. If a child (under 8) is left unattended, a staff member will attempt to locate the parent. When the parent is found, the policy will be explained to the parent. If a parent cannot be located or contacted within 15 minutes, the library will call the Hartford City Police Department to take custody of the child.
2. Ask a misbehaving child to behave properly. Give a reminder of the rules of the library and the expectations the library has of all patrons.
3. If the behavior violation continues and a caregiver is present, contact the caregiver.
4. If the behavior continues and a caregiver is not present, tell the child to leave for the rest of the day. The length of time of a "suspension" from the library will be based on prior history and determined by the library director.
5. Staff will file an incident report with the director after each incident. Document the date, time, and nature of the incident, names of those involved, and actions taken.
6. For multiple offenses a meeting may be arranged with the caregiver and the library director to decide on a plan of action.
7. Staff should understand that each individual and situation is different and needs to be handled in light of both the safety of children and the purpose and functions of the library.
8. Do not touch a child unless there is immediate danger of harm to the child or others.
9. Children who need assistance in using the restroom must get that assistance from their caregiver.
10. In case of a child not leaving the library when asked inform them first that the police will be called. Then, call the Hartford City Police Department to escort the child from the property.
11. If a child is alone at closing time, attempt to contact the parents. Do not leave the child alone. Do not give the child a ride home in your vehicle. Wait until the parents arrive. If the parents cannot be contacted call the Hartford City Police Department.