

Supervision of Children Policy

The trustees and staff of the Sharon Public Library strive to create a warm, inviting, fun environment for children. The library offers many programs and services that encourage children to develop a love of books, reading and learning. However, the safety and well-being of children at the library is of primary concern. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Sharon Public Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children while they are in the Library and on Library property. The Sharon Public Library staff is committed to helping children with activities related to the Library. However, it is not the responsibility of Library Staff to serve as baby-sitters, teachers, or disciplinarians. Violations of library's Code of Conduct by children are grounds for suspension of library privileges. Whenever advisable, the Library will notify the parent of incidents involving an unattended or disruptive child. The Library is not responsible for materials viewed or checked out by children.

Unattended Children

Children age 9 or under must be accompanied in the library by someone who is 16 years or older, who can take responsibility should an emergency occur. (Accompanied is defined as "within sight".)

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. In the event that a parent or guardian cannot be contacted, the Police will be contacted.

Children age 10 and older may use the library on their own. However, parents are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their child or children. Responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned chaperone. Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they are unattended. Staff may need to contact authorities such as the police either to assist with the enforcement of discipline in the library or to ensure the safety of an unattended child.

Parents should not use the Library as an alternative to daycare. 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 also realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior.

The Library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children prior to opening or after closing. The Library is also not responsible for children outside the building who await transportation or who are socializing. Adults responsible for unattended school-age children using the Library should be aware of the Library's hours and make arrangements to meet the children on time.

This is a particular concern in inclement weather and after dark. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, or the parent or responsible caregiver cannot be located, or if the Library is closing, library staff is authorized to call the police and stay with the child until the police arrive. No staff member is permitted to take a child home.

Teenagers are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

Inappropriate Behavior

Inappropriate behavior is considered to be behavior that represents physical danger to the child or others, or behavior that interferes with other library users or staff. Inappropriate behavior is behavior that is inappropriate in a library setting. Inappropriate behavior that is unacceptable in the Library includes, but is not limited to:

- Running, chasing, horseplay
- Screaming, shouting, yelling, loud laughing or other noise
- Eating or drinking in unapproved areas
- Continued or frequent loud talking in study areas
- Pushing, hitting, fighting, biting
- Throwing books, toys or other objects
- Prolonged crying or temper tantrums
- Bullying or bothering other people
- Jumping on furniture

Library staff will approach disruptive children in the following manner:

Give a verbal warning to the child indicating that such behavior is disruptive to other library users and is unacceptable.

If the disruptive behavior continues, approach the parent or guardian with the same warning. If the child is unattended, give the child a second warning.

If the disruptive behavior continues, request the parent or guardian to escort the child from the library premises. Unattended disruptive children, older than 9 years may be asked to leave the library after one warning in accordance with the process described above.