



## Children in the Library

Purpose: The staff of the Newport Public Library (“Library”) strives to create a warm, inviting, and developmentally appropriate environment for children. We offer many programs and services that encourage children to develop a lifelong love of books, reading, and learning.

In the absence of stated policy, all visitors to the Library must follow Library staff instruction at all times.

The happiness and safety of young children left alone in the Library, however, can be a serious concern. Library staff cannot know if children are leaving the building with parents or with strangers. The following policy has been established for the protection and well-being of children who enjoy the Library. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

### General Policy:

- The Children’s Room is designed to serve the needs of children, parents, caregivers, teachers and adults studying Children’s Literature or using the Children’s Department’s resources. Adults who are not in the company of young children must use the Adult and Reference areas of the Library.
- A parent, guardian, or caregiver must continually attend children younger than 8 years of age. No child under 8 years old should be left unattended in the Children’s Room. If a babysitter or older sibling is supervising a child 8 years old or younger without an adult present in the Children’s Room, the sibling or babysitter should be at least 12 years old, and be willing and capable of continually attending to the young child.
- Responsibility for the safety of children using the Library rests at all times with the parents, guardians, or caregivers, not with Library personnel. Library staff, pages, and volunteers cannot agree to watch a child for a parent or caregiver.
- Library staff supervises children attending Library programs only during the scheduled time of the program.
- During story times or other pre-school programs, adults who do not attend the program with the child must remain in the Library building and must return to the Children’s Room by the end of the program.
- Parents, guardians, or caregivers and children should be aware of the opening and closing times and the scheduled ending time of Library programs to ensure that a child does not become vulnerable while waiting for a parent or caregiver to arrive. Parents, guardians, and caregivers should not leave children alone outside the Library building before opening or after closing.
- The parent, guardian, or caregiver is responsible for insuring that their children behave appropriately while in the Library. The parent, guardian, or caregiver should not allow disruptive behavior. Disruptive behavior includes shouting, running, pushing, throwing, hitting, biting, pounding on computer keyboards, or other rowdy activities.
- If a child is reported missing a staff member should go to each door until the child is located.
- An adult must accompany children under 8 years old on the elevator.
- At the discretion of a responsible adult, a child 8 years old or older may use the Library independently for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, or attend

a program. Children using the Library independently will be expected to display appropriate behavior. The child must know how to reach a responsible adult.

- If a school-age child is using the Children's Room during normal school hours on a day that school is in session without an adult present, staff should question the child to determine if they are truant from school. Staff should check the school calendar to make certain that school is not closed or having an early dismissal. Staff should attempt to determine if the child is home-schooled or attends private school. If staff suspects that a student is truant, staff should contact the city's truant officer and let the truant officer assume responsibility.
- Parents, guardians, or caregivers allowing pre-school children to use the Children's Restroom independently should remain nearby in case the child requires assistance. Parents, guardians, or caregivers should check the condition of the Children's Restroom after the child is finished. Running water should be shut off, debris picked up, and Children's staff should be notified if the restroom needs supplies or repair.

Definitions:

- **Disruptive Child:** A child exhibiting behavior, which is inappropriate in a Library setting as defined by the Library's Behavior Policy. This includes behavior that presents physical danger to the child or to others, or behavior that interferes with the legitimate Library business of other patrons or staff. (see below)
- **Unattended Child:** A young person under 8 years old, using the Library resources and facilities unaccompanied by a responsible adult. Any young person who is unable to care for him- or herself.
- **Vulnerable Child:** A child under age 8 who is not being actively supervised by a parent or caregiver. An unattended child or adolescent whose safety or well-being would be endangered if she/he was sent out of the building alone. A child being left alone in the dark or being left alone outside the Library after business hours.
- **Truant Child:** A school-age child who is enrolled in and attends school, who is skipping or may be reasonably suspected of skipping classes without a written excuse or parental knowledge while school is in session.

Procedures if a child is lost, unattended, or does not have a way to get home at closing time, staff should:

- Try to identify and locate the parent or caregiver. If the parent or caregiver is located inside the Library building, staff will explain the Library policy on unattended children. Parents, guardians and caregivers will be given a written copy of the policy if requested.
- If the parent or caregiver is not found inside the building, staff should try to locate an adult family member or caregiver through searching the Library records and local phone book. The parent, adult family member or caregiver should be contacted and informed of the Library policy. Staff should ask them to join the child in using the Library (if it is not closing) or come to take the child home immediately. If they are unable to come immediately, staff should notify the police. When the parent or caregiver arrives, staff should give them a written copy of the policy.
- If a parent, caregiver or adult family member cannot be located at closing time or within one hour during regular business hours, staff should notify the police. Two members of the Library staff should wait with the child until the police arrive. If a parent or caregiver arrives before the police, staff should explain the Library policy and give a written copy to the parent or caregiver. Staff should call the police to notify them that they are no longer needed. If the police do arrive to take responsibility for the child, staff should give the officer a written copy of the policy to provide to the parents.
- Staff members should never give a child a ride or otherwise leave the Library with a child. All incidents of a child being left alone will be recorded by a staff member. Repeated incidents of a child being left alone may constitute abandonment and will be reported to the police.

Disruptive Attended Child:

Staff will ask the child to behave. Staff may try to engage the child's attention in a Library book, toy, or other resource. If the disruptive behavior continues, staff will inform the parent, guardian, or caregiver that

the child is disturbing others and will ask the parent or caregiver to please intervene. If the behavior continues, staff may ask the family to please go down to the lobby, or step outside until the child has calmed down. If the parent or caregiver cannot manage the child's behavior—or if they step out for a moment, return, and the disruption continues—staff will ask the family to leave.

#### Disruptive Unaccompanied Youth:

Staff will ask the child to behave. If the disruption consists of talking loudly, staff should give the child three (3) warnings. If the behavior continues after two (3) warnings, staff may ask the child to leave. If the child is reluctant to leave and does not quiet down, staff should contact the security guard on duty. If the disruption is more severe than being loud, staff should ask the child for information on how to contact a parent or responsible adult. Staff will contact the adult and ask them to please come pick up the child. Staff will contact the security guard on duty to wait in the lobby with the child and a staff member until the parent or caregiver arrives. When the parent or caregiver arrives, they will be given a copy of the policy. If staff cannot determine how to contact a parent or caregiver, the security guard on duty will ask the child to leave, unless doing so would make them a vulnerable child. In that case, the security guard on duty should contact the police, at his or her discretion.

In case of medical emergency, staff must call 911 and get professional medical emergency personnel to attend to the child's needs. Staff will then attempt to contact the parents.

If the Children's Services Department is unable to administer this policy for whatever reason or cause, staff members from the Circulation Department must be able to step in and assist the librarian(s) on duty.

Good-faith decisions, staff judgment, and professional discretion will be used in the interpretation of the above policy.