

Unattended Children Policy

Accepted April 2024

Policy Statement

The Library is a public space, and as in all public spaces, it is not safe for children to be left alone. Community members of all ages are equally welcome at the Library, however, responsibility for the safety, well-being and behavior while on the premises of the Library rests with the parent, guardian, or caregiver, and not with the Library. Parents or legal guardians of minor children have full responsibility for their child's use of the Library's space and resources, and parental guidance and assistance to children using the Internet is strongly recommended. Neither the Library nor Library staff assumes the role of a parent, known as in loco parentis, nor do they assume the role of a daycare or childcare provider.

Many materials, programs and services are offered to make the Library enjoyable for children and to help them develop a love of books, reading and libraries. However, children who are left unattended in the building may encounter potential hazards such as stairs, electrical outlets, or emergency exit doors on the second floor, to name a few. If an unattended child has a medical emergency, the library staff are able to take no action, other than to call 911.

There may be times when the library must close due to an emergency such as a storm or power outage. In such instances, library staff will be on the alert for any child in need of assistance and will make every effort to contact a responsible adult. However, staff members are prohibited from transporting children in their vehicles. Additionally, "Stranger Danger" is a serious concern in any public setting, including the Library. Library staff have no way of knowing if a child is interacting with or leaving the building with a stranger.

It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children, to ensure that El Reno Carnegie Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it. To that end, the Library has adopted the following policy:

Children in the Building

- **Ages 0-12** must be at the library with someone over the age of 16 (caregiver)
- **Ages 0-9** must be within sight of their caregiver
- **Ages 10+** are allowed to be on the children's floor alone, but their caregiver must be in the building the entire time they're here
- **Ages 13+** are allowed to be here without a caregiver

Children at Programs

- **Ages 8+** are able to be at a program without a caregiver
 - The caregiver must meet them at any point that they leave the program. Meaning the caregiver must be in the building or close enough to meet them at the door when they exit the program.

Staff Actions

- **Ages 0-12** who are not accompanied by a caregiver in the building or on the lawn will be asked to contact their caregiver to come get them
 - If they are unable to contact their caregiver, Library staff will try to find their information using their library card
 - If we also cannot locate their information and no caregiver can be found, Library staff will call the local non-emergency police number
- If any child **age 0-12** is unattended at closing time or in the event of an emergency closing, Library staff will call the non-emergency police number

Caregivers of those 13+ are still responsible for the actions and safety of their children. Caregivers who wish to limit or restrict the content access of their own children must personally oversee their children's selections, location within the building, and internet usage.