

WELLS PUBLIC LIBRARY UNATTENDED CHILD POLICY

It is the goal of the Wells Public Library to provide a safe, enjoyable experience and environment for each child who visits the library. The Wells Public Library welcomes and encourages children to use its facilities and services. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow the Library Behavior Policy posted in the library and on the library website.

- The library staff members do not serve as caregivers (*in loco parentis*) for children in the library.
- For the safety of all children who visit the Wells Public Library, children eight years of age and younger must be accompanied and directly supervised by a responsible caregiver who assumes full accountability for the children's safety and behavior in the library. "Directly supervised" means the child and the caregiver must be able to observe one another at all times. .

General Procedure:

- If a child age eight years of age or younger appears to be left unsupervised, library staff will attempt to locate the caregiver and have him or her return to the area. The individual will be advised of library policy.
- If the situation occurs again and the caregiver is not the parent, the policy will be restated and the name and address of the child's parent or legal guardian will be obtained. A letter outlining the policy may be mailed to the child's parent or legal guardian, noting the safety concerns and possible consequences if not corrected.
- If there are additional instances of the same child being left unsupervised on library premises, the library will act in the interest of the child by reporting the situation to the police and may pursue legal action to enforce the policy.
- Children 9 and older may use the library on their own. However, parents are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their children. Children using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. If a child in this age group is not permitted by a parent/caregiver to leave the library without an adult, he/she should not be in the library alone. 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.
- Children age 14 and older are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

At closing time:

- Parents or guardians must pick up their children aged nine through twelve prior to library closing time.
- Children age thirteen or under who are not picked up by closing time may be placed, for their protection, in the custody of the police.
- At least two staff members will stay with unattended children at the library for up to 15 minutes after the library closes. The library staff members will attempt to contact the child's parents during this time. After that time, the police will be contacted. In a situation where staff is unable to stay police will be called immediately.
- Staff members will never transport a child or children home.

Right of Appeal:

The library has a "Policy on Appeals of Library Decisions Involving Library Policies," a copy of which is available upon request. Appeals may be made in accordance with that policy.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees March 2001; revised January 2010; revised and approved April 14, 2010; revised and approved July 29, 2021