

Safe Child Policy

Revision Control

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I. Overview

- A. The Lincolnwood Public Library District strives to offer a safe, welcoming, friendly space for all, and requires young patrons to meet certain behavior expectations in order for everyone to enjoy the Library, regardless of age. In order to accomplish this, the Library relies on parents, guardians, and caregivers (referred to collectively as “caregiver”) to monitor and supervise their children’s activities and whereabouts. Caregivers, not the Library or its staff, are responsible for children.

II. Caregiver Responsibilities

- A. The Library does not act in loco parentis (in the place of parents) and staff cannot take responsibility for monitoring the safety or behavior of unattended children nor their choice of materials – this responsibility falls to the caregivers.
- B. A caregiver whose child is using the Library should be available by phone in case of an emergency or behavior issue in which the child or library staff may need to get in contact.
- C. Caregivers should be aware that the Library is a public building open to all individuals and as such may be unsafe for a child left unattended. A responsible caregiver attending to a child must be 14 years of age or older.
- D. Any child visiting the library alone in accordance with this Policy must have an emergency contact available, meaning that there is a responsible caregiver who is immediately available to pick up the child as necessary, and whose contact information is known by the child (library staff does not maintain this information, and will request it from the child if necessary).

III. Guidelines for Children Using the Library

- A. **Children in grades 2 and below (ages 7 and below).** Must be accompanied and attended to at all times by a responsible caregiver who takes an active role (remaining in sight) supervising the child. For children who are attending programs at which adult attendance is not required, the caregiver must remain in the building and immediately join the child at the conclusion of the program. If a child of this age group is disruptive or demonstrates inappropriate behavior, they may be required to leave the building.
- B. **Children in grades 3 to 5 (ages 8 to 11).** May use the Library with a responsible caregiver in the building. For children who are attending programs at which adult attendance is not required, the caregiver must stay in the building, and join the child at the conclusion of the program. If a child of this age group is disruptive or demonstrates inappropriate behavior, they may be required to leave the building. Library staff may request emergency contact information to

notify a caregiver that the child has been asked to leave the Library; regardless, the child will be required to leave.

- C. **Self-supervised children in grades 6 to 8 (ages 11 to 13).** May use the Library on their own. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their caregiver and must have an emergency contact available upon request. If a child of this age group is disruptive or demonstrates inappropriate behavior, they may be required to leave the building. Library staff may request emergency contact information to notify a caregiver that the child has been asked to leave the Library; regardless, the child will be required to leave.
- D. **Self-supervised teens in grades 9 to 12 (ages 14 to 17).** Treated as adult users, with the ability to use adult computers and book study rooms. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their caregivers and must have an emergency contact available upon request. If a teen of this age group is disruptive or demonstrates inappropriate behavior, they may be required to leave the building. Library staff may request emergency contact information to notify a caregiver that the teen has been asked to leave the Library; regardless, the teen will be required to leave.

IV. Inappropriate or Disruptive Behavior

- A. All patrons are subject to the Library's Behavior Policy and all other library policies.
- B. Any staff member witnessing disruptive behavior or responding to a complaint from another patron of such behavior is empowered to eject the patron or group of patrons causing the disruption for the rest of the day.
- C. If asked to leave for the rest of the day, children 14 years of age and under may be asked for emergency contact information to notify a caregiver that they have been asked to leave. Staff cannot maintain responsibility for a child after they have been asked to leave the building, but will make an effort to contact a caregiver if the child provides that contact information. Repeat instances of disruptive behavior will result in loss of library privileges without direct supervision of a caregiver.
- D. Caregivers who do not adequately or effectively supervise the behavior of children in their charge will be made aware of the problem. If a problem persists after the caregiver has been made aware of it and given a reasonable opportunity to correct it, the caregiver and child will be required to leave the Library. If the problem is severe enough or becomes chronic in nature, the Library Director and/or the Board of Trustees may limit or suspend a caregiver's and child's access to the Library as per the Behavior Policy.

V. Library Phone Usage

- A. The Library telephone may be used for brief phone calls to an emergency contact.
- B. To protect children from being contacted by someone who should not have access to them, the Library does not page individuals who are contacted by phone, but will encourage a child to call back their guardian.

VI. Unattended Children Aged 11 and Under During Library Hours

- A. When a child 11 years of age or younger appears to be lost or unattended, library staff will immediately try to locate or contact the caregiver. If the caregiver cannot be contacted or located within 30 minutes, staff is authorized to call the police to ensure the safety of the child.

VII. Unattended Children Aged 14 and Under after Closing Time

- A. Children left to wait outside for a ride after the Library has closed are placed in a vulnerable position. Prior to closing, any child may use a telephone to schedule their ride home. Caregivers must pick up their children by library closing time. While staff is not legally responsible for the safety of a child once the Library has closed, staff may work with the child to contact a responsible caregiver up to 10 minutes after closing. During this time period two library staff may remain with the unattended child before staff will call the police to ensure the safety of the child.