

Unattended Child Policy

The Lehigh Public Library welcomes and encourages children to use the materials and services of our library. As libraries are essential to the lives of children, we strive to provide useful, safe and inviting spaces for youth in our facility. Your children are important, and we want them to have a rewarding library experience.

We urge parents to remember that the library is a public building and it is not in any child's best interest to be left here unattended. When children are left alone, they may become frightened or anxious. If they wander through our building, they may encounter hazards such as doors, heavy furniture or electrical equipment. They may also become bored and restless and could disturb the enjoyment of other patrons.

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff and board. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library personnel. Library employees cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior. The following guidelines will be followed concerning the care and behavior of young library users.

- Children under the age of 9 must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. An exception to this would be children attending a library program without a parent/caregiver in the room. However, the parent/caregiver is expected to immediately join the child at the end of the program.
- A caregiver is defined as **someone 14 years of age or older** who has the mental and physical capacity to care for the child should an emergency arise. It is highly recommended that the caregiver carries emergency contact information for the child in their care.

- 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. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child is found unattended again, the Webster County Sheriff's Department will be called for assistance.
- If unattended children are left at the library for more than sixty minutes after normal or weather-related library closings, library staff will attempt to contact the parent or responsible caregiver first. If the staff are unable to reach a parent/caretaker, the Webster County Sheriff's Department will be called, and the child will be given into their custody.
- Children are not allowed to run, become loud and disruptive, use vulgar and inappropriate language, damage library property, treat library staff disrespectfully or interfere with the use of the library by other patrons. Should this happen, library staff will attempt to contact the parent or responsible caregiver first. If the staff are unable to reach a parent/caretaker, appropriate law enforcement authorities will be notified to take custody of the child.

The Board and staff wish to assure parents that all means of contacting an unattended child's parents or caregiver will be exhausted before calling the Webster County Sheriff's office. The contacting of the sheriff's office will be a last resort.