

## CHILD SAFETY POLICY

The J. V. Fletcher Library welcomes children of all ages and encourages them to explore and enjoy the multiple resources and programs available to them at the Library. It is the strong desire of the J. V. Fletcher Library Trustees that the childhood experience of the library be an exciting, stimulating and enjoyable one. However, parents are reminded that the Library is a heavily-used public facility where staff cannot be directly responsible for unattended children, nor are they able to monitor children and a child's experience in a public place. Younger children should not be unattended in their library use, because of the public nature of the library facility and the library staff's legal inability to act "in loco parentis." This policy is drafted for the protection and safety of child users and the guidance of parents/caregivers.

### 1. Children Using the Library:

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law 119, Section 39 children under the age of ten may not be left unattended. In line with the Library's Code of Conduct, children age 10 or older may utilize the library without an attending adult/caregiver, solely at the discretion of a responsible adult, for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, or attend a tween program. Children must know how to reach a parent, guardian or caregiver in case of an emergency, and both adult and child should be aware of library hours. All ages at all times must comply with the Library Code of Conduct. Staff may contact the Westford Police Department if a parent or guardian of an unattended child cannot be located. In the event of a medical emergency when a parent or guardian is not with the child, staff will contact the Westford EMT's and Fire Department and then the parent or guardian, in that order.

### 2. Children Attending Programs at the Library:

The Library Trustees and Administration cannot emphasize enough that a responsible adult should accompany a youngster to library events, meetings and programs. While children attend preschool story hours, at all times and for all age sessions, parents or guardians remain responsible for their children and must be present in the Youth Services area.

With the exception of library-run Book Clubs, parents, guardians or responsible adults must attend programs with their youngsters under the age of 10, understanding that library staff cannot be responsible for individual children, especially in a large crowd situation. It is strongly recommended that parents whose youngsters are attending non-library functions within the library facility, accompany their children into, and out of, the presence of the responsible adult party overseeing that function/meeting.

### 3. Caregivers Attending Programs/Meetings, Researching at the Library, etc.:

Caregivers attending adult programs or meetings at the library should expect that any children under the age of 10 will accompany them to these events. "Attended" means that the caregiver/adult is on the same level, maintaining visual contact and verbal control of the child. Caregivers engaged in research may need to seek out a librarian to provide the best site for balancing research and responsibility for the child.

### 4. Adults in Child, Tween and Teen Spaces and Programs:

Library Staff will monitor adults unaccompanied by children utilizing the Child, Tween and Teen spaces for appropriate usage of collections, materials and offerings. Adult users may be referred to other areas of the library or ushered from programs dependent upon staff assessment.