

## **UNATTENDED CHILDREN 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. This policy is drafted for the protection and safety of child users and the education of parents/caregivers.

### **1. Children Using the Library:**

In concert with the Library's Code of Conduct, children age 14 or older may utilize the library without an attending adult/caregiver, solely at the discretion of a responsible adult. 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. 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."

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

The Library Trustees and Administration strongly advocate that the library experience be a joint one between the child and the parent/attending adult. The library 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.

Parents, guardians or responsible adults must attend programs with their youngsters, 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 using the library facility for meetings, accompany their children into the presence of the responsible adult party overseeing that function/meeting.

### **3. Minors Left at Closing Time:**

Should a minor (a child under the age of 18) be left unattended and stranded at the library after closing hours, two staff persons will remain with the minor to handle the situation. These staff shall be the Building Supervisor and his or her designee, or the two staff with the most seniority. Library staff will attempt to call the parent/attending adult. If the staff cannot reach a parent/attending adult, they will remain with the minor within the library entrance for 15 minutes after closing time. After this time period has elapsed, the two staff will contact the Police Station and request that an officer come and assume responsibility for the minor and accompany him or her to the Police Station; staff will explain to the attending Officer the steps taken so far. An Incident Report Form will be filled out by staff and submitted to the Director, so that the parent/attending adult may receive a copy of this policy, and understand the actions taken. An ongoing or recurrent problem with a specific family may require further action. Under no circumstances will Library staff transport or accompany the minor from the library grounds. This policy shall be posted in the Library, and filed at each workstation, and verbal reminders to unescorted minors shall be part of normal closing procedure.

VOTED AND APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF LIBRARY TRUSTEES: 8/1/94, pending approval by Town Counsel. Revised and Approved 11/4/96; 6/5/2000;11/4/02.