

Service Policy 435

Children at the Library

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9/19/06

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The Spring Lake District Library encourages visits by young children. We desire to make these important visits both memorable and enjoyable for the children. However, library staff is not expected to assume responsibility for the care of unsupervised children in the library.

Therefore it is library policy that all children age seven and younger must be accompanied and under the direct supervision of a parent or person 12 years of age or older while in the library or during a library program.

If it is determined that a child is lost, or that a child age seven and younger has been left unattended, a staff member will bring the child to the circulation desk. A staff member will then try to locate a parent or the accompanying person responsible for the child and will notify the staff person in charge. The following steps shall be followed.

1. A staff member will walk around the library with the child, looking for a parent or the accompanying person responsible for the child.
2. If no such parent or accompanying person responsible for the child is found in the library, a staff member will attempt to locate a parent or person responsible through a search of the library database, the telephone book, or other available reference resources and telephone the parents. A staff member (two staff members if the library is closed) will stay with the child until the parent or person responsible for the child arrives and accepts responsibility for the child.
3. When a parent or person responsible for the child is located and comes to pick up the child, the staff member will firmly but courteously explain this policy concerning unattended children.
4. If the library is open and neither a parent nor a person responsible for the child is located within an hour of the initial determination that the child is lost or unattended, a staff member will call the police. A staff member will stay with the child until the police arrive and accept responsibility for the child. A staff member will telephone the parents to explain where to locate their child.
5. If the library is closed and a child is waiting, library staff will ask the child to call his parent or will make the telephone call for the child. If a parent or person responsible for the child does not appear within 15 minutes after the library's closing time, a staff member will call the police and two staff members will stay with the child until police arrive. Staff will place a sign on the door using the first name only of the child to tell parents where to locate their child.

Likewise, if any child (i.e. any person under the age of 16) remains in the library after closing time without a parent or a person responsible for them, the following steps shall be followed.

1. A staff member will inquire of the child whether a parent or person responsible is expected to pick the child up at the library.
2. If the child indicates that a parent or person responsible is expected to pick the child up at the library, two staff members will stay with the child until such person arrives. At closing time the library staff will ask the child to call his/her parents. If the child is not picked up within fifteen minutes after closing, library staff will call the police.
3. If a child indicates that a parent or person responsible is not expected to pick the child up at the library, library staff will attempt to telephone the parents. If a parent or person responsible does not appear within 15 minutes after the library's closing time, a staff member will call the police. Two staff members will stay with the child until the police arrive and accept responsibility for the child.
4. If the police take custody of a child, before leaving the building library staff will post a notice on the outside window with the first name only of the child notifying the parents where the child can be located.

Notwithstanding any other provisions in this policy, no staff member is responsible or authorized to retain a child at the library against the child's will. Further, no staff member is responsible to determine whether or not an individual has in fact been designated as the person responsible by a parent of a child at the library. Under no circumstances will a library staff member accompany a child left alone at the library to a location off library premises.