

Unattended Children Policy

Rice Public Library

June 30, 2015

Rice Public Library ~ Unattended Child Policy

The Rice Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. Sharing this environment with others requires that everyone follow the Patron Conduct Policy posted on the library's website and in multiple locations around the library. The Staff and Board of Directors of the Rice Public Library welcome and encourage children to use its facilities and services.

- For the safety of all children who visit the Rice Public Library for an extended period of time (over 15 minutes), children under the age of 12 must be accompanied and directly supervised by a responsible caregiver 16 and older who assumes responsibility for the child's safety and behavior in the Library. "Directly supervised" means the child and the caregiver must be able to observe one another at all times and be in the immediate vicinity of one another. (Please note that parents are still responsible for the actions and well-being of their minor children, whether they are present or not.)
- The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the Library (or on the Library property itself) rests with the parent/caregiver and not with Library personnel.

The following guidelines will be followed concerning the care and behavior of young Library users.

General Procedure:

- If a child is under the age of 12, and appears to be unsupervised, Library staff will attempt to locate the caregiver and have him or her return to the area. The individual will be advised of Library policy.
- If there are additional instances of the same child being left unsupervised on Library premises, the Library will act in the interest of the child by reporting the situation to the police and may pursue legal action to enforce the policy.
- Children 12 and older may use the Library on their own. However, parents are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their minor children. Children displaying inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the Library. If a child 12 and older is not permitted by a parent/caregiver to leave the Library without an adult, he/she should not be in the Library alone. This is a particular concern in inclement weather and after dark. All children should know the telephone number of an adult who can assist them in an emergency.
- Teenagers (children 13 and older) are treated as adult users. Nonetheless, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

- If at any time a Library staff member feels that a patron's actions pose a threat to himself/herself or others, the police will be called according to emergency procedures. This is the case regardless of the patron's age.

At closing time, including early closures:

- Parents or guardians must pick up their children prior to the Library's closing time.
- If a child age 12 or younger is not accompanied by a parent/ caregiver at closing time, the Library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver. If the parent/caregiver cannot be reached, the Library staff will call 911 to request that the police collect the child. Two or more staff members will stay with the child after closing until the police or parent/caregiver arrives.
- If the parent/caregiver arrives before the police do, a staff member will notify police that they are no longer needed.
- Staff members will not transport children under any circumstances.

Incident Reports

When parents/caregivers or police are contacted in reference to child safety situations, staff will submit a Library Incident Report.