

HADDONFIELD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Policy on Unattended Children in the Library

Introduction

Service to children is a very high priority of the Haddonfield Public Library. Children of all ages are welcomed and encouraged to use the Library's materials, programs and services and every effort is made to have a pleasant, warm and inviting library building. At the same time, the Library is an open, public building and the well-being and safety of young children left alone is a serious concern. An unattended child is a child under the age of 8 who is apparently unaccompanied by a parent/guardian or responsible caregiver. Unattended children, left alone for an extended period of time, often become bored, restless or disruptive. Some, especially younger children, can become frightened or anxious.

For these reasons the following policy has been established.

Policy

Parents, guardians or adult caregivers are responsible for the care of their children using the Library's facilities. Library staff cannot assume the responsibility for the care or supervision of children in the Library. Any youth, who is unable to care for him/herself and who is left in the library without a parent/guardian or responsible caretaker for any period of time and /or who is not picked up at closing time is considered abandoned by the library as set forth in *NJSA 9:6-1. Children, like all library customers, are expected to behave appropriately, as outlined in the Library's Code of Conduct.

The following guidelines have been established to ensure that children are safe and cared for while in the library and have been made with the understanding that individual children mature at different rates.

- Children under 8 years of age: a parent/guardian or responsible caregiver (age 13 or older) must remain with or be immediately visually accessible to the child at all times for the duration of the child's visit
- Children under 8 who are attending a program must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or responsible caregiver who will remain in the building for the duration of the child's visit
- Children age 8 and older are generally old enough to use the library responsibly. Staff may use discretion in dealing with children age 8 or older who are unattended in the library or not behaving appropriately.

It is not the intention of the Library to seek out unattended children but rather, to have a reasoned response prepared if necessary. If problems arise while children

are using the library or if they are left alone, the library staff will attempt to reach the parents or guardian. In certain circumstances, if the parents cannot be contacted, the police will be called to ensure the safety of the child.

Adopted by the Library Board of Trustees

September 15, 1998 Revised December 21, 2004 Rev. and approved by the Library Board of Trustees on April 28, 2015

*NJSA 9:6-1: Abandonment of a child shall consist in any of the following acts by anyone having the custody or control of the child: (a) willfully forsaking a child; (b) failing to care for and keep the control and custody of a child so that the child shall be exposed to physical or moral risk without proper and sufficient protection...

A caregiver is defined as a person who cares for someone who is sick or disabled or an adult who cares for an infant or child.