

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL LIBRARY
CHILD SAFETY POLICY
Revised 3-18-2021

INTRODUCTION

The libraries of the Appalachian Regional Library welcome children of all ages to use our materials and services. While the library is a doorway through which life-long learning takes place, it is also a public building that anyone can enter and leave without being observed by library staff. A child left alone in the library could be approached by or persuaded to leave with a stranger. He or she could also become ill or disoriented while left unattended.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as a person under eighteen (18) years of age.

The public library does not assume the role of surrogate parent to children nor does it provide daycare. While library staff do what they can to foster a safe environment, it is ultimately the responsibility of parents to ensure the safety of their children both in the library building and on library grounds. To ensure that children have a pleasant, safe experience at the library, parents and/or caregivers are asked to observe the following rules:

1. Everyone entering the library, regardless of age, is subject to the Library User Code of Conduct and the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.
2. Parents or guardians are responsible for the conduct of their children under age eighteen (18) in the library or on library grounds, regardless of whether or not they accompany their children to the library.
3. A child who is eleven (11) years of age or younger is to be kept in view of a parent or caregiver during the entire library visit. Children must be 12 (twelve) years old to be alone at the library.
4. A parent/caregiver must accompany a child eleven (11) years or younger to library sponsored programs. On some occasions library staff may give the parent/caregiver the option to leave the program area, with the understanding that the parent/caregiver remains in the library building and returns by the time the program has ended.
5. When staff becomes aware of a child who is anxious or disruptive and not accompanied by a parent/caregiver, the library staff will attempt to contact the parent/caregiver. Failing that, law enforcement may be called to take appropriate action. In this case, the following business day a letter will be sent to

- the parent/guardian explaining what happened and including a copy of this policy. An incident report will also be filed at the library.
6. Arrangements must be made by the parent/caregiver to pick up the child/children in their care before the library closing time.
 - a. If a child is not picked up by closing, the manager on duty and another staff member will wait with the child and attempt to contact a parent/guardian.
 - b. If contact cannot be made within 15 minutes after closing, or if contact is made but the child is not picked up within 15 minutes, staff will contact local law enforcement and place the child in their custody.
 - c. The following business day, a letter will be sent to the child's parent/guardian explaining what happened and including a copy of this policy. An incident report will also be filed at the library.

 7. The children's area of the library is reserved for children, their parents or responsible adult caregivers, and adults interested in children's literature. Out of concern for the safety of young patrons, adults who are unaccompanied by a child or children in the children's area of the library may be questioned by staff, and may be asked to move to another area of the library.