

# Eureka Public Library District

## Policy for Supervising Unattended Children

### Introduction

---

The Trustees and Staff of the Eureka Public Library District hope that the children who use this library will perceive it as an inviting and fun place. We encourage children of all ages to visit our library with their families to take advantage of the resources available to help meet their informational, recreational, and educational needs. Many programs are offered to make the Eureka Public Library District enticing to children and to help children develop a love of books, reading and libraries.

We do have a growing concern with the number of young children left unattended in the library. The library Staff is not responsible for the supervision of children left unattended by their parents. The staff cannot know if children are leaving the building with parents or with strangers. For the protection and well-being of children who enjoy libraries, the following policy has been established:

- Parents, a responsible adult, or the legal guardian must accept the responsibility of supervising their children while in the library. This supervision helps to provide for the general welfare and safety of all people using the library.
- All children who are unattended must have a library-related purpose in visiting the library - finding a book, reading, doing homework, or using the computers. The library is not to be used as a babysitting service.
- All children age 5 or under shall, at all times, be attended by an adult or mature adolescent. Children ages 6 and 7 may be left unattended in the library up to 30 minutes, except during special programs when they may be left for the duration of the program. Children ages 8 and older may use the library unattended for a maximum of two hours unless attending a scheduled library program. Parents are responsible for their children's behavior while in the library.
- People who do not adhere to this policy will be asked to leave the library. Continued disruptive behavior or leaving children unattended will result in the loss of library privileges.

If any patron is creating a disturbance or causing problems in the library, the staff has the authority or right to tell that patron to leave the library. If that patron refuses to comply and continues to cause problems, the police will then be contacted to eject that patron from the library.

---

# Behavior in the Library

---

Disruptive behavior is unacceptable in a library.

Disruptive behavior that is unacceptable in a library includes, but is not limited to:

1. Running, chasing
2. Shouting, loud conversation, arguments, foul language
3. Throwing books or toys
4. Bullying or bothering other people
5. Consuming food or drink (including chewing gum)
6. Vandalizing library property or facilities

Appropriate behavior includes:

1. Doing homework, writing, researching, studying
2. Browsing, reading
3. Using the computers within the time limits set

If a child is misbehaving or is requiring constant attention:

1. The staff will ask the child to correct his/her behavior.
2. If the disruptive behavior continues, a staff member will inform the parents that their child is disturbing others.
3. If the parents refuse or are unable to correct the behavior, the family will be asked to leave.
4. If the child is unattended and the disruptive behavior continues, he/she will be told to sit quietly at a table closest to the staff desk. The staff will obtain parents' names and attempt to locate a parent. When a parent cannot be located in the building, the staff will attempt to contact a parent and that parent will be told that his/her child is being disruptive and must be picked up immediately.
  - a. For a disruptive child who is twelve years old or younger, it may be necessary to contact the police.
  - b. In the case of an older child, age thirteen and up, the child will be asked to leave the library. If the child refuses and disruptive behavior continues inside or outside the building, the person in charge will call the police to assume responsibility for the child.

## Children left in Library at Closing Time

---

In making a decision regarding a vulnerable child\*, the staff member in charge will act as if his or her child were the person being left alone in the library at closing time. Staff will consider the age, size, mental capability, and emotional stability of the child.

*\* A vulnerable child is an unattended child whose safety or well-being would be endangered if he/she were sent out of the building.*

If the staff decides to stay with the child, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Library staff should attempt to call a parent. If the staff cannot reach a parent within fifteen minutes after closing, the police will be called to assume responsibility for the child.
2. Two staff members should remain with the child until the parent or the police arrive.
3. The library staff will UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES transport or take the child away from the building. In the case of either a disruptive or an unattended child where action as outlined above has been taken, a report will be sent immediately to the Director and a copy will be filed at the library.

---

This policy was passed by the Library Board of Trustees on September 21, 1998, and takes effect immediately.