

CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY ASTORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

Policy Statement Regarding Unattended Children

The Astoria Public Library welcomes children and families. We seek to provide a safe, secure, welcoming environment in which to read and do research. However, libraries are public buildings and therefore cannot be considered separate, safe havens from the larger world around them.

There are many reasons that parents and responsible persons need to be as careful of their children's safety in the Library as they would be in any public building. Children who cannot easily locate their adult caregiver may become frightened and temporarily lose their ability to communicate. It may be necessary to close or evacuate the facility during an emergency. Our staff, limited in number, cannot monitor the behavior or whereabouts of any particular customer, including children, who are visiting the Library without an adult caregiver. Staff members cannot know who, and who is not, supposed to be interacting with a child who is in the library.

Policy Regarding Unattended Children

All patrons are asked to behave in ways that do not interfere with another patron's use of the Library for its intended purposes or the staff's ability to perform their duties.

Parents are responsible for the behavior of minor children (under 18 years of age) in the library or on library grounds, regardless of whether they accompany their child or not.

- ❖ Children up to age 8 are expected to be under the direct supervision of a responsible person at all times. Responsible persons include parents and care givers who are 16 years old or older.
- ❖ Children ages 8 through 10 must have a responsible person in the library during the child's library visit.
- ❖ Children under the age of 10 may not be left unattended in the library.
- ❖ Children ages 11 through 18 attend the Library at their parent's discretion and with the understanding that the Library does not provide child care nor accept responsibility for the child.

Children under the age of 18 may also be considered unattended under the following circumstances:

- ❖ They are unable to manage their behavior.
- ❖ They are unable to communicate with staff.
- ❖ They are in the library for prolonged periods of time on a repetitive daily or weekly basis.
- ❖ They are left in the Library at closing time.

Policy on Children Left Unattended at Closing Time

The Library is not responsible for minors without a ride home at closing.

Procedures for Unattended Children at Closing Time

- ❖ One half-hour before closing time, staff will ascertain whether the child is here with a responsible adult and/or whether the child needs to call for a ride. The child will be invited to call for a ride immediately.
- ❖ If the child cannot reach an adult on the first call, staff will work with the child until quarter to closing to find a responsible adult. They may ask the child who else could be called. At this point, staff will make the phone calls.
- ❖ If an adult cannot be located, the child may be considered abandoned and police may be called at one quarter to closing time.
- ❖ Staff members will not drive children home, or to the police station, under any circumstances.

Policy on Children Attending Library Programs

Staff conducting library programs are not responsible for the behavior or safety of children who are attending library programs. Children ages 5 and under are to be accompanied by their responsible person while in the program. The responsible persons for children ages 6 through 10 are to remain available within the Library building.

Policy on Disruptive Youth

Any person of any age whose behavior is disruptive of another's use of the library for its intended purposes, is infringing on the rights of all patrons to enjoy a pleasant library experience.

Procedures for Disruptive Youth

- ❖ As children under age 10 are to be accompanied by a responsible person at least 16 years of age, staff will ask the responsible person to control the behavior of the child. If a second conversation becomes necessary, staff will ask the adult and child to conclude their visit for the day.
- ❖ Children over age 10 will be asked by staff to stop the disruptive behavior. If a second conversation becomes necessary, staff will call a parent or guardian or ask the youth to leave the Library for the day.
- ❖ Staff documents all incidents occurring within the Library. If three incidents accrue to any individual or group, those individuals and/or their parent or guardian will be contacted by the senior library staff. Library privileges may be revoked until the senior staff has met with the individual or group.

Policy on Internet Use

All children under age 18 must have written permission from a parent or legal guardian, signed on the library permission form in the presence of a library employee, to access the Internet. Signatures on the forms indicate that parents and children have discussed appropriate use of the Internet as defined within the family and that all parties will follow the library policy on Internet use.

Policy on Use of Computers

Internet policy as adopted applies to all use of the computers. If a child must complete homework assignments and print materials are not available, the staff can use the appropriate profile to provide computer reference capability. This profile does not allow access to the Internet.

Policy on Library Card Use

The signature of a parent or guardian, in the presence of a library employee, is required for children under age 18 who wish to get a library card. Parents and/or guardians are responsible for all overdue, lost or damaged materials and fines, fees and other debts accrued by a minor child.

The library is not responsible for the minor's selection of materials. It is the right and the responsibility of a parent or guardian to determine what is appropriate material in order to meet personal family standards and guidelines. Parents are encouraged to select material with their children or review their children's selections.

Children who claim emancipated minor status will need to present appropriate legal proof, including but not limited to marriage license or other court documents.