

## **UNATTENDED CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY**

*Revised and approved by the Board of Trustees, October 15, 2014*

The Wyckoff Public Library welcomes library use by children. Staff members are available to assist children with library materials or services. The library, however, is a public building and is not equipped—nor is it the library's role—to provide long- or short-term child care. In fact, the library is prohibited from functioning as a child care center unless licensed as such (NJSA Section 30:5B, 1-15). Out of concern for the safety and well-being of children, the library has updated the following policy to guide parents and staff about children's library use:

1. Children under the age of six years old must be attended by a responsible caregiver (age 13 or over) at all times while in the library.
2. Children six to ten years of age must have a responsible caregiver (or older sibling age 13 or over) present in the building.
3. Children aged eleven or twelve may be left in the library without an adult for reasonable periods of time (one to three hours), but parents are responsible for their behavior and will be contacted if that behavior is deemed disruptive or inappropriate by library staff.
4. Children thirteen and over may be in the library without an adult. However, should disciplinary problems arise or the child is not following library policies, the library has the right to ask the child to leave. If the child becomes belligerent or refuses to leave, staff will attempt to contact a parent or caregiver. If staff is unable to reach a parent or caregiver, they will contact the Wyckoff Police for assistance. After the child leaves the building, the library assumes no further responsibility for him or her.

Library staff members may intervene in the following situations with any unattended child:

- An unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library.
- An unattended child is perceived to be endangering himself or herself.
- Another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child.
- An unattended child exhibits loud, inappropriate or disruptive behavior or is breaking a library policy.
- A child is left at the library with an older sibling who is not at least 13 years of age himself.
- An unattended child has not been met by a parent or caregiver at closing time.

Parents or caregivers must pick up children left at the library no later than 15 minutes before closing time. Staff will approach unattended children 30 minutes before closing to confirm that they have a ride home, and if not, staff or the child will attempt to contact a parent or caregiver. If the child's ride has not arrived by closing, two staff will wait with the child. At 15 minutes past closing, staff will call the Wyckoff Police for assistance locating a parent or responsible caregiver. Staff are not permitted to escort the child off library property nor to drive the child home. In consideration for the library permitting children to utilize library facilities in accordance with this policy, parents and caregivers acknowledge and agree that they will be billed and held directly responsible for any staff overtime costs incurred by the library, at prevailing rates, as a result of staff's waiting with an unattended child after closing time.

In the event of an emergency closing, staff will take charge of all unattended children under 13, contact parents or caregivers, and wait with the children at a safe location—even if off library property—until parents or caregivers arrive. Parents will not be billed for overtime incurred by staff in such an unexpected situation. If schools close early due to inclement weather, parents should not drop off children at the library, because it is likely the library will be closing shortly as well.

Adults who visit the children's library must be actively caring for or waiting for a child or using the children's library collection. Adults who do not have specific reason to be in the children's library will be asked to move to another area of the library. Repeated requests to move elsewhere may result in further actions as deemed appropriate by the Library Director, including but not limited to suspension of library privileges.

The teen corner of the library is reserved for use by teenagers on weekends, after school hours and during July and August. Adults over 21 are not permitted to use the space during these times unless they are accompanying a teenager or using the teen library collection.