

Children's Safety in the Library & Unattended Child Practice

Introduction:

The Salem Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children to visit the Library, use Library collections and services, and attend Library programs. Library staff are available to assist and support children with their use of Library resources. The Library is a public building, open to everyone and a child's safety cannot be guaranteed. Children may encounter hazards in the Library such as doors, furniture, electrical equipment and other Library patrons.

The Library is not responsible for a minor's selection of Library materials, attendance at programs or use of the Internet or other services. Parents, guardians, or responsible adults are expected to accompany their minor children in the use of Library materials and services, including computer use.

The responsibility for the behavior and well-being of children using the Library rests with the parent, guardian, or designated caregiver. Library staff members cannot supervise children in the Library. The Library does not serve in loco parentis.

Practice:

Children under 10 years of age must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or designated responsible caregiver (16 years of age or older) at all times while in the Library. Caregivers must supervise and provide guidance for children during the entire Library visit.

Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) 163.545: Child neglect in the second degree. (1) A person having custody or control of a child under 10 years of age commits the crime of child neglect in the second degree if, with criminal negligence, the person leaves the child unattended in or at any place for such period of time as may be likely to endanger the health or welfare of such child. (2) Child neglect in the second degree is a Class A misdemeanor.

In the following situations, Library staff will take the actions outlined below for all children zero (0) to seventeen (17) years of age:

- A child is alone and frightened or crying in the Library
- A child is alone and doing something dangerous, or another person in the Library seems to be a danger to the child
- A child is alone and is not following the Library Code of Conduct
- No caregiver comes to pick a child up at closing time

Library staff members will evaluate the situation and try to contact the child's parent or guardian. If staff cannot reach the parent or guardian, he or she will place the child in the care of the appropriate local law enforcement agency.