

**PASCO COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
POLICY MANUAL**

SECTION: PUBLIC SERVICES

POLICY TITLE: UNATTENDED CHILD AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICY

EFFECTIVE DATE: JANUARY 2005

REVISED: JULY 2008
SEPTEMBER 2024

Philosophy:

The Pasco County Library System is dedicated to providing a welcoming, educational, and safe environment for customers of all ages. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for the safety, behavior, and supervision of their children at all times in the library and on library property, whether or not they are with the child.

When children are left alone they may become frightened or anxious. If they wander through the building they may encounter hazards such as stairs, doors, furniture or electrical equipment. They may also become bored and restless and could disturb the enjoyment and work of others

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. However, the library is a public facility, and staff may not be able to monitor all aspects of patron behavior. Libraries cannot guarantee that a child will be safe in the library or on library property. Libraries does not act **in loco parentis**.

Statement of Policy:

It is strongly recommended that children be accompanied in the library by a parent, guardian, or assigned caregiver. Staff is not able to provide childcare or babysitting.

An exception would be children attending a story time or library program without a parent, guardian or caregiver in the room. However, the parent, guardian or caregiver must remain in the library building and join the child at the end of the program or when summoned by a library staff member to care for the child.

Parents/guardians and caregivers should be aware of library opening and closing times and make suitable arrangements to meet and/or transport their children. In the event that a child is left after library hours and no one can be contacted to provide transportation

within fifteen (15) minutes, the staff will call the appropriate law enforcement agency for assistance. Staff will not transport children home or to any other destination under any circumstances.

Parent/Caregiver Expectations

Parents/Caregivers are responsible for the safety and well-being of their children on Library property. The library expects parents/caregivers to:

- Accompany any child under the age of eight (8). An actively engaged parent/caregiver of at least 12 (twelve) years of age must be in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with a child under the age of eight (8). Ensure that the assigned caregiver of a child under the age of eight has emergency contact information for the child.
- Ensure that unaccompanied children ages eight (8) and older are able to abide by Library policies, including the Patron Conduct Policy.
- Ensure that unaccompanied children ages eight (8) and older have emergency contact information and are able to independently share that information with staff when requested.

Violation of Policy:

Library staff cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or who are demonstrating inappropriate behavior. If a child's behavior does not conform to the library's Patron Conduct Policy, or results in a safety issue, the child may be asked to leave the library, a parent may be notified, and/or law enforcement may be called for assistance.