



Pickerington Public Library Unattended Children

Board Policy:

DATE REVIEWED: 4/13/2017
DATE APPROVED: 4/13/2017
EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/13/2017
REPLACING POLICY EFFECTIVE: 9/13/2007

The Board of Trustees and staff of the Pickerington Public Library (PPL) are pleased that patrons of all ages are visiting us. It is important that we provide an environment that allows all patrons to enjoy the facility in a safe, relaxed manner. While we welcome library use of children 18 years of age and younger, children under age twelve (12) must be attended by a parent or an adult caregiver.

PPL wishes to provide a safe environment for visitors of all ages; however, library facilities are open to the public, which can present risks to children. Parents, caregivers and group leaders need to be aware that staff cannot be responsible for the safety and security of unattended children. Parents and caregivers must exercise their own judgment regarding whether to leave their children over the age of twelve (12) unattended in the library. In exercising this discretion, parents and caregivers should be aware that the library cannot monitor children who enter and leave the library, and that children who are disruptive may be asked to leave the library. Accordingly, parents and caregivers should only leave unattended children at the library if they are capable of coming and going by themselves.

Children who become disruptive, a security or safety issue, or endanger themselves or others anywhere on library property will be asked to correct their behavior. Should the behavior continue, the child will be asked to leave the library as indicated by the Patron Code of Conduct Policy.

Parents and caregivers are responsible for arranging transportation to and from the library for unattended children. Transportation for these children should arrive prior to the closing time. If a child's transportation has not arrived within 15 minutes after closing, PPL may call the police if the child expresses concern, if a PPL staff member believes there is reason for concern or if the child is under the age of twelve (12).

Administrative Procedure:

DATE APPROVED: 4/13/2017
EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/13/2017
REPLACING PROCEDURE EFFECTIVE: New

Any child who is left alone or unattended anywhere on library property can be a security and safety issue. "Unattended" can include the following examples:

- A child is out of view of the parent or caregiver and/or not actively engaged with the parent or caregiver;
- A child is alone at the library without appropriate supervision
- A child is dropped off at the library without appropriate supervision

A. Procedures for Handling Disruptive Behavior of Children

Any child can become disruptive, a security or safety issue or endanger him/her or others anywhere on library property. Staff must use PPL's "Eviction Procedure" in all cases of disruptive behavior.

1. Staff member who discovers the situation should warn the child that his/her behavior is unacceptable, and this is a verbal warning to stop the behavior (unless more severe discipline is immediately required according to Appendix A of the Library's Code of Conduct).
2. If the child is with a parent or caregiver, staff are expected to warn the child and the parent/caregiver that his/her behavior is unacceptable, and this is a verbal warning to stop the behavior (unless more severe discipline is immediately required according to Appendix A of the Library's Code of Conduct).
3. Staff member must explain what the appropriate behavior is.
4. If the disruptive behavior persists, staff should follow the steps outlined in the "Eviction Procedure."
5. In all cases of disruptive behavior, a staff member must file a Security Incident Report (including the parent or caregiver's name, address, telephone number and the child's name), and alert all staff working in the public service area. Filling out a Security Incident Report is important for documenting repeat occurrences.
6. In the case of an eviction, a staff member should use their best judgment with regard to calling parents when sending a child off library property.
7. In the case of evicting a child younger than twelve (12) years old, the staff member should explain to the parent or caregiver that they are welcome back that day without the child if they wish to return.
8. If timely pick up is an issue, evicted children may be directed to wait in a specific area of the library until the parent arrives. When staff direct a child to leave library property, under no circumstances should the child be directed by library staff to wait in a specific location off library grounds.
9. Under no circumstances should staff use force or place hands on disruptive children.

B. Procedure for Handling Unattended Children Under the Age of Twelve

1. The staff member who discovers the situation will try to identify and contact the parent or caregiver by walking through the library or by paging the parent or caregiver. When the parent or caregiver is located, the staff member should explain PPL's policy on unattended children, stressing concern for the child's safety. When appropriate, the parent or caregiver will be given a copy of the Unattended Child Policy.
2. If the parent or caregiver is not located in the library, staff should try to contact the child's parent or caregiver by telephone. A staff member may need to stay with the child in a public area while this is being done.
3. When the parent or caregiver is reached, staff should insist that the child be picked up immediately, explaining PPL's policy. If the parent or caregiver refuses to pick up the child, the parent or caregiver will be informed that the police will be called. If the parent or caregiver still refuses to pick up the child, staff will call the police. After contacting the police staff must notify the Library Director or his/her designee, to report the police have been called.
4. If the child's parent or caregiver is not located within 30 minutes the staff member will call the police. After contacting the police staff must notify the Library Director or his/her designee, to report the police have been called. Staff should ask the dispatcher for an estimated response time. Staff may need to stay with the child in a public area until the police arrive.
5. Any time a child under the age of twelve (12) is left unattended; a staff member must file a Security Incident Report the same day (including the parent or caregiver's name,

address, telephone number and the child's name) and alert all staff on duty. Filling out a Security Incident Report is important for documenting repeat occurrences.

6. Under no circumstances will staff take the child away from the Library or off of the public service floor.

C. Procedures for Handling Unattended Children at Closing

1. At 30 minutes before closing time, staff will announce that all children who need adult supervision to get home must secure a ride.
2. Staff may need to allow children to use the library phone to call home.
3. If the child has not been picked up by closing time, staff member in charge will follow these steps:
 - a. **At closing (5:00, 6:00 OR 8:00)**
 - i. Have the minor patron call their legal guardian/parent and ask to speak with them directly
 - ii. When speaking with the parent, explain the following; library hours and staff's inability to remain after closing to supervise unattended children, expectation for a police referral after 15 minutes, expectation that the building alarms itself and staff and minor are waiting outside
 - b. **15 minutes after closing** – If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or does not pick up the child call the police to inform them that an unattended minor was left at the library and the library is now closed. Ask them to come and pick up the child
 - c. **30 minutes after closing** – Call the parent or guardian again if they and the police haven't arrived
 - d. If child is picked up by the parent, make sure police are informed
4. The person in charge and one other staff member will remain in the building with the child until a parent or caregiver or police arrives.
5. The parent or caregiver will be given a copy of the PPL's Unattended Child policy.
6. In all cases of an unattended child at closing time, a staff member must file a Security Incident Report (including the parent or caregiver's name, address, telephone number and the child's name). Filling out a Security Incident Report is important for documenting repeat occurrences. If the staff member has to stay beyond their scheduled time to complete the report, they must notify their supervisor in order for their schedule to be adjusted accordingly.
7. Under no circumstances will staff take the child away from the library, be left alone with the child or allow for the child to sit in their vehicle. All parties must stay inside or in front of the library.

These procedures are not intended to cover every unattended child issue. Staff must use good judgment when dealing with a variety of issues. All staff are empowered to and expected to handle and enforce these procedures. If possible, it is recommended that a second staff member be present when handling any unattended child situations.