

## **Hales Corners Library**

### **Unattended Children Policy & Staff Procedures**

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The Hales Corners Public Library welcomes children of all ages to use its facilities and services. Our services and programs are offered to make the library enticing to children, to encourage them to visit the library and to develop a love of books, reading and libraries.

Busy public buildings are not secure places for children to be left alone. Responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library rests with the parent, guardian or an assigned caregiver. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they are unattended.

Children should know how to reach an adult at all times. They may use the library's business phone in case of an emergency.

#### Purpose:

In an effort to ensure the safety and well-being of the children and to maintain an atmosphere of constructive library use, the Hales Corners Library Board of Trustees has established the following policy regarding appropriate use of the library by children and their parents or caregivers.

The library does not assume responsibility for unattended children and the policy provides guidelines for staff in the event that a child is left unattended in the library. Library staff will follow established procedures when addressing issues with unattended children.

1. Children age 5 and under: Children age five and under must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or an assigned caregiver at all times and in all areas of the building including the children's area and the restrooms. Parents, guardians or assigned caregivers of preschool children attending storytime must remain in the building during the program.
2. Children ages 6, 7 and 8: Children ages six, seven and eight may be left unattended in the children's area for a short time, if the parent, guardian or an assigned caregiver who accompanied them to the library is in the building and readily available.
3. Children age 9 and over: Children age nine and over are welcome with or without a parent, guardian or assigned caregiver at all times provided they practice appropriate behavior regarding language, respect for others and respect for library equipment and property.
4. Children requiring continuous supervision: A parent, guardian or assigned caregiver shall accompany any child (regardless of age), who requires continuous supervision or intervention. Children requiring continuous supervision may be of any age with (but not limited to) mental, physical or emotional disabilities, disruptive behavior or incomplete social skills which affect decision-making skills or render supervision necessary.
5. Children in library programs: For a child under the age of 9, the parent, guardian or an assigned caregiver must remain in the library while the child is in a library program. Very young children occasionally need the attention of their parents during the programs, and become anxious when they are unavailable.

For a child age 9 or older, the parent, guardian or an assigned caregiver may leave the library for the duration of the program but are expected to return before the program is over and be available to meet their child when he/she comes out of the program.

If a child (regardless of age) requires continuous supervision, the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver shall remain in program with the child.

6. Lost children: If it is determined that a child is lost, a staff member should try to identify and locate the parent or the responsible childcare provider. If the parent is not found in the building, a staff member should stay with the child until the parent can be located. If the parent has not been located by the time of closing or within a reasonable amount of time, the librarian-in-charge should call the police who shall assume responsibility for the child. The librarian-in-charge shall write an incident report. Under no circumstances shall a staff person take the child out of the building.
7. Unattended child at time of closing: If it is determined that a child is left in the library at the time of closing, the librarian-in-charge shall call the police who will assume responsibility for the child. The librarian-in-charge shall write an incident report. Under no circumstances shall a staff person remain in the library after closing or take the child out of the building. For the purposes of this policy, a child is under the age of 16 years.
8. In cases of repeated inappropriate behavior by a child, the library director will notify the parent or guardian of the child that these documented and repeated violations of the Hales Corners Library & W. Ben Hunt Center Appropriate Behavior Policy may result in the child having their library privileges revoked or restricted.

Under State law [§43.52 (2)], the Library Board has the right to revoke a person's right to use the library if the person has a history of disruptive behavior in the library

“Every public library shall be free for the use of the inhabitants of the municipality by which it is established and maintained, subject to such reasonable regulations as the library board prescribes in order to render its use most beneficial to the greatest number. The library board may exclude from the use of the public library all persons who willfully violate such regulations.”

Staff procedures – for children in the library:

The librarian-in-charge is responsible for monitoring the atmosphere in the library and for talking to the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver of the child or to the individual who is causing a problem. Depending on the activity or behavior, the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver and the child or the individual may be asked to leave the library immediately, or the police may be called, or the following procedure may be followed. The library director shall be informed of the situation.

- The librarian-in-charge shall:
  1. First time, request the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver to take responsibility for their child or ask the individual to stop the behavior or activity.
  2. Second time, give another verbal warning indicating that if the problems continue the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver and the child or the individual will be asked to leave the library for the remainder of the day.
  3. Third time, the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver and the child or the individual will be asked to leave the library for the remainder of the day. If appropriate, the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver and the child or the individual will be welcome to return and start fresh on another day.

If an individual's behavior is extremely disruptive, dangerous, or illegal, the police should be called immediately. Calling the police can be done by any staff member.

Staff procedures – for children in a library program:

The youth services librarian is responsible for monitoring the atmosphere in a library program and maintaining a quiet, safe, and productive environment.

If there is a problem with disruptive behavior or it appears that a child needs continuous supervision, the youth services librarian shall select a strategy for handling the immediate situation which may include having the child sit next to him/her, requiring the friends to sit apart from each other, sending his/her assistant to find the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver in the library or to ask another staff person to provide assistance.

After the program, the youth services librarian shall talk with the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver if they are available. If they are not available, the youth services librarian shall call the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver and talk about the situation and ask the individual to remain with the child in the program.

The library director shall be informed of the situation.

The library director is responsible for maintaining a record of problems and giving a report to the Library Board as necessary.