Policy on Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults

Purpose

The Sioux Center Public Library strives to provide a warm, welcoming and safe environment conducive to lifelong learning for guests of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow the Patron Conduct Policy established by the Library Board of Trustees posted in the library building and on the Library website, www.siouxcenterlibrary.org.

The Library encourages children and vulnerable adults to use its facilities and services. While the Library is concerned for the safety of children and vulnerable adults in and around library facilities, the Library does not act *in loco parentis* (in place of parents). A parent, legal guardian, teacher, custodian or caregiver is responsible for monitoring the activities and managing the behavior of children or vulnerable adults during their Library visits. Library employees have many duties and do not serve as a substitute for daycare or babysitting. Staff does not monitor the arrival or departure of any child or vulnerable adult from a program or the building. The Library is not responsible for any consequences of parents, legal guardians, teachers, custodians or caregivers not fulfilling their responsibilities nor is the library responsible for the actions or safety of minors or vulnerable adults.

The safety of children and vulnerable adults is a priority for the Library. However, the Library is a public building, open to all. Therefore, they may be at risk when they are left unattended.

Guidelines

The Library will adhere to the following guidelines concerning the care and behavior of children and vulnerable adults.

- Children under the age of five (5) and children and vulnerable adults who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves may not be left alone in the Library and must have adequate supervision while in the Library.
- Children age five (5) and over and vulnerable adults who can understand and follow the Patron Conduct Policy and who can care for themselves are allowed to be in the library unattended. They should have contact information for someone who can assist them in an emergency.
- All children using the STEM room must have an adult or caretaker who is able to monitor the behavior of said child inside the room with them.
- Library staff will attempt to contact a parent, legal guardian, custodian or caregiver when:
    - the health or safety of an unattended child or vulnerable adult is in doubt;
    - a child or vulnerable adult is frightened while alone at the Library;

    - the behavior of an unattended child or vulnerable adult disturbs other Library guests and has caused staff to ask the individual to leave the Library;
    - an unattended child or vulnerable adult has not been met by a parent, legal guardian, custodian or responsible caregiver at closing time;
    - an unattended child or vulnerable adult requires or asks for staff help beyond normal assistance with library services.
- If a parent, legal guardian, custodian or caregiver cannot be reached, Library staff will contact law enforcement officials to take charge of the situation involving the unattended child or vulnerable adult.
- Library employees are not permitted to transport children or vulnerable adults away from Library facilities.

Parents, legal guardians, custodians, caregivers, children and vulnerable adults who are in violation of this policy or the Patron Conduct Policy are subject to suspension of library privileges.

Definitions

An unattended child generally is defined as:

A. a child under the age of five (5) who is not accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, custodian or caregiver age 14 or older;
B. a child under the age of eighteen (18) who is not accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, custodian and who does not know or have the information necessary to contact a parent, legal guardian or other responsible adult;
C. a child under the age of eighteen (18) who is not accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, custodian and who is not picked up by closing time and who needs assistance procuring transportation;
D. a child under the age of eighteen (18) who is not accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, custodian and who appears to need staff help beyond assistance with normal library services.

A vulnerable adult is an adult who should not be left alone in the Library or is unable to reasonably care for himself/herself in an emergency situation. This includes adults who are mentally or physically challenged and who need staff help beyond assistance with normal library services and are not under the direct supervision of a parent, legal guardian or custodian.

Additionally, an individual is considered a vulnerable adult when he/she is not picked up by closing time and needs assistance procuring transportation.

Approved 12/2014; Reapproved 12/2017; Reapproved 11/2018; Reapproved 11/2019; Amended and Reapproved 5/2020; Reapproved 6/2021; Amended and Reapproved 6/2022; Amended and Reapproved 7/23; Reapproved 6/24; Reapproved 6/25; Amended and Reapproved 6/26