

Rockingham Free Public Library Unattended Children Policy

The Rockingham Free Public Library is a valuable community resource of materials, information services, and programs. As a public institution, its doors are open to all regardless of origin, age, background, and views. Staff members are concerned when parents leave their young children alone or in the care of a slightly older sibling or friend. When young children are left unattended in the library, even for a few minutes, they can become frightened. A slightly older child left in charge can be easily burdened by this responsibility. Sometimes children stay at the library for many hours or wait here after school until a parent picks them up. Often they become bored and restless. This leads to disruptive behavior that interferes with the library business of other patrons and staff. Staff shall not be placed in the position of supervising children who are too young to be unattended, or whose behavior indicates that they have stayed at the library for too long a time. For the safety and protection of youth, and for the benefit of all, the Rockingham Free Public Library has developed the following rules:

All children aged 7 and under must be accompanied by an adult or responsible adolescent

The library assumes no responsibility for an unattended child. The person-in-charge must stay with the child.

Self-supervised youth, aged 8 and up, are welcome to use the library as long as they exercise acceptable behavior

Parents should not view the library as an alternative to daycare. Unlike a daycare facility, the library is not a closed environment. Staff cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all patrons are free to use any public area within the library. For safety's sake, parents should make sure that their children are sufficiently mature before allowing them to visit the library by themselves. Parents should be advised that if their children misbehave they will receive three warnings for them to change their behavior, and then they will be asked to leave the library and the library grounds. Parents should further realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior. Finally, parents need to be aware that the library and library staff do not act "in loco parentis".

Children must leave the library at closing time

Youngsters left to wait outside for a ride after the library has closed are placed in a vulnerable position. Staff may attempt to contact parents, however, if unsuccessful or in the case of an extended wait the police shall be summoned to assist the youth.