

Unattended Children Policy

The Merrimack Public Library strives to provide a safe environment that welcomes patrons of all ages to use and enjoy the library's facilities, collections, and events. For the particular safety of our young patrons we have developed a specific policy regarding unattended children.

1. Children under the age of eleven may not be left unattended at the library. A child is unattended if they are in the library without a parent* in the same vicinity. A parent or other responsible individual over the age of fifteen must remain in the library building or at the offsite library event while the child attends the event. The library staff do not provide child care services and do not assume responsibility for unattended children.
2. At the discretion of a parent, a child age eleven to fourteen may briefly be left unattended to select materials, complete a homework assignment, read, or attend a library event. The child must know how to reach the parent in case the need should arise.
3. All library patrons are subject to the library's Rules and Regulations Policy. Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children while in the library. Library staff do not serve *in loco parentis*, i.e., in the place of a parent. If a child does not abide by the library's Rules and Regulations Policy or if their actions disrupt other library users, the parent will be contacted to remove the child from the library. If the parent cannot be reached, the library staff will contact the Merrimack Police Department to remove the child.
4. If a child is left at the library without a way home one half hour prior to closing time, library staff will call the child's home or the parent's employer using information provided by the child, in the patron database, or the telephone directory and the parent will be told that their child must be picked up immediately. If the parent cannot be located, the library staff will contact the Merrimack Police Department.
5. Under no circumstances will library staff give a child a ride home. When necessary, two library staff will wait with a child to be picked up by the parent or police.

**As used in this policy, the term "parent" may include legal guardians, responsible individuals over the age of 15, or other persons having custody or control of a minor.*

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