

2.6-1 Unattended or Disruptive Children Policy

In an effort to provide a library environment that allows all patrons to use library materials and resources in a safe, relaxed manner, the Board of Library Trustees of the Chelmsford Public Library has adopted a policy statement concerning unattended or disruptive children.

Children who are **10 years of age and older may stay independently** in the Main Library and/or the MacKay Branch. They may use the library unattended for a reasonable period of time provided they are able to maintain proper library behavior. Children must have the telephone numbers of their parent, guardian, or other designated adult so that a responsible person may be contacted to come and pick up the child in case of a health emergency, an unexpected library closing, or a child unaccompanied at closing time ([see Policy 3.5 Safety at Closing Time](#)).

Children who are **8 years of age and over** may stay in the children's room of the Main Library unattended if there is a responsible relative, legal guardian, babysitter, or sibling of at least 14 years of age in the main part of the library who acknowledges responsibility for the child, during their entire stay. Exceptions to this rule may be discussed with the library director.

Young children often feel anxious, frightened or vulnerable in the library when not accompanied by an adult. Children under the age of 8 years must not be left unattended in the children's room or meeting room, unless the child is participating in a library program and has the permission of library staff to be there unsupervised. Children under the age of 8 must be accompanied by a responsible relative, legal guardian, babysitter or sibling of at least **14 years of age in the Children's Room**. If a child under the age of 8 is left unattended in the children's room, the staff will inform the parents of library policy prohibiting this.

Every reasonable effort will be made by the staff to assist the child in contacting an appropriate adult, but it is the parent's responsibility to be aware of the library's opening and closing hours and make arrangements for the child to be picked up at the appropriate time.

Staff members cannot provide supervision of children except at particular library programs designed for them. If a child is repeatedly left unsupervised, parents will be notified that their child is no longer permitted to use the library unattended.

Missing Child: If a child is reported missing to a staff person, that staff person will obtain a detailed description of the child and notify all other staff in the building to cover building exits and search for the child. If the child is not located **after an initial five-minute search, call 911 to notify Chelmsford Police**. Refer to the Library's Missing Child Procedure in the Safety Manual for more specific details.

Disruptive behavior: If a child behaves in a disruptive manner, the child will be asked to correct her/his behavior. If the behavior persists, library staff may, at their discretion, contact the parent/guardian/designated adult, or direct that the child leave the library. In addition, the library reserves the right to summon the police in order to preserve the library's operations and/or protect the interests of the child.

Parents, whether present or not, are ultimately responsible for their children's behavior while in the library. Children and young adults who are disruptive in the library or on library property interfere with library service to all patrons. The library is a public institution where all patrons have an equal right to quality library service in a friendly and peaceful environment.

Approved, Board of Library Trustees, February 2019

Revised and Re-adopted, Board of Library Trustees, January 2025