

Patterson Library Unattended Children Policy

The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the Library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with Library staff. Library staff cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior. Children who exhibit inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the Library. If the child is unable to leave the Library without an adult, he/she should not be in the Library without an adult.

For the protection and well-being of children who enjoy our library and to prevent undue disruption of normal library activities, the Patterson Library has adopted the following policy:

1. Children aged 8 and under must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of (and in visual contact with) the child. A responsible adult or mature adolescent (at least 12 years old) must accompany them. A child can attend a Library program without a parent/caregiver in the room as long as the parent/caregiver remains in the Library and immediately joins the child at the end of the program.
2. If a child aged 8 and under is found unattended, Library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the Library and inform him/her of the Unattended Child policy. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, Library staff will contact the Westfield Police Department.
3. If a child aged 8 and under violates the Library's Unattended Children policy, the child and the parent/caregiver will be informed of the policy and asked to comply with it. If inappropriate behavior* continues, the child and parent/caregiver may be asked to leave the Library.
4. Children age 9 and older may use the Library unattended. However, the parent/caregiver is still responsible for the behavior and the wellbeing of the child. The child is expected to follow the Library's Unattended Children policy and may be asked to leave the Library if he/she exhibits inappropriate behavior. The Library assumes no responsibility for the whereabouts of an unattended child who has been asked to leave Library property.
5. Teenagers are considered adult users. However, they are the legal responsibility of their parent/legal guardian and should have an emergency contact available.
6. Staff members are not allowed to assume responsibility for any child in the absence of an adult, even for a very short time.

*Inappropriate behavior includes treating other patrons and library staff with discourtesy and disrespect. Rough play, excessive running, and inappropriate use of library property will not be tolerated.