

# Unattended Child and Parent/Guardian Responsibility Policy

*The purpose of this policy is to describe the responsibilities of Parents/Guardians in regard to children who are using Patterson Library. This policy supports the Library Code of Conduct by establishing the standards for children's independent use of the Library and its services and facilities.*

Patterson Library's Program Goal is to "promote public use of the library collection; provide quality services and programs for babies, children, students, young adults, adults, and seniors; conduct programs to develop reading and communication skills; assist in providing community information and information literacy." (See *Long Range Plan 2022-2027.*)

In order for Library Staff to accomplish the Program Goal, they cannot assume the role of Parents/Guardians/caregivers. Monopolization of Library Staff attention (in lieu of other childcare arrangements) is a violation of the Library Code of Conduct.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for the safety and well-being of their children on Library property.

## **The Library expects parents/caregivers to:**

1. Accompany any child under the age of 9.
  - a. Have an actively engaged and willing caregiver of at least 13 years of age in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with a child under the age of 9.
  - b. Ensure that the assigned caregiver of a child under the age of 9 has emergency contact information for the child.
  - c. If the child is attending a Library-sponsored program, the caregiver may visit other areas of the library but must remain on Library property for the duration of the program.
2. Accompany any school-age child between the ages of 9 and 16 during regular school hours, or ensure that a homeschooled child is able to provide proof of homeschool status. (If the school-age child cannot meet these expectations, they will be invited to call a Parent/Guardian to be picked up, or the Westfield Police Department will be contacted.)
3. Ensure that unaccompanied children ages 9 and older are familiar with and able to abide by Library policies, including the Code of Conduct and any posted "Rules of Behavior." A child who violates those rules may be asked to

## Patterson Library Unattended Child and Parent/Guardian Responsibility Policy

leave library premises. Continued inappropriate behavior will result in the requirement that they be attended by a Parent/Guardian.

4. Ensure that unaccompanied children ages 9 and older have emergency contact information and are able to independently share that information with staff when requested.
5. Ensure that unaccompanied children ages 9 and older are able to leave the Library independently when instructed to leave by Library staff, at closing time, or in the event of an unexpected Library closure. (Library staff will make reasonable attempts to contact Parents/Guardians for no longer than 15 minutes past closing. At this point the child/children will be placed in the custody of the Westfield Police Department.)
6. Ensure that unaccompanied children ages 9 and older only remain at the Library for a reasonable amount of time. In general, the Library considers more than 2-3 hours (depending on the age and conduct of the child) to be excessive and inappropriate.

*Library staff will enforce this policy with their professional discretion and will strive to notify Parents/Guardians of problem behaviors including but not limited to: treating other patrons and Library staff with discourtesy and disrespect, rough play, excessive running, and inappropriate use of Library property. The Library reserves the right to contact the Westfield Police Department and/or child welfare hotlines concerning the safety and well-being of any minors.*