



West Hartford Public Library Safe Child Policy

Purpose

The West Hartford Public Library ("Library") is dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming environment for users of all ages, and encourages children of all ages to enjoy the facilities, programs, and collections offered at all Library locations. While the Library is committed to creating spaces that support learning and exploration, responsibility for a child's safety and behavior while visiting the Library rests with the parent, guardian, or caregiver.

Definitions

Caregiver¹ - A parent, guardian, or person having custody or control, or providing supervision, of a child under the age of twelve years while visiting the Library.

Child - Any person under eighteen (18) years of age.

Unattended Child is defined as follows:

- A child who is under the age of twelve (12) years old, not accompanied by a caregiver;
- A child between the ages of twelve (12) and sixteen (16) who is using the Library independently, but is not picked up by closing time and needs assistance procuring transportation;
- A child under the age of eighteen (18) who appears to need staff help beyond assistance with standard Library service, and is not accompanied by a caregiver.

Policy

Parents, guardians, or caregivers must provide appropriate supervision based on their children's ages, abilities, and levels of responsibility. Library staff is not responsible for the safety, behavior, or supervision of children visiting the Library or on Library premises.

¹ In accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §53-21a, as may be amended from time to time.

Behavior Expectations

Children, like all Library users, are required to follow all Library policies, including the Patron Rules of Conduct policy. Children who require excessive staff intervention, are disruptive, or engage in unsafe behavior towards themselves, others, or Library property may be asked to leave Library premises.

Program Participation

All information regarding Library programs will specify whether the program is intended for children only or for children and caregivers together. For programs designated for children only, caregivers remain responsible for their child throughout the duration of the program and must ensure prompt pickup at the conclusion of the program.

For preschool-aged children attending a child-only program, a caregiver must remain in the immediate vicinity of the program space within the Library building for the duration of the program. For school-aged children attending a child-only program, a caregiver must remain within the Library building for the duration of the program.

In all cases, children must be picked up promptly at the conclusion of the program.

Hours of Operation and Closing Time

Parents and caregivers are expected to be aware of the Library's opening and closing times, as these hours are subject to change. If any child is left at the Library at closing time and a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or found, the West Hartford Police Department will be notified. The Library is not responsible for children outside the building who are awaiting transportation or who are socializing.

Applicable State Law

This policy is in accordance with Connecticut state law governing unaccompanied minors in places of public accommodation, as may be amended. Connecticut General Statute § 53-21a states that: "Any parent, guardian, or person having custody or control or providing supervision of any child under the age of 12 years who knowingly leaves that child unsupervised in a place of public accommodation or a motor vehicle for a period of time that presents risk to the child's health or safety, shall be guilty of a Class A Misdemeanor."

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