

# Unattended Child Policy

## **Statement of Purpose:**

The Greenwich Library is a community resource. We welcome and value our young patrons. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Greenwich Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it. It should be understood that while we do our best, the library cannot take responsibility for the safety or welfare of unattended children because of limited staff and volunteer time and training. Parents, guardians, or older siblings are expected to be responsible for young children while at the library. This policy is to be implemented when children are lost, frightened, stranded, or otherwise need assistance because they are alone.

## **Policy Statement:**

Children under the age of 6 who are at the library for programs or other reasons are required to be accompanied at all times by a parent or caregiver. Children 6-8 should be accompanied by a responsible caregiver who remains in the building and maintains responsibility for the child(ren).

Children 9 and over may use the library unattended, provided they act in a responsible manner.

Appropriate behavior (in accordance with our Library Use Policy) is expected of all library patrons, regardless of age. Library staff reserves the right to ask patrons, including unaccompanied children over the age of 9, to leave if they cannot meet this expectation. An attempt will be made to contact the parent/caregiver of younger children who are not behaving appropriately. If no one is available, police will be notified (692-9332).

## **Child Left Unattended During Open Hours:**

If it is determined that a child under 9 is lost or left unattended, a staff member should try to identify and locate the parent/caregiver, according to the following procedure:

1. Children left unattended are often frightened and crying and should be reassured by the staff.
2. Walk around the area with the child, looking for the parent/caregiver and informally ask for assistance. Often other people in the area can provide information.
3. When the responsible adult is located, gently remind him/her about the Library policy on unattended children. For example, "Your child was scared. When your child is at the library please make sure he/she knows where you are."

4. If the parent/caregiver is not found in the building, a staff member should stay with the child until someone can be located.
5. If after making an attempt, the parent/caregiver has not been located, the staff member will call the police (692-9332). Explain to the child that no one is in trouble but that we want to make sure the child gets home safely.
6. Under no circumstances will a staff member take the child out of the building.

#### **Child (under 9) Left Unattended at Closing**

1. Check through the building and call out the child's parent/caregiver's name. Repeat as needed.
2. If the parent/caregiver is not in the building, a staff member should stay with the child until someone can be located. Normal efforts to locate caregivers should be made, using information from the child.
3. If, after making an attempt, the parent or another responsible adult has not been located, call the police (692-9332). Explain to the child that no one is in trouble but that we want to make sure the child gets home safely.
4. Under no circumstances will staff member take the child out of the building.

#### **Child Reported Lost or Missing**

If a parent/caregiver reports a child of any age missing, staff will follow this procedure:

1. Obtain name, age, and description of the child.
2. Ask other people working that time slot for assistance in locating the child, or call out for the child. Provide a name and/or description of the child. Watch exits.
3. Check all areas thoroughly, including bathrooms, offices, the elevator, and the basement.
4. Check outside the Library.
5. Call the police (9-1-1) if unable to locate the child.
6. If the child is found, let other staff/volunteers know that the child has been found.

Timelines and actions may vary with maturity of the child, the time of the year, the weather, and staff availability. The goal is to be helpful and to keep library patrons safe.

*Approved by the Board of Trustees on April 3, 2013*