



Unattended Child Policy

Adopted 9/19/13 by the North Richland Hills Library Board

Although the NRH Library is pleased to offer numerous services for children and their parents/guardians, the Library is not a day-care facility nor can library staff act in place of an absent parent/guardian.

Overview

The North Richland Hills (NRH) Library wants children to use its facilities and services and is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library staff. Library staff cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to encourage parents/guardians to exercise reasonable care, supervision and control over their minor children so:

- No unattended child is found frightened or crying in the Library
- No unattended child is perceived to be endangering him or herself
- No person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child
- No unattended child violates the Library's Patron Behavior Policy, posted in the building and available at the library's service desks
- No unattended child has not been met by a responsible parent/guardian at closing time

Library staff reserves the right to contact the NRH Police Department if an unattended child is being disruptive, is in distress, remains unattended for more than 15 minutes, or remains unattended at the Library's closing time.

Parents/guardians who leave their children unattended at the Library are exposing their children to potential harm and may be committing an offense under the Texas Penal Code, Section 22.041c: Endangering a Child.

Children Under 10

Children through age 9 must have a parent/guardian *in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact* with the child. The caregiver must be a responsible person, aged 17 or older, and must carry emergency contact information. An exception would be children, ages 6 and older, who are attending a library program without a parent/guardian in the room. However, the parent/guardian is expected to remain in the library building and immediately join the child at the end of the program.

Children 10 and Older

Children age 10 and older may use the library on their own, but may be asked to leave the library if exhibiting inappropriate behavior. These children should know how to contact their parent/guardian while at the library.

Children with Special Needs

Children who have special needs such as impaired physical and mental ability, disruptive behavior, emotional problems, inadequate attention span, incomplete social skills, etc., shall be in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact of a parent/guardian at all times.

Unattended Children at Closing Time

Children who do not have transportation home at closing time will be asked for telephone numbers of people who can pick them up at the library. If a child 16 or younger is not picked up within 15 minutes after closing, library staff will call the NRH Police Dispatch. Two staff members are required to stay with children until they are picked up.