



Safety Policy for Children and Vulnerable Individuals

Adopted May 30, 2024 by the North Richland Hills Library Board

Overview

The North Richland Hills Library strives to provide a comfortable, safe, and welcoming environment for children of all ages. The Library is a public building with staff trained to provide public library services, including programs and resources offered to encourage children and help them develop a love of reading, offer access to educational resources, and developmentally appropriate programming.

Appropriate library behavior (as outlined in the Patron Behavior Policy) is expected of all library patrons, regardless of age.

Library staff do not act *in loco parentis* (in place of parents) for minors or vulnerable individuals while in the library facility. A parent, legal guardian, or caregiver is responsible for monitoring the activities and managing the behavior of minors or vulnerable individuals during their library visits. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library staff.

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.

Appropriate Supervision

For supervision, a caregiver is defined as a person 17 years or older who has emergency contact information and is responsible for the child, children, or vulnerable in their care.

Age of Child	Level of Supervision
Ages 0-9	Must have a caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. An exception would be children ages six and older attending a library program without a parent/guardian in the room. However, the caregiver is expected to remain in the library building and immediately join the child at the end of the program.
Ages 10-12	May browse the library independently. However, the caregiver must remain in the library building and be available for the child in case of emergency.
Ages 13 +	May be left unattended, providing they understand and follow library rules and observe proper conduct. Children are subject to the same rules of behavior as other patrons and the same consequences, including being asked to leave the building and premises. Continued inappropriate behavior will result in the requirement that they be attended by a caregiver.

Adults in Youth Designated Areas

The children's area of the library is reserved for children, their parents or responsible adult caregivers, and adults interested in children's literature, such as teachers and college students taking children's literature classes. Out of concern for the safety of young patrons, adults who are unaccompanied by a child or children in the children's area of the library may be asked to move to another area of the library.

Adults may use the children's of the library only when accompanied by a child using that area. The Library reserves the right to determine who can be in and remain in the children's area of the library.

Unaccompanied adults may be asked by staff to use the facilities, services, and equipment in other areas of the library.

Vulnerable Individuals

A vulnerable individual is a person of any age who is mentally or physically challenged to the degree that significantly impairs the individual's ability to provide adequately for their own care or manage their own behavior without assistance.

Vulnerable individuals may not be left alone in the library and must have adequate supervision while in the library. These patrons must always have a guardian or caregiver in the immediate vicinity or in visual contact while in the library.

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 the child or children until they are picked up.

Policy Violations

Repeated violations of this policy, or a single violation that endangers a child, vulnerable individual, another patron, or a library staff member, may result in loss of library privileges.