

CUSTOMER POLICIES

UNATTENDED AND DISRUPTIVE CHILDREN

Board Policy:

DATE REVIEWED: 01/26/2023
DATE APPROVED: 01/26/2023
EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/01/2023
REPLACING POLICY EFFECTIVE: 11/07/2013

Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) welcomes library use by children under 18 years of age. Children under the age of seven (7) must always be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. CML wishes to provide a safe environment for visitors of all ages; however, library facilities are open to the public, which can present risks to children. Parents, caregivers and group leaders need to be aware that staff cannot be responsible for the safety and security of unattended children. Parents and caregivers must exercise their own judgment regarding whether to leave their children over the age of seven (7) unattended in the library. In exercising this discretion, parents and caregivers should be aware that the library cannot monitor children who enter and leave the library, and that children may be asked to leave the library if they violate the Code of Conduct. Accordingly, parents and caregivers should leave children unattended at the library only if they are capable of following the Code of Conduct and coming and going by themselves.

Children who become disruptive, a security or safety issue, or endanger themselves or others anywhere on library property will be asked to correct their behavior. Should the behavior continue, the child will be asked to leave the library as indicated by the Customer Code of Conduct policy.

Parents and caregivers are responsible for arranging transportation to and from the library for unattended children. Transportation for children should arrive prior to closing time. If a child's transportation has not arrived within 15 minutes after closing, CML may call the police if the child expresses concern; if a CML staff member believes there is reason for concern; or if the child is under the age of seven (7).

Administrative Procedure:

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Children under the age of 7 must always be accompanied by a parent or caregiver age 11 or older.

“Unattended” can include the following examples:

- A child is out of view of the parent or caregiver and/or not actively engaged with the parent or caregiver

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- A child is at the library without appropriate supervision

A. Procedures for Handling Disruptive Behavior of Unattended Children Age Seven and Older

Any child can become disruptive, a security or safety issue or endanger himself/herself or others anywhere on library property. Staff must follow the procedure detailed in the Suspensions policy in all cases of disruptive behavior.

1. If a child is being asked to leave for the day (i.e. being suspended), staff should use their best judgment with regard to notifying the child's parent/caregiver.
2. If timely pick up is an issue, suspended children may be directed to wait in a specific area of the library until the parent/caregiver arrives. When staff direct a child to leave library property, under no circumstances should the child be directed by staff to wait in a specific location off library grounds.
3. Under no circumstances should staff use force or place hands on disruptive children.

B. Procedure for Handling Unattended Children Under the Age of Seven

1. If the parent or caregiver is at the library, staff should explain CML's policy on unattended children, stressing concern for the child's safety. When appropriate, the parent or caregiver will be given a copy of the Unattended Children Policy.
2. If the parent or caregiver is not at the library or cannot be located by library staff, staff should try to contact the child's parent or caregiver by telephone. A staff member may need to stay with the child in a public area while this is being done.
3. When the parent or caregiver is reached, staff should insist that the child be picked up immediately, explaining CML's policy on unattended children. Staff will inform the parent or caregiver that if the child is not picked up, the police will be called.
4. If the child's parent or caregiver does not respond within 30 minutes, the staff member will call the police. After contacting the police, staff must notify their Public Services Director, the Security Operations Center and send an #EmergencyContact email to report the police have been called. Staff should ask the police dispatcher for an estimated response time. Staff may need to stay with the child in a public area until the police arrive.
5. Any time a child under the age of seven (7) is left unattended; a staff member must file a Security Incident Report as soon as possible (including the parent or caregiver's name, address, telephone number and the child's name). Filling out a Security Incident Report is important for documenting repeat occurrences.
6. Under no circumstances will staff take the child away from the library.

C. Procedures for Handling Unattended Children at Closing

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1. At 30 - 60 minutes before closing time, staff should check in with children who may need adult supervision to get home to let them know they need to secure a ride.
2. Staff may allow children to use a library phone to call home and/or secure a ride.
3. If the child has not been picked up by closing time, staff will try to contact the parent or caregiver and inform them the child must be picked up immediately.
4. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or does not pick up the child within 15 minutes after closing, staff may call the police.
5. The person in charge or Security Officer, along with one other staff member, will remain in the building with the child until a parent or caregiver or police arrives.
6. Staff will inform the Security Operations Center at 614-849-1270 of the name of the child picked up by the police and the time of pick up.
7. In all cases of an unattended child at closing time, a staff member must file a Security Incident Report (including the parent or caregiver's name, address, telephone number and the child's name) as soon as possible.
8. Under no circumstances will staff take the child away from the library, be left alone with the child or allow for the child to sit in their vehicle. All parties must stay inside the library.

These procedures are not intended to cover every unattended child issue. Staff must use good judgment when dealing with a variety of issues. All staff are empowered to and expected to handle and enforce these procedures. If possible, it is recommended that a second staff member be present when handling any unattended child situations.

Related Policies/Forms:

- Customer Code of Conduct
- Suspensions
- Truancy