

Child Safety Policy

Introduction

Bossier Parish Library is dedicated to providing a safe, welcoming, and friendly environment for patrons of all ages. Sharing this environment with others require that everyone follow the *Appropriate Library Use Policy* established by the Library Board of Control, which is posted in each library location and on the library website.

Access to Children's Areas

To make the library an enjoyable place and to encourage a love of books, reading, and learning, the library offers designated children's areas, programs, and services for children. With the assistance of parents/caregivers, children can make effective use of the library. Parents/caregivers can help children select books and materials, use the computers, or bring them to programs.

The Children's area of the library is specifically designed to serve the needs of young patrons. Adults in that area not using children's materials or not using the area for the purpose intended will be asked to use other areas of the library. Staff members place the safety of children first.

Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of Library staff. While staff values the safety of children, only parents/caregivers can provide appropriate supervision of children. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library personnel. The following guidelines must be followed concerning the care and behavior of young library users.

- Children under the age of 13 must be accompanied and directly supervised at all times by a parent, guardian, or other responsible caregiver. Caregivers must be 16 years of age or older.
- The parent, guardian, or other responsible caregiver must be in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child, except while the child is attending a children's program (some programs may require the responsible person to stay with the child during the program).
- Parent/caregiver must remain in the library while their children are attending a children's program and immediately join the child at the end of the program.
- If a child age 13 and under violates the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*, the child and parent/caregiver will be informed of the rules. If inappropriate behavior continues, the family may be asked to leave the library.
- Children age 13 and older may use the library on their own. However, parents are still responsible for the actions and well-being of their children.

Staff Responsibilities

Library staff members have many duties to fulfill and cannot supervise children in the library or when children leave the building. However, if staff is concerned that a child is on library premises without proper supervision, staff may take action to correct the situation and will inform library administration of the concerns and actions taken.

In order to ensure a positive library experience for everyone, if a child appears to be alone, staff will follow these guidelines.

- Attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library. If located, staff will inform them of the rules regarding unattended children.
- If unable to locate parent/caregiver in the library, staff will encourage an unattended child to contact his/her parent by phone. If no contact is made within 30 minutes, local law enforcement will be notified.

Closing Time

Children who do not have transportation home at closing time will be asked to contact someone who can pick them up at the library. If a child is not picked up within 15 minutes after closing, local law enforcement will be contacted.

- Two staff members will stay with the child until they are picked up.
- If the child is in the protective care of the police department, a note will be attached to the library entrance, with the following information: "Unattended child is in the care of the police department." Neither the name of the child nor the name of the parent/caregiver will be listed on the note.
- At no time will staff transport a child away from the library.

In any situation involving the safety of children, and specifically whenever the parent/caregiver or police are contacted, staff will inform library administration.

Approved by: Library Board of Control Date: July 2016
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