

Library Staff Circular

Date Approved by the Board of Trustees: April 15, 2003

Subject: **Unattended Child Policy**

I. Policy

The Tuscaloosa Public Library encourages the use of the library and its resources by children and their families. Parents and caregivers should realize, however, that the library staff cannot provide supervision for their children. Library staff cannot prevent children from leaving the library facility by themselves or with strangers whose intention may be to harm children. To ensure the safety of children who use the library, the following policy regarding unattended children has been adopted. An “unattended child” is defined as a child who is in the library without a parent or adult supervisor who is eighteen or older. Under no circumstances will library staff take an unattended child out of the library or provide transportation for the child.

II. Unattended Children When Library is Open

A. Children Under the Age of Nine Years

1. Children under the age of nine years may not be left alone in any part of the library. Parents or adult supervisors of children under the age of nine should remain within sight of their children at all times while visiting the library.
2. Library staff should determine that a child under the age of nine is unattended.
3. The staff member will try to locate the parent/caregiver in the building and explain the library policy
4. If a parent/adult supervisor is not on library premises, library staff will attempt to contact him/her by phone, using information provided by the child, library records, or the phone book.
5. If no one responsible for the child can be contacted and no one arrives to pick up the child within one hour, the library staff will phone the police department, who will then assume responsibility for the child.
6. An incident report will be completed by the library staff person.

B. Children Ages Nine to Twelve:

1. Children ages nine to twelve may be left by themselves provided a parent or adult supervisor is elsewhere in the building.
2. Should library staff discover that a child aged nine to twelve is unattended, meaning no parent or adult supervisor is elsewhere in the building, the staff procedures outlined above will be followed.

C. Children Ages Thirteen and Older

1. Children ages thirteen and older are welcome to use the library facilities by themselves, provided they are able to do so responsibly.
2. All children aged thirteen and older should have an emergency contact number available when they use the library.

D. Children of All Ages Who Are Attending Programs

Children of all ages who attend library programs or programs sponsored by outside groups at the library should have a parent or adult supervisor who stays in the building during the entire program.

III. Unattended Children in Library at Closing Time

Approximately one hour prior to library closing, library staff should survey each department to determine if there are children who may not have a ride home. Library staff should provide a phone for any child who may need to secure transportation.

If, at closing time, a child does not secure transportation after calling, two library staff members will stay with that child for one-half hour. The police department will be called to pick up the child if no one comes for the child by the end of the half hour period.

An incident report will be completed by the library staff person.

IV. Other Situations Related to Unattended Children

A. Special Needs Children

The library advises parents or caregivers to accompany children of any age who have emotional, mental, or physical problems that make constant supervision necessary.

B. Disruptive Behavior

It is a parent's or caregiver's responsibility to ensure that a child of any age does not behave in a way that presents a safety hazard to himself, to other patrons, or to library property. Additionally, the child's behavior (loud talking, running, etc.) should not interfere with the use of the library by others. Library staff will seek the intervention and cooperation of a parent/ adult supervisor should a child exhibit such behavior. Library privileges may be suspended or revoked as a result of such behavior. Library staff will complete an incident report.

C. Emergency Procedures

In case of a medical emergency involving a child, emergency personnel will be notified first and then library staff will attempt to contact a parent or adult supervisor by available means.