

Policy on Children in the Library

The Drummond School & Community Library ("Library"), a public Library open to the general public, welcomes and encourages children to visit the Library, use its services, and attend programs. The Library staff strives to create a warm, inviting, fun environment for children. The Library offers many programs and services that encourage children to develop a love of books, reading, and learning. However, the safety and well-being of children at the Library is of serious concern. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children while they are in the Library and on Library property. The Library staff is committed to helping children with activities related to the Library. However, it is not the Library staff's responsibility to serve as baby-sitters, teachers, or disciplinarians. Children are expected to respect Library property and adhere to all Library rules. As it is for adults, violations of Library rules are grounds for suspension of library privileges. Whenever advisable, the Library will notify the parent of incidents involving an unattended or disruptive behavior of their child or children.

Unattended Children

Children of any age may not be left at the library for childcare or babysitting purposes.

Children age 6 or younger must be accompanied in the library by a parent/guardian/caregiver. Accompanied is defined as "within sight". It is strongly recommended that all children are accompanied by someone who can take responsibility should an emergency occur.

If a child age 6 or younger violates the Library rules, the child and the parent/guardian/caregiver will be informed of the rules. If inappropriate behavior continues, the family may be asked to leave the Library.

If a child age 6 or younger is found unattended, Library staff will attempt to locate the parent/guardian/caregiver in the Library and inform him/her of the rules. If the parent/guardian/caregiver cannot be found, law enforcement will be called for assistance to locate the child's parent/guardian/caregiver. Child Protective Services of the MT DPHHS may be called as well. Library staff may wait with such a younger child until law enforcement arrive.

Children age 7 and older may use the library on their own. However, parents are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their child or children. Children using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the Library. Responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned chaperone. Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they are unattended. Staff may need to contact authorities such as the police either to assist with the enforcement of discipline in the library or to ensure the safety of an unattended child.

Parents should not use the Library as an alternative to daycare. For safety's sake, parents should make sure that their children are sufficiently mature before allowing them to visit the Library by themselves. Parents should also realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior.

The Library is not responsible for the care and supervision of unaccompanied children prior to opening or after closing. The Library is also not responsible for children outside the building who await transportation or who are socializing. Adults responsible for unattended school-age children using the Library should be aware of the Library's hours and make arrangements to meet the children on time.

This is a particular concern in inclement weather and after dark. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, or the parent or responsible caregiver cannot be located, or if the Library is closing, library staff is authorized to call the police and may but are not required to stay with the child until the police arrive.

Teenagers are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

The Library will not be responsible for property that is left unattended in the Library.

Library staff will not provide transportation for children from the Library.

Disruptive Children

Disruptive Behavior is considered to be behavior that represents physical danger to the child or others, or behavior that interferes with other library users or staff. Disruptive behavior is behavior that is inappropriate in a library setting. Disruptive behavior that is unacceptable in the Library is at the discretion of the district/library employee includes, but is not limited to:

- Running, chasing, horseplay
- Screaming, shouting, yelling, loud laughing or other noise
- Eating or drinking
- Abusive or excessive uses of the courtesy phone for calls other than to parents or guardians.
- Abnormal, erratic behavior that hinders normal library use
- Continued or frequent loud talking in study areas
- Pushing, hitting, fighting, biting
- Throwing books or other objects
- Prolonged crying or temper tantrums
- Bullying or bothering other people
- Jumping on furniture
- Dangerous use of toys (pushing toys down the slide, ramming trucks, etc.

Library staff will approach disruptive children in the following manner:

Give a verbal warning to the child indicating that such behavior is disruptive to other library users and is unacceptable.

If the disruptive behavior continues, approach the parent or guardian with the same warning. If the child is unattended, give the child a second warning.

If the disruptive behavior continues, request the parent or guardian to escort the child from the Library premises. Unattended disruptive children, older than 7 years of age may be asked to leave the Library after one warning. In such instances, parents will be contacted or, if the parent is unavailable, law enforcement assistance will be utilized.

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