

HENDERSON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

SAFE CHILD POLICY

August 14, 2009

The Henderson County Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for visitors of all ages, especially children. The safety and welfare of children left alone in the library is a serious concern of the library. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children rests with the parent or caregiver and not with library personnel. Library employees cannot be responsible for the whereabouts and activities of children who are unattended or behaving inappropriately on library property. Neither the library nor its staff shall assume responsibility for keeping an unattended child within the library building nor shall they assume responsibility for the safety of a child once he or she leaves the library.

A child left unattended in the library in violation of this policy may be deemed to be at risk. In such situations, the library may contact local law enforcement and/or child protective authorities to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. Parents should carefully consider the age and maturity level of their children before leaving them alone in a public place. Children of any age with special needs related to mental, physical, or emotional ability must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver at all times.

The following guidelines will be followed concerning the care and behavior of children. All library users, including children, are expected to abide by the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*.

Children ages 5 and under must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver at all times. They must not be left unattended at any time. The assigned caregiver must be a responsible person and must carry emergency contact information.

- Library staff will attempt to find or contact the parent or caregiver if a child of this age is found unaccompanied at any time on library property.
- Library staff may notify the police and/or Child Protective Services in the following situations:
 - A child of this age is unaccompanied and the parent or caregiver cannot be found or contacted by phone.
 - The parent or caregiver habitually leaves a child of this age unaccompanied.

Children ages 6-12 may be unaccompanied for limited periods of time. Because children develop and mature at different rates, there is no definitive age at which all children are ready to cope with the variety of circumstances they may face alone in the library. Library staff will use their judgment and discretion in determining whether or not an unattended child has been left alone for too long and/or is vulnerable or at-risk.

- Library staff will attempt to find or contact the parent or caregiver in the following situations:

- A library staff member determines that an unaccompanied child of this age has been left alone for too long and may be a victim of neglect. Neglect means that the parent, guardian, or other person exercising custodial control does not provide the child with adequate care, supervision, food, clothing, shelter, education or medical care necessary for the child's well-being (KRS 600.020).
- An unaccompanied child of this age violates the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*.
- Library staff may notify the police and/or Child Protective Services in the following situations:
 - A staff member deems that a child of this age has been left alone for too long or may be a victim of neglect and the parent or caregiver cannot be found or contacted by phone.
 - The parent or caregiver habitually leaves a child of this age unaccompanied.
 - An unaccompanied child of this age habitually violates the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*.

Children ages 13-17 may be unaccompanied as long as they abide by the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*.

- Library staff will attempt to find or contact the parent or caregiver in the following situations:
 - A library staff member believes that an unaccompanied child of this age may a victim of neglect.
 - An unaccompanied child of this age violates the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*.
- Library staff may notify the police and/or Child Protective Services in the following situations:
 - An unaccompanied child of this age shows signs of neglect and the parent or caregiver cannot be found or contacted by phone.
 - The parent or caregiver habitually neglects an unaccompanied child of this age.
 - An unaccompanied child of this age habitually violates the *Appropriate Library Use Policy*.

Unattended children at closing time

Parents or caregivers who do not pick up unattended children when the library closes will be contacted if library staff members feel that the child should not be left outside alone due to age, maturity level, health, weather, etc. If a parent or caregiver does not arrive within a reasonable period of time, the police will be called to pick up the child.

Privacy statement

The library will respect the privacy of its customers and will intervene only when it believes the safety and/or well-being of a child is threatened.

In case of an emergency

The library will call 911 if an unattended child has a medical emergency. Emergency personnel will be informed that the child's parent or caregiver is not present.