

## **Hays Public Library Unattended Children Policy**

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The Hays Public Library encourages visits by children and is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. Responsibility for the behavior and well-being of children using the library rests with the parent/caregiver. Though they will always respond with care and concern, library staff members cannot assume responsibility for the supervision of children.

To help ensure the safety and security of children, parents/caregivers are required to supervise children age 8 and younger while at the library. Parents/caregivers must be in the library and easy to locate.

Older children able to maintain proper behavior may use the library unattended. However, some children between nine and eleven years of age may not be able to cope with being unattended. Therefore, it is *recommended* that children eleven and younger be accompanied by a parent/caregiver.

A caregiver must be a minimum of twelve years old and actively demonstrating responsibility for the child he/she is caring for.

If a child eight and younger is left without supervision at the library, the procedure is:

1. Help the child find the parent or guardian and inform them of the Hays Public Library Unattended Children Policy. Inform the Youth Services Librarian so the incident can be documented.
2. A second incidence will result in barring the parent's and/or guardian's card for 30 days from use of the library resources, such as borrowing materials, participating in programs, and use of computers. The Youth Services Librarian or Library Director will directly contact the child's parent and discuss the policy. The Youth Services Librarian will document the incident.
3. After a third incidence of unattended children from the same family, staff will call the Hays Police Department and turn the unattended child over to them. The Youth Services Librarian will document the incident.

### **Child Left Alone At Closing Time**

Staff should try to be aware of children who are left alone at closing time and use their best judgment in helping children at all times. Weather, time of year, proximity to other people, and vulnerability of the child may all require that staff stay and help the children locate a ride. This assistance does not mean the staff member is taking responsibility for the child.

A minimum of 2 staff should wait with children.

Ask the child to provide information about when and who is to pick him/her up from the library. Get a phone number. Help the child make a call for a ride home. If no answer, try again soon. Reassure the child that someone will be coming.

If staff can reach no one on the phone and no one comes to pick the child up after 20 minutes, the Hays Police Department (785-625-1011) will be called. An option, depending on the situation, is to walk the child to the police station to continue calling. You do not need to stay with the child at the police station.

Staff should call the Library Director at home and inform him of the incident. The following day write up notes on an incident form.

Under no circumstances, should staff drive the child home.