

Unattended Children in the Library

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.

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 they are caring for.

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

1. Staff will attempt to help the child find the parent or guardian and then inform them of the Hays Public Library Unattended Children Policy. If a child is left unattended for an extended period of time and a parent or guardian cannot be contacted, staff may contact the Hays Police Department. Staff will document the incident and inform the Public Services Manager.
2. 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 Public Services Manager will document the incident.

Child Left Alone at Closing Time

Minors that are alone at the library at closing time may be assisted by staff members in securing a safe way home. Weather, time of year, proximity to other people, age, and vulnerability of the minor may require that staff help the patron locate a ride. This assistance does not constitute the staff members taking responsibility for the minor. If needed, a minimum of 2 staff members will wait with the patron.

If no one can be reached on the phone and no one comes to pick the minor up within 20 minutes, the Hays Police Department (785-625-1011) will be called. Depending on the situation, staff may walk the minor to the police station to continue trying to contact someone. Staff will not stay with the child once at the police station. Under no circumstances will staff drive or escort a minor home who is not under their care.

The Library Director or Public Services Manager will be informed of the incident immediately, and an incident report will be completed detailing the steps taken.