



POLICY: Unattended Children

APPROVED/REVIEWED: : July 15, 2013 Re-approved: May 21, 2018; April 19, 2021

DURING LIBRARY HOURS

Children under the age of ten (10) must be accompanied by a parent or responsible caregiver (at least 14 years of age) at all times.

Guidelines for staff implementation:

1. If a staff member becomes aware of a child who appears to be under the age of ten alone in the library, the child's parent or caregiver should be paged and asked to stay with the child. A child is considered alone even if the parent or caregiver is in the library but far from the child (in a different section or on a different floor of the library).

2. If there is no response to two pages, the staff member should escort the child to the Children's Department, if the child is not already there. The Children's Department staff should attempt to contact a parent or caregiver.

a. If that person is expected within 30 minutes, staff should keep the child under observation until the parent or caregiver arrives. When the parent or caregivers arrives, staff should

- explain Library Policy about unattended children;
- say that no public place, including the Library, can guarantee the safety of a young child alone;
- tell the person that, if he or she had not come, West Chester police would have been called.

b. If the child does not know when the parent or caregiver will return but can give contact information, staff should try to reach the parent or caregiver.

- If successful, ask the person to come immediately for the child. If the person cannot come within 30 minutes, tell him or her that police will be called to pick up the child. (staff may use some discretion in determining if an extension of the 30 minute time limit is appropriate.)
- If not successful in reaching the parent or caregiver, notify other staff in building. Call West Chester police and inform them of situation. Notify other staff to be alert for the parent or caregiver looking for the child so that parent/caregiver can be properly directed.

c. If child cannot give contact information, call West Chester police as above.

3. If a staff member becomes concerned about the behavior or the vulnerability of an unaccompanied child ten years of age or older, *

- staff member observing the behavior should notify a second staff member, who will assess the situation together.
- if in their judgment the situation requires parental involvement, staff should follow the steps given above for contacting a parent or caregiver or, if necessary, calling police.

4. Like all other members of the public, unaccompanied children of any age, as well as children who are accompanied, must abide by the Library's Behavior Policy.



AT CLOSING TIME

Children under the age of 16 who are unattended or waiting for transportation when the Library closes will be monitored and assisted by staff until transportation or police responders arrive. Staff will not provide transportation to children under any circumstances.

Guidelines for Staff Implementation

If children under the age of 16 are waiting outside the Library entrance at closing, staff will monitor them from inside the Library while closing procedures are completed. After ten minutes staff will call West Chester police, report the situation, and wait until responders arrive.

1. At closing, staff will

- a. ask any unattended children if they are expecting a ride, when the ride is coming, and if they need to use the telephone;
- b. offer the use of a library telephone to any child.

2. If any children are still waiting outside the library entrance after 10 minutes and when staff are ready to leave, two staff members will wait with the children. At that time, staff will

- Ask the name/names of the child/children
- Inform them that, for their safety, the Library is calling West Chester police.
- Discourage, but do not physically prevent, children from leaving the area unless they are in imminent danger.*
- Post a notice at entrance stating that “Unattended Children are in the care of West Chester police responders, who may be reached at 610-696-2700.”
- If the ride arrives before the West Chester police responders, inform the driver that West Chester police has been called and give the driver a copy of this policy. Call West Chester police to say the emergency has been resolved.

3. An Incident Report will be completed then or in the morning.

*** Library staff may take action they deem appropriate and necessary to provide for the welfare and safety of an unattended child until a parent, caregiver or emergency responder arrives.**

If staff determines that a situation is life-threatening or that a crime has been committed, 911 should be called immediately.