

POLICY

Category: Access & Facilities

Number: E.06

Title: Children in the Library

Effective Date: February 13, 2021

Authorized By: Library Board of Trustees

Last Revision or Review: October 1, 2011; July 21, 2004, June 24, 1999

References: Wisconsin State Statute 43.52 (2); Cudahy Municipal Code Chapter 9.28

The Cudahy Family Library welcomes and encourages children of all ages to visit the Library and use its materials, programs and services. The Library Board and staff view service to the youth of our community as an important part of our mission. It is our goal to provide a fun and educational environment for our young patrons in the hope that the Library will be a significant and beneficial part of their lives.

At the same time, the Library is a large public space and the well-being and safety of children left alone or unattended is a serious concern for the Library Board and Staff. Library staff cannot monitor the behavior or whereabouts of each patron in the Library or on its grounds, including children, and there are occasions when the Children's Department is not staffed. The responsibility for the welfare and the behavior of children on Library property rests with parents, legal guardians, or responsible caregivers and not with the Library personnel. The Cudahy Family Library cannot assume responsibility for childcare or children's safety when they are unattended.

In order to provide for the general welfare of children and for the benefit of all people using the Library, and for the protection of library property, the following rules regarding the supervision of children are in effect:

- 1) Children four years or younger must stay in the immediate vicinity of, and in visual contact with, a parent or caregiver unless the child is participating in a Library program that does not require supervision. Children ages five through seven must be accompanied and adequately supervised by a parent or caregiver.

Caregivers must be over the age of twelve, even if the person is a sibling. During library programs, the parent or caregiver must remain in the Library and must return to the location of the program by the end of the session. If a preschool child is found unattended in the Library or on the Library's grounds, staff will attempt to locate the

parent or caregiver. If the parent or caregiver cannot be located in the building, the Cudahy Police Department will be contacted to pick up the child.

- 2) Children ages eight through seventeen may use the Library on their own except during regular school hours, subject to appropriate behavior.

Out of concern for safety, the Library staff may request age verification and schooling information from parents or caregivers of unattended students if they have questions for the enforcement of the rules. The Library must not be used 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 and should make sure their children have emergency contact information when they do visit.

Parents will be advised that if children misbehave and do not follow the Library's Code of Conduct, they will be subject to the same consequences as adult users, including being required to leave the library or losing library privileges. Parents should also realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior. (see Library Code of Conduct. E.01)

- 3) Children who depend on adults for transportation to return home must be picked up before the Library closes.

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 children on time. If a child is found unattended at closing, the Staff will offer assistance to the child. If attempts to contact the child's responsible adult fail, the Cudahy Police Department will be called for assistance.

- 4) Children of all ages who have special needs, disabilities, and/or problems must remain with an adult or responsible person at all times.
- 5) If a child or young adult becomes ill or injured and the parent or caregiver cannot be located or contacted, the Cudahy Fire Department or, if appropriate, 911 will be called.
- 6) If a child or young adult is suspected of being truant from school, the Cudahy Police Department will be called to investigate.

It is not the intention or practice of the Cudahy Family Library to seek out unattended children, but rather to have a reasoned response prepared if necessary. The Library respects the privacy of all patrons and will intervene only when, in the opinion of our Staff, the safety and well-being of a child or other patron is threatened.