

STOUGHTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY ~ Approved 1-16-19



I. Purpose

- A. Under the provisions of Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin State Statutes, specifically Section 43.52 (2), the Stoughton Public Library Board of Trustees may enact regulations that serve to ensure the safety of all who use the Library, especially children.
- B. The Stoughton Public Library encourages visits by children and their families, and it is our desire to make these visits both memorable and enjoyable. However, the Library is legally a public place in which literally anyone may be spending time, and most parents would not leave their children unattended in public places.
- C. Questions regarding the interpretation of these guidelines will be referred to the Library Director and/or the Library Board.

II. Definitions

- A. "Unattended children" refers to children age 5 or younger who are unaccompanied by or not in immediate proximity to a caregiver age 14 or older.
- B. "Parents" shall be interpreted to also include guardians, caregivers, and anyone else to whom parents have entrusted the care of their children. It is also the intent of the following statements to include both the singular and the plural.

III. Library Policy for Unattended Children

Library staff spend their time helping members of the public to use the Library and doing other assigned work. Thus outside of scheduled Library programs, staff are unable to provide adequate supervision for children.

For the safety of your children the Board of Trustees of the Stoughton Public Library has enacted the following policies and guidelines.

- A. The Stoughton Public Library welcomes families and children of all ages to the Library.
- B. The Library and Library staff cannot and will not assume any responsibility or liability for the care of unsupervised minor children in the library.
- C. Children who are age 5 or younger should not be left unattended in one part of the Library, even while their parents are in another part of the Library. Parents should always keep such children within sight, within earshot, or within close proximity.
- D. If Library staff have determined that a child is lost or inappropriately left unattended, a staff member shall bring the child to the Children's Librarian or other staff member in charge. The staff will then attempt to identify and locate the parent or designated caregiver. If a parent or designated caregiver cannot be found, then the child will be remanded to the care of the Stoughton Police Dept.

- E. Children age 6 and older may be left unattended for short periods of time while parents are in the Library at the discretion of the parents. However, even if the parents are in another part of the Library, the Stoughton Public Library assumes no responsibility or liability for the care or behavior of such children. If an unattended child over the age of 6 is violating library policies or exhibiting unsafe behavior, library staff will require parents to remain in sight of their child. If the caregiver cannot be located or refuses to stay within sight of their child, library staff will not hesitate, if parents cannot be located or contacted, to remand children to the care of the Stoughton Police Department.
- F. The Library requires that children be age 9 or older before being allowed to visit or remain in the Library unaccompanied by parents.
- G. Whether or not parents/guardians are present in the Library, they are responsible for their children's behavior while the children are in the library. This includes any children or teens of minor age who are in the Stoughton Public Library.
- H. Children of all ages are encouraged to use the library for homework, recreational reading and program attendance. The library staff realizes that the library will be noisier at busy times and that children by nature can cause more commotion. However, children (whether with parents or not) who are being continually disruptive will be given a single warning that they must settle down or will be asked to leave the library. If the child continues to be disruptive, he/she will be asked to leave the library. If the child needs to contact a parent, they may do so and then wait until the parents arrive.
- I. During Library programs, parents of children ages 6-8 are required to remain in the building but not necessarily in the meeting room with their children. Parents of children age 9 and older may leave the building during programs. Occasionally library staff may ask parents of older children (age 9 and older) to stay and participate, or parents of younger children (age 5 or younger) to leave the room so the children can create a surprise gift or skit. If staff experience behavior problems, staff may also request that parents remain in the room to assist.

Notes:

- *Children age 5 or younger – must be accompanied an adult/guardian/care giver*
- *Children ages 6, 7, or 8 – may be left alone if an adult/guardian/care giver is also in the building*
- *Children age 9 and older – may be in the building without an adult.*
- *Guardian/caregiver/adult for above must be age 14 or older.*

These ages were chosen based on the following:

- Librarians' experience
- Guidelines from various youth services classes and workshops
- Policies at other libraries.