

# Thomas Crane Public Library

## Safe Child Policy

### Policy Statement

The library seeks to create a welcoming environment for people of all ages, to encourage the use of its resources and services and to develop a lifelong love of reading. While library staff strives to create a safe and comfortable place for children, the library is a public building, and as such it can be a dangerous place for children alone. Library staff are not responsible for supervising children and cannot know if children are leaving the building with parents or with strangers. Young children unattended at closing time could be left alone just a few feet from a busy street. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for monitoring their children's safety, activities, and behavior while visiting the library. This Safe Child Policy has been established for the protection and well being of children using the library.

### Definitions

#### *Unattended Child*

An unattended child is any child aged nine or under using the library unaccompanied by a responsible adult such as a parent, guardian, teacher, other adult caregiver, or a responsible child aged 14 or older.

#### *Vulnerable Child*

A vulnerable child is any child aged 12 or under using the library unaccompanied by a responsible adult, whose safety or well being would be endangered if he or she were sent out of the library building.

#### *Teen*

A teen is any child aged 13 to 17 using the library accompanied or unaccompanied by an adult.

### Regulations

1. The children's areas within Library facilities are reserved for use by children, their caregivers, and adults interested in the children's collection. The teen areas are reserved for teens and those who accompany them. Patrons not included in these categories may be required to leave the children's or teen areas and instead use other areas of the Library.
2. Children aged four and under must always be closely supervised ("within sight") by a responsible adult or child aged 14 or older.
3. Children between the ages of five and nine must be directly supervised (in the same room or area of the library) by a responsible adult or child aged 14 or older.

Caregivers must remain in the building while a child is attending a library program.

4. Children aged ten and older left unattended must be mature enough to follow the library's Patron Behavior Policy. Consequences for violating this policy may include being asked to leave the library. As a general rule, if a parent or guardian feels a child is not mature enough to be left home alone without supervision, he or she is not mature enough to be left unattended in the library.
5. Library staff do not seek out unattended children, but if an unattended child or a child being supervised by a child aged 13 or under comes to the attention of staff, staff will attempt to locate the adult caregiver in the building or by telephone. When the caregiver is located, staff will explain and provide a written copy of the library's Safe Child Policy. If the caregiver cannot be located, staff will notify the police.
6. A child aged 12 or under unattended at closing time may be deemed vulnerable. Staff will attempt to locate the caregiver in the building or by telephone beginning at least a half hour before closing time. If the caregiver has not been located, or is not present at the library, by closing time, staff will notify the police. Two staff members will wait with the child until a caregiver or the police arrive. If the parent/guardian arrives before the police, staff will explain and provide a written copy of the library's Safe Child Policy. If the police arrive first and take responsibility for the child, staff will give police a written copy of the Safe Child Policy to provide to the parent/guardian.
7. Should the library close early due to unexpected circumstances such as inclement weather or a power outage, staff will attempt to locate the caregiver for any unattended or vulnerable child. If the caregiver cannot be located by closing time, staff will notify the police. Two staff members will wait with the child until a caregiver or the police arrive. If the parent/guardian arrives before the police, staff will explain and provide a written copy of the library's Safe Child Policy. If the police arrive first and take responsibility for the child, staff will give police a written copy of the Safe Child Policy to provide to the parent/guardian.
8. Library staff are not authorized to transport any child away from the library under any circumstances.
9. In case of a medical emergency involving an unattended or vulnerable child, the staff will call 911 for emergency assistance and then attempt to contact a parent/guardian, in that order.
10. If a parent/guardian repeatedly leaves a child unattended in the library, after being informed of the library's Safe Child Policy, staff will notify the police.
11. The library will have written copies of the Safe Child Policy available at all service desks and will provide copies of the policy to caregivers of unattended and vulnerable children.

*Adopted by vote of the Library Board of Trustees, October 18, 2004; Amended January 10, 2011, November 13, 2017*