

# Sunderland Public Library — Sunderland, MA

## Child Safety Policy

The Sunderland Public Library strives to provide a welcoming facility and inviting resources to attract children and encourage them to become lifelong library users. The safety and well-being of children in the library are the responsibility of their parents or guardians. Library staff do their best to create a safe environment for children.

The intention of this policy is to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Sunderland Public Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

Young children left alone at the library for an extended period of time can be vulnerable and at risk. If they wander through the building, they may encounter hazards such as doors, furniture or electrical equipment. Left on their own, young children are not safe from abduction and/or inappropriate attention from strangers. Young children may also become frightened, anxious, bored or restless, and could disturb the enjoyment of other library users.

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. **The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library personnel.** For the protection of children and the well-being of other library users, the following policy has been established:

- Parents/guardians may not leave children under the age of 10 unattended in the library.
- Children under 10 must be attended by a person 14 years of age or older.
- **EXCEPTION:** Children under age 10 may attend a supervised library program without a caregiver as long as the parent/guardian or caregiver remains in the library and immediately joins the child when the program is over.
- Children aged 10 and over may be left unsupervised as long as they are able to make appropriate use of the library and are not engaged in disruptive behavior.

### STAFF PROCEDURE:

If an unattended child is found in the library, an attempt to locate the parent/guardian will be made. The parent/guardian will be alerted to the library's *Child Safety Policy*.

If the parent/guardian cannot be located or does not pick up their child within 15 minutes of being contacted, the police will be called to take custody of the unattended child.

If a child of any age proves unable to abide by library rules when left unsupervised, a parent/guardian or caregiver will be required to accompany and supervise the child at all times.

The Sunderland Public Library assumes no responsibility for children of any age left unsupervised at the library.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Appropriate library use:** Reading, browsing for library materials, thinking, daydreaming, conversing quietly, attending programs, using the computers, doing homework, researching, writing or volunteering.

**Disruptive behavior:** Behavior that represents physical danger to the child and others, or may serve to interfere with legitimate library business by other patrons or staff. Disruptive/ inappropriate behavior includes but is not limited to fighting, running, pushing, shoving throwing things, verbally or physically threatening or harassing other patrons, volunteers or staff, including stalking, staring and lurking. Shouting, profane, threatening or obscene language and other loud or disruptive behaviors are also prohibited. Library staff have the sole discretion to determine what constitutes a danger or interference with library business. Library staff will take into consideration the unique developmental needs of each patron when making such a determination.

**Unattended child:** A child under the age of 10 left in the library unaccompanied by a parent/guardian or an appropriate caregiver (must be at least 14 years of age).