



## **SAFE CHILD POLICY**

### **POLICY #2018-10**

The safety of all patrons is of foremost concern to the Neuse Regional Libraries (NRL). This is particularly true of the children who make use of our facilities and services. The library staff wants the children who use our libraries to feel welcome and secure. NRL locations provide many programs and services for children that help them be successful students and independent learners. Each location has collections, computers, and staff to serve children and families.

Children should not be left unattended in any public area, including the library. Parents or guardians are responsible for the safety and behavior of their children when they use the NRL. Library staff do not provide direct supervision for individual children who visit the NRL unaccompanied by an adult. Consequently, for the protection and well-being of children who use the library, the Neuse Regional Libraries have developed the following policy.

#### **Statement of Policy**

The Neuse Regional Libraries encourage children to use its facilities and services. However, the safety and behavior of the child in the library lies solely with the parent, guardian, or assigned chaperone of that child, and not with library staff.

Teachers are responsible for the conduct of their students while they are in the library for a class visit or tour. Likewise, group facilitators and camp counselors are responsible for the conduct of their participants while they are in the library for a group visit or program.

Children must abide by the Code of Conduct policy of the Neuse Regional Libraries.

#### **Definitions**

*Unattended Child:* A child under the age of twelve, who is left at the library without supervision by a parent, guardian, or assigned chaperone for extended periods of time, or is not picked up from the library at closing time.

*Disruptive Behavior:* Inappropriate conduct that interferes with the work of other patrons or library staff. Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to, loud, abusive, or inappropriate language, running, fighting, inappropriate use of library materials, or any criminal behavior. (See Code of Conduct of the Neuse Regional Libraries.)

*Chaperone:* A person aged sixteen or older who is responsible for the supervision of a young child who is using the library.

## **A. Unattended Children**

1. Children who are disruptive will be warned to stop the behavior or risk being asked to leave the library.
2. Unattended children should be assisted in finding their parent or chaperone. Library staff should remind the parent or chaperone of library rules and ask that they ensure their child follows them.
3. If the parent or chaperone does not supervise the child, or if the child is disruptive, he or she and the child will be asked to leave the library.
4. If the child is unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the child's parent or guardian by phone. If located, the parent will be asked to come to the library immediately and supervise the child. If the parent is not located or cannot come to the library, the police will be called to take responsibility for the child.
5. Arrangements should be made to pick up all children under the age of 16 before library closing time. If a child has not been picked up by closing time, a Department Supervisor and at least one other staff member at the Headquarters Library or branch staff at other facilities will remain with the child and attempt to contact the parent or guardian. If contact cannot be made within 15 minutes after closing time, library staff will contact the police, and the child will be placed in their custody. Library staff may not provide transportation for any child left after closing.
6. An incident report should be filed if the police are notified.
7. Library staff may not, under any circumstances, physically remove the child from the building or transport the child from the library.

## **B. Truancy and School Suspensions**

Children between the ages of seven and sixteen who do not have an excused absence from school (including public, private, remote, or home school) during times when school is in session are considered truant. Children who are currently suspended from school may not be at the Library unattended during school hours.

The following procedures have been established for handling these situations.

1. Staff should try to contact the parent of an unattended child (see above).
2. If staff is unable to contact an unattended child's parent and the child, who is aged seven to sixteen, is at the library during regular school hours and is suspected to be truant, staff should provide name and contact information (if available) to the Director of Libraries, Assistant Director, or Youth Services Supervisor, who will share the information with the appropriate school officials.
3. An incident report should be completed.

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