

UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY

The Boone County Public Library (BCPL) welcomes children of all ages and staff strive to provide a safe and appropriate environment for all library users. Libraries are public places; however, and may become unsafe for a child who is left unattended. Library facilities are not designed or licensed to provide childcare and should not be used for this purpose. A child left alone at the library may become bored or frightened, which may lead to behavior that disrupts library services. It is not the library's purpose to seek out unattended children, but rather to have guidelines in place when a problem occurs. BCPL encourages parents to consider the safety and well-being of their children, as well as the needs of other library users.

Children age **five and younger** must be in close proximity and within sight of the adult accompanying them. Children age **nine and younger** must be supervised by a responsible caregiver in the same service area, unless they are participating in a library program. Responsible caregivers (age thirteen and older) must be able to effectively supervise young children and be willing and able to provide contact information for a parent or guardian upon request. Caregivers using computers are still responsible for the behavior of the child accompanying them and should remain aware of where their children are and what they are doing. If a parent/guardian cannot be located, staff will call the police to pick up the child.

Children age **ten and older** are free to use the library's resources unattended provided that their behavior is not disruptive and they are mature enough to follow library rules; otherwise they should be supervised by a responsible caregiver. Parents/Guardians are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their children. Children using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. If a child in this age group is not able to leave the library unaccompanied by an adult, he/she should not be in the library alone.

Children of any age with mental, physical or emotional disabilities which affect decision-making skills or render supervision necessary must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver at all times.

If a situation arises that jeopardizes the safety or welfare of an unattended child, library staff may take action they deem appropriate and necessary to provide for the welfare and safety of that child. This action may include any or all of the following:

- Locate the parent or caregiver in the Library

- Attempt to contact a caregiver who is not in the Library to come and pick up the child.
- Call the local police to pick up the child if the caregiver cannot be located.
- Encourage an unattended child to contact the caregiver if it is within 20 minutes of closing time.
- Library staff may not transport any child from the Library to another location.

Ultimately, library staff will use their own discretion and judgement in each individual circumstance as to how to best apply the aforementioned policy.