
Unattended Children Policy

The Merrimack Public Library welcomes children of all ages to use and enjoy the facilities, collections and events offered by the library. The library staff attempts to provide a safe environment for children to select books and other materials and to attend library activities and events. However, young children are not safe when left unattended in the library. The staff cannot know if children are leaving the building with their parents or with strangers. For the safety of minor children and the enjoyment of all patrons using the library we have developed a specific policy regarding unattended children.

1. Children under the age of eleven may not be left unattended at the library. A child is unattended if he/she is in the library without a parent or responsible individual over the age of fifteen in the same vicinity. This includes children participating in library activities or events; a parent or other responsible individual over the age of fifteen must remain in the library or at the site of the event, during the event.
2. At the discretion of a responsible adult, a child age eleven to fourteen may be left unattended for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, read, or attend an event. The child must know how to reach the adult in case the need should arise. Children should not be left for longer than two hours unless the event goes longer; the library does not provide child care services.
3. Parents are responsible for the behavior of minor children at all times, even if they are not in the library with the child. Library staff does not serve *in loco parentis*, in place of the parent. If a child's behavior is inappropriate for the library, and he/she does not respond to appropriate guidance from library staff, the parent will be contacted to remove the child from the library. If the parent cannot be reached and the child's behavior is deemed dangerous or unduly disruptive, the Merrimack Police Department may be called.
4. If a child is left at the library without a way home one half hour prior to closing time, library staff may call the child's home or parents' place of business using information provided by the child, the patron database, or the telephone directory. If contacted, the parent will be told that their child must be picked up immediately. If the parent cannot be located or if a parent has not picked up the child within one half hour, the library staff may contact the Merrimack Police Department.
5. Under no circumstances will a staff member give a child a ride home. When necessary, two adults will wait with a child to be picked up by parents or police, which may include approved volunteers or event chaperones.
6. The Merrimack Public Library and its staff do not assume responsibility for any child left unattended in the library.
7. All library patrons are subject to the "Patron Code of Conduct Policy" concerning disruptive behavior.
8. As used in this policy, the term "parent" may include legal guardians or other persons having custody or control of a minor.