

Safe Child Policy & Procedures

The Cherry Hill Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow the library's Patron Code of Conduct established by the Library Board of Trustees and posted throughout the library building and on the library website. While children of all ages are welcome and encouraged to use the Library's materials, programs and services, parents and caregivers must be aware that the Library is an open, public building and the well-being and safety of young children left alone or unsupervised is a serious concern. It is for the safety of each child that the Library has adopted the Safe Child Policy.

An unattended child may be defined as a child unable to care for himself/herself when left in the Library without a parent or responsible adult within sight or sound range, any child left unattended for long periods of time, or any child not picked up at closing time. **The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the Library always rest with the parent or caregiver and not with the Library staff.**

Policy

Children under the age of 7 must have an actively engaged parent or responsible adult (age 18 or older) in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. If a child in this age group is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the rules. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child is found unattended again, the police will be called for assistance.

Children between the ages of 7-9 may use the library independently, however a parent or responsible adult (age 18 or older) must be in the library building at the same time and must be easily accessible by child and the library staff. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found in the building, the police will be called for assistance.

Children age 10 and older may use the library on their own, however, parents are still responsible for the actions and well-being of their child(ren). In accordance with CHPL's Code of Conduct, all patrons, including children, using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. All unaccompanied children at the library should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. Parents/caregivers are responsible for being aware of the library's hours of operation if leaving their child unaccompanied at the Library.

Procedures

If the Library is closing due to inclement weather or other emergency, and an unattended child is left at the Library without transportation home, the Library staff will allow the child to call for a ride home using a library phone. At all regular or early closings, if a child is unable to contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver, the Cherry Hill Township Police will be contacted and the child will be placed in their care. Library staff will remain no longer than 15 minutes after closing.

If a child is found without a parent or caregiver during library hours, the following procedures will be followed:

1. Staff will try to locate the parent or caregiver in the Library and provide a Safe Child Policy to the parent or caregiver.

2. Staff will encourage an unattended child to contact the parent/caregiver if it is within 15 minutes of closing time.
3. Staff will call the Cherry Hill Township Police to pick up the child if the parent/caregiver cannot be located within the library or via phone. Staff will notify the Director and Library Services Manager of the situation when police are called.
4. Two library staff members will remain with the child until the parent/caregiver or police arrive.
5. A sign will be left on the Library door stating "Unattended child is in the custody of the Cherry Hill Township Police, 820 Mercer Street, 856-665-1200," once the child is in the care of the police. The child's identity will not be stated on the sign.
6. Under no circumstances will Library staff provide transportation to stranded children or other patrons.

VIOLATION OF THE SAFE CHILD POLICY MAY RESULT IN SUSPENSION OF LIBRARY PRIVILEGES FOR THE FAMILY.

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