

Child Safety Policy

Policy:

The Child Safety Policy supports the goal of the Alameda County Library to provide a safe and positive experience for every child and caregiver who visits a Library. As the Library neither supervises children nor acts *in loco parentis*, these Child Safety Policy guidelines help staff navigate occasions in which children in the library lack supervision. They provide guidance for the following conditions: unattended children, safety emergencies, and children left at the library after or at closing.

Reason for Policy:

Children who are unattended may become frightened or disruptive, creating a danger to themselves or others. Parents, guardians, and designated caregivers are responsible for the safety and well-being of their children.

Definition of Terms:

Designated Caregivers: For the purpose of the below guidelines, a *Designated Caregiver* is defined as someone 16 or older who has been assigned the responsibility to supervise a child aged eight or younger. Neither Library staff nor its volunteers act as children's designated caregivers.

Guidelines:

Unattended Children:

During open hours, it is the responsibility of a parent, legal guardian, or designated caregiver aged sixteen or over to supervise a child who is aged eight or younger. Young children, especially those who are unable to communicate their first and last names, their phone number, and the name of the person with whom they came to the library, must always be visible to the caregiver who brought them.

Library staff cannot care for, watch, or assume responsibility for a child left unattended at the Library. Children are expected to observe the behavioral guidelines as set forth in the Library's Behavior Policy while in the library. Children who are left unattended may disrupt the Library experience for others. Members, including minors, may be asked to leave the Library for the day when they disrupt library service for others, contribute to unsafe conditions, or inhibit the ability for Library staff to perform their duties.

For safety reasons, when a disruptive child aged eight or younger is unsupervised, Library staff will attempt to contact a parent, legal guardian or designated caregiver and will make an effort to stay with the child while doing so, rather than simply asking the young child to leave the library. If no parent, legal guardian or designated caregiver is reached within a reasonable amount of time, staff may call local police or child protective services.

Emergencies:

In emergency cases when a parent, legal guardian or other designated caregiver cannot be reached, library staff may contact local police or emergency services. Examples of this are:

- A child who is ill
- A child who is a danger to themselves or others

- A child who is being threatened

Unattended Minors at closing:

Minors who are left at a library at closing are not the responsibility of library staff. Staff will attempt to call a child's parent, legal guardian, or caregiver if possible, and will wait with another staff member for fifteen minutes after closing the Library to reach the child's caregiver. If a parent, legal guardian or caregiver has neither retrieved the child nor been reached by staff, library staff will contact local police to request that they assume responsibility and retrieve the child.