

## OTTAWA LIBRARY POLICY OF UNATTENDED MINORS

The Ottawa Library welcomes children of all ages. The library is a public building, and the safety of every child is a serious concern of the library staff and administration. A child left alone could become frightened, ill, or be tempted to go off with a stranger. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library and on library property **rests with the parent or caregiver and not with library personnel**. Library staff has many duties to perform and cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior.

- Children under the age of nine must at all times be in the immediate vicinity of and supervised by a parent, adult guardian, or responsible caregiver. A parent or guardian must accompany children under the age of nine attending a library program. Children nine years of age and older may use the library on their own; however, parents are still responsible for the actions of their children.
- “Supervised” means that a parent, adult guardian, or responsible caregiver is attentive to the child and not distracted by the Internet, Word Processor, or their own library activity.
- A “responsible caregiver” is defined as a person **age fourteen or older** who is attentive to the child and not distracted by the Internet, Word Processor, or their own library activity.
- If a child is identified as unattended, the staff will attempt to reach the parent or guardian by telephone, explain the library guidelines, and ask them to pick up their child. If a parent is unavailable, the staff will contact the police and a copy of this policy will be mailed to the parent. When a parent is in another part of the library, staff will locate the parent, explain the policy, and ask them to return to the child.
- All library visitors are expected to treat staff and other patrons with consideration, and to respect library property. Destructive or unruly behavior or verbal abuse will not be tolerated.
- Patrons displaying disruptive behavior or violating any of the rules of the Library will be given a warning and told that, if the behavior continues, they must leave. If a child under 16 is told to leave, the parent will be contacted. If the child is not able to contact a parent or guardian, the child will be considered “unattended” regardless of his/her age, and the police will be contacted.

- Patrons 16 or older who are displaying disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the library for the day. If a child is asked to leave the library for longer than a day, a copy of the incident report and this policy will be mailed to the parent.
- When extenuating circumstances exist, such as inclement weather or darkness, a parent will be contacted to pick up the child. All children should have the telephone number of someone whom they can reach in an emergency.
- If a child, at any age, is unaccompanied in the library fifteen minutes before closing time, staff may assist the child in calling home to arrange for transportation. Staff will make every reasonable effort to contact a parent or guardian, and attempt to have the child picked up within a reasonable time. If no contact is made with the parent or guardian, and staff believes that further contact will not be successful, then staff will contact the police or other social agency. Two staff members will remain with the child until he/she is picked up. Under no circumstances will a library staff member transport a child home.