

A. PURPOSE

This policy is established to address Elkhart Public Library's concern for the welfare and safety of children when they are left unattended in the Library.

B. POLICY**1. Patron Responsibility**

- a. Parents and guardians are responsible for the safety and conduct of their children under age 18 in the Library, on library property, and at offsite library events, whether or not they accompany the child. The Library and Library staff are not responsible for supervising children using the Library and its services, and assume no responsibility for the supervision of children in the Library/participating in library events. For example, the Library and Library staff are not responsible for monitoring the behavior of children while using the Library and its services, or supervising the materials and publications children may access in the Library. Such supervision is the responsibility of parents, guardians and caregivers.
- b. Children seven (7) years old or younger must be accompanied and actively supervised by a caregiver who is at least thirteen (13) years of age.
- c. Children eight (8) to ten (10) years of age must have a caregiver who is at least thirteen (13) years of age in the building or at an offsite/outside library event at all times.
- d. If Library staff become aware that an unsupervised or inappropriately supervised child is in the Library, on library property, or at an offsite library event, staff will make every effort to contact a parent or guardian to accompany/pick up the child. If after 30 minutes a parent or guardian cannot be contacted and the child remains in the Library, on library property or at an offsite library event, library staff will call local law enforcement authorities who will be given custody of the child. (Library staff who have reason to believe a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect (e.g., physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect) are to make an immediate report by calling Indiana's Abuse and Neglect Hotline, in accordance with the Library's Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting Policy.)

2. Closing Time

- a. Unattended children under 16 years of age in the Library 10 minutes before closing time may be asked to contact a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver to pick them up.
- b. If a child under the age of 16 remains in the Library at closing time, staff will call the local law enforcement authorities, who will be given custody of the child.
 - (1) Downtown: Upon determining an unattended child situation exists at closing time, staff will immediately inform the Professional-In-Charge (PIC), who will provide any assistance needed. If the PIC is not available, staff may contact another manager,

the Health and Safety Coordinator, an Assistant Director, or the Director for assistance.

(2) Branches: If assistance is needed during the incident, staff may call (in the order listed) the Branch Supervisor, the Assistant Director of Branch and Technical Services, the Health and Safety Coordinator, or the Assistant Director of Public Services.

- c. At least two staff members will remain in the Library if a minor child remains in the building after closing.
- d. Under no circumstances will staff transport a minor in their own vehicle or in a library vehicle. Exceptions may be made for EPL security personnel who are also employed as law enforcement officers.

3. Waiting for Local Law Enforcement to Arrive

- a. If a caregiver arrives to pick up the child before a law enforcement officer arrives, staff will update the authorities on the situation.
- b. If a child leaves the Library alone while waiting for a law enforcement officer to arrive after closing time, staff will notify the authorities that the child has left the Library alone and will provide identifying details, direction of travel (if known), and any other information that may help the officer locate the child.

4. Follow-Up

- a. Downtown: After the situation has been resolved, staff will send a brief description of the facts and action taken to the Health and Safety Coordinator and the Assistant Director of Public Services.
- b. Branches: After the situation has been resolved, staff will send a brief description of the facts and action taken to the Branch Supervisor, the Health and Safety Coordinator, and the Assistant Director of Branch and Technical Services.
- c. Non-exempt staff members who remain in the building past closing due to unattended children will be compensated for their time. If possible, the remaining week's scheduled hours will be reduced by the amount of extra time they spent handling the matter. If this is not possible, staff will be compensated in overtime pay.
- d. Exempt staff members who remain in the building past closing due to unattended children *may* adjust their schedule accordingly during the same week, depending on workload and coverage needs in their departments.

C. ADOPTED

- 1. Adopted by Elkhart Public Library Board of Trustees: June 21, 2022
- 2. Supersedes Unattended Children Policy adopted June 17, 2014
- 3. Supersedes Unattended Children Policy adopted July 16, 2008