The Ramsey Free Public Library Safe Child Policy

The Ramsey Free Public Library desires to provide a comfortable, safe and welcoming environment for children of all ages. The library, as a public building, has staff trained to provide public library services, including programs and resources offered to make the library enticing to children and to help children develop a love of reading, get access to educational resources, and have a safe and welcoming environment. The staff urges parents to remember that the library staff is not equipped to provide childcare and it is not in any child's best interest to be left unattended. It is not the library's intention to seek out unattended children, but rather to have a reasoned response prepared when a problem presents itself. The library has implemented the following policy for the safety of all children visiting the library.

Policy Parameters

- A parent or responsible caregiver (ages 13 or over) must accompany children under the age of 10 years old for their safety and comfort while using the library. The parent or caregiver must remain with the child at all times while at the library.
- 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.
- Parents/caregivers are responsible for being aware of the Library’s hours of operation if leaving their child unaccompanied at the library. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for the care, safety or well-being of children in the library or on library grounds.
- Children, like all library patrons, are expected to behave appropriately and must adhere to the library’s Code of Conduct.
- Children, or persons of any age, should not play, run or otherwise act in an unsafe manner in the library’s parking lot area. As with all behavior, inappropriate use of the parking lot area is the responsibility of parents/caregivers.
- Staff will not physically prevent a child from leaving the Library, assume responsibility for a child, accompany or transport an unrelated child off Library premises.
- If the Ramsey Schools close because of inclement weather, children should not be sent to the library as the library may also close in situations of inclement weather.
- Programs – During story times or other programs, adults who do not attend the program with the child MUST remain in the building and must be visible when their child returns from the program.
- Violation of the Safe Child Policy may result in suspension of Library privileges for the family.
Unattended Children under 10 Years Old:
Children under the age of 10 years old may not be left unattended in any part of the library without a parent or responsible caregiver. If children under the age of 10 are found without a parent or responsible caregiver, library staff will attempt to locate the parent or responsible caregiver. If the library staff is unable to locate the parent or responsible caregiver within a reasonable time, the Ramsey Police Department will be contacted to pick up the child. Library staff may also contact the Department of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) in the event that a child under the age of 10 is left unattended in the Ramsey Free Public Library; or if a parent/guardian fails to supervise the child directly; for example leaving the child alone in the Children’s Department.

The Library Director will send a follow-up letter to the parent(s) documenting any incident where a child is left alone, not picked up on time or where the child created a problem and Library staff could not reach a parent or guardian.

Children are subject to the same Patron Code of Conduct as other patrons and are subject to the same consequences, including being asked to leave the Library. Library staff will notify the parent of the child’s inappropriate behavior.

Unattended Children 10 Years Old or Older.
The above procedure will also be applied in the following situations involving unattended children 10 years old or older:

- If unattended child is found frightened or crying in the library
- If unattended child is perceived to be endangering him or herself, or that another person in the library poses a perceived threat to the unattended child.
- If unattended child exhibits inappropriate behavior or violates the library’s Code of Conduct
- If unattended child has not been met by a parent or responsible caregiver at closing time

If a problem arises with an unattended child at the library, after evaluating the situation, the library staff will attempt to contact the parent or responsible caregiver of any unattended child. In the event that a parent or responsible caregiver cannot be reached, the unattended child will be placed in the care of the Ramsey Police Department.

If a parent or responsible caregiver does not arrive to pick up an unattended child within 15 minutes after closing time of the library, the library staff will call the Ramsey Police Department and turn the child over to them.

NJSA 9:6-8.21 prohibits parents from endangering the welfare of children.

NJSA 30:5B-I-I 5 prohibits the library from functioning as a childcare center unless licensed by the State of New Jersey.

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Ramsey Library Board of Trustees at a regular meeting on April 8th, 2019.