

UNATTENDED CHILD POLICY

The Hamburg Public Library encourages children of all ages to visit the library and hopes they will find it a warm, inviting place to be. It is important to the library staff and board of directors that children are encouraged to develop an interest in reading and learning through the programs and resources that are offered. As a public institution, the library must provide open access to all members of the community, however, the safety of the patrons and staff must be given due consideration. The library will make every effort for children to use the library without disrupting service to others. To make this happen, it is necessary that parents, guardians, and caregivers be responsible for the safety, behavior, and supervision of their children at all times in the library and on library property.

Library staff has many duties to perform in order to serve our patrons. Library staff is not expected to assume responsibility for the care of unattended children in the library. 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. For the protection and wellbeing of children who visit our library, the following policy has been established.

Definition

An unattended child is defined as any child under the age of 17 using the public library and facilities unaccompanied by a parent or responsible caregiver.

Children under age 9 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or caregiver age 13 or older at all times and in all areas of the Library and its property except when participating in a library sponsored program, such as story time or the summer reading program.

Children ages 9-12 are welcome to use the library unattended if they are observed by library staff to be using the library appropriately, but are not to be left alone in the library for longer than 2 hours. Appropriate library use includes but is not limited to:

- Looking at or reading magazines or books
- Quietly using computers
- Working on schoolwork or other projects
- Participating in library programs or activities

If problems arise, they may be asked to leave or parents may be contacted. The child must have the telephone numbers of their parent, guardian, or other designated adult so that a responsible person may be contacted to come and pick up the unattended child in case of a health emergency, prohibited behavior or an unexpected emergency closing of the library.

Children ages 13-16 are old enough to use the library responsibly by themselves and are welcome to use the library unattended if they are observed by library staff to be using the library appropriately as listed above. If problems arise, they may be asked to leave or parents may be contacted. The child must have the telephone numbers of their parent, guardian, or other designated adult so that a responsible person may be contacted to come and pick up the

unattended child in case of a health emergency, prohibited behavior or an unexpected emergency closing of the library.

If a child in this age group is acting as a caregiver, s/he is to keep the younger child in sight at all times. If the younger child is misbehaving and/or engaging in prohibited behavior, both children may be asked to leave immediately.

Parents, guardians, and other caregivers should be aware of library opening and closing times and make suitable arrangements to meet and/or transport their children. Library staff will exercise appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of unattended children 12 years of age and younger when the library is closing. Any unattended children will be alerted before closing time (about fifteen minutes) to contact their parent and/or ride so they will be picked up at or before closing time. If, upon closing, unattended children remain in the library, library staff will verify that the child has contacted their parent or ride.

Staff will not transport children home or to any other destination under any circumstances.

Prohibited behavior. If an unattended child engages in prohibited behavior, the child will be asked to correct this behavior. If the prohibited behavior persists, library staff may, at their discretion, contact the parent/guardian/designated adult, or direct that the child leave the library. In addition, the library reserves the right to summon the police in order to preserve the library's operations and/or protect the interests of the child.

Everyone who uses the library will be subject to the Prohibited Behavior Policy.

Violation of the unattended child policy constitutes grounds for suspension of library privileges for the family.

Approved by the Hamburg Public Library Board of Trustees March 1, 2004