

Unattended Children Policy for the Lake Wales Public Library

The Lake Wales Public Library welcomes youth of all ages in accordance with the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights. The library, although a fun and entertaining place to be, is a busy public facility, and public places may present hazards for unsupervised children. The safety of all children left alone in the library is a serious matter. Young children left on their own often become frightened or anxious. In libraries, as in all public places, "stranger danger" is a real concern. Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving the library with persons who are not appropriate caregivers.

We encourage families and youth to use our library and, while doing so, also affirm parents' responsibility for their child's safety and behavior. Children, like all library patrons, are expected to behave appropriately. Parents and caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior and supervision of their children in the library.

For the protection and well-being of children who enjoy our library and to prevent undue disruption of normal library activities, the following rules have been adopted by the Lake Wales Public Library.

★ **A child, age 5 or older, may be left unattended in the library for a period of one hour. All unattended children, age 5 to 12, must remain in the children's room during this one hour period.**

★ **No child under the age of 5 may be left in the library unattended or under the supervision of a person under 16 years of age.**

★ **The parent or legal guardian of a child age 5 to 12 must sign the child in with youth services staff prior to leaving the child one-hour unattended. A contact telephone or cell phone number must be left on the sign in sheet. **NOTE: We ask that the parent or legal guardian NOT leave the building after signing the child into the room.**

★ **Children, age 5 and older, who come to the library unattended, (i.e.: walkers, bike riders or drop offs), are allowed to remain in the children's room for one hour. They must sign in at the children's library circulation desk. They must provide an emergency contact name and phone number. Acceptable emergency information includes a parent's name, work telephone number, cellular phone number, parent or guardian's place of employment or home address. Unaccompanied, unattended children must remain in the children's room during their one hour visit. These children will be provided with rules and policies to deliver to their parents, or parents will receive this information via mail. No child younger than age 5 may be left at the library unattended or under the supervision of a person under 16 years of age. (i.e. Please do not send your 3 year old child to the library with your 13 year old child).**

★ **All children, whether unattended or accompanied by an adult, are expected to behave in a manner which is not disruptive to other library users or interfere with staff members duties**

★ **If an unattended child is disruptive a parent or legal guardian designated by the parent will be contacted to remove the child from the library.**

★ **It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to make themselves aware of the Lake Wales Public Library's hours of operation.**

We thank you in advance for your cooperation with this policy.