Unattended Children/Adults in Need Policy

Peabody Institute Library of Danvers

General: The Peabody Institute Library strives to provide a safe, comfortable environment for users of all ages. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of unattended children and adults in need in our facilities.

Parents or guardians are responsible for the conduct of minor children (under 18 years of age) in the Library or on Library grounds, regardless of whether they are in accompany of their children or not. All library users, regardless of age, must conduct themselves lawfully, follow the library’s Guidelines for Patron Behavior use policies and be considerate of others.

Library employees are not licensed care providers and cannot take the place of parents or guardians. Furthermore, library duties do not allow staff to actively monitor facilities or grounds beyond their work stations. Please remember that the library is a public place. The library staff does not know whether the person a child or adult in need is interacting with, or leaving the library with, is an appropriate chaperone or a stranger. As in all public places, “stranger danger” is a real concern.

Definitions:

* Unattended Child: Any child under the age of 18 on Library premises unaccompanied by a parent, guardian or caregiver.

* Adult in Need: A person 18 years of age or older who, due to physical or developmental challenges, is incapable of adequately caring for himself or herself and his or her interests.

1. Unattended Children: Parents/guardians are responsible for the behavior and safety of any child under the age of 18 in the Library.

   a. Children under the age of 8 must have a parent or caregiver within sight or conversation distance unless the child is participating in a formal library program. If the child is participating in a formal library program, a parent or caregiver must remain in the building and should join the child immediately when the program is completed. The caregiver must be at least 12 years of age.

   b. Children ages 8 – 11 may use the Library unattended for an amount of time appropriate to their age and level of maturity. Library staff will take note of disruptive behavior caused by children who are apparently unattended. Library staff will inform children behaving disruptively or inappropriately of the rules. If the disruptive or inappropriate behavior continues, the child will be asked to leave the Library. If a child in this age group is unaccompanied by an adult or appropriate-aged caregiver, the staff will follow the directions in Paragraph 3. (below) for children found on Library premises without a parent or caregiver. Library staff may not take responsibility for the care of any child regardless of age.
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2. Adults in Need: Guardians/caregivers are responsible for the behavior and safety of any adult(s) in need in the Library. As with unattended children, library staff may not take responsibility for the care of any adult in need.

3. If a child under the age of 8, or an adult in need in apparent distress, is found in the Library without a parent or caregiver, Library staff will:

a. Notify the Librarian in Charge of the situation.

b. Attempt to verbally comfort the individual, if necessary. Do not lay hands on or touch them.

c. Locate the parent/guardian or caregiver in the Library and explain the Unattended Child/Adult in Need Policy.

d. Attempt to contact the parent/guardian or caregiver who is not in the Library and ask him or her to come to the library and pick up the child or adult in need. Staff will express the Library’s concern for the individual’s safety and explain the Unattended Child/Adult in Need Policy.

e. Should attempts to contact the parent/guardian of the unattended child/adult in need prove unsuccessful, call the Danvers Police Department, which will assist in the successful resolution of the situation.

f. Encourage an unattended child/adult in need to contact the parent/guardian or caregiver if it is within 15 minutes of closing time or in the case of an emergency closure of the facility due to inclement weather, utility failure or other qualifying condition. If a parent/guardian or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive by closing time, Library staff will call the Danvers Police Department, which will assist in the successful resolution of the situation.

g. Remain with the individual until the parent/guardian or caregiver arrives or until police resolve the situation.

h. Leave a note on the front and rear doors of the Library if police take custody of an unattended child/adult in need stating “Unattended [‘child’ or ‘adult in need’] is in the custody of the Danvers Police Department, 120 Ash Street, 978-774-1212.” The name of the individual will not be stated on the note.

i. Library staff may not transport or accompany any child/adult in need from the Library to another location.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, May 9, 2012