

Hamilton North Public Library Safe Child Policy

The staff and board of the Hamilton North Public Library (HNPL) are concerned about the safety and well-being of all its customers. We welcome all children and offer many programs especially for children to encourage lifelong appreciation of books and other resources.

Children left unattended are at risk, and there are many factors that could place them in danger; a child could be tempted to go off with a stranger or a child could become ill. Either of these or other emergencies could take place in a public building. It is for the safety of each child that the Hamilton North Public Library has adopted this Safe Child Policy.



Unattended Children

The Library is a public building and open to anyone, law-abiding and otherwise. Due to the many responsibilities of the library staff, monitoring of each child's behavior and location is not possible. Library staff **do not** take over parental responsibilities for children when they come into the library.

If a child is left at the library alone for hours at a time, boredom and fatigue may lead to behavior which interferes with other patrons and the work of the library staff. If a child is not picked up before the library closes, it may be dangerous for a child who is stranded outside after closing time.

In all situations, the parent/adult caregivers who have transported minor children onto the library premises or who have otherwise directed or allowed minor children onto the library premises shall be responsible for the care and safety of those children at all times that the children are on the library premises. Children under the age of eight (8) must be supervised in the library. Parents of older children are strongly encouraged to be present, as well. They are also responsible for monitoring the activities and regulating the behavior of their children while the children are on library property. Children from ages eight (8) to ten (10) years of age must have a responsible caregiver, age fourteen (14) years or older, on the library premises.

Our staff is comprised of good-natured library professionals who strive to provide excellent library service to every patron. We want the time you spend with us to be productive, pleasant, and worthwhile. In order to accomplish this, we need your cooperation. Those responsible for children should know:

- If a child is disruptive, ill, or injured, staff will ask the parent/guardian, if in the building, to properly supervise their child. Staff will try to phone the parent/guardian, if absent from the building, to have them remove their child from the library. If the parent/ guardian is not located, a staff member may contact the Cicero Police Department to report cases of unattended children.
- In addition, we will ask any adult lingering in the children's area to leave if they are not accompanying a child to further protect our younger patrons.

Child Protection Guidelines for Staff

Employees and volunteers who work with children and youth should observe the “two-person rule” or the “open-door policy.” The two-person rule requires that employees shall **make every reasonable effort** to avoid situations where an employed or volunteer worker is alone with children or youth in a closed room with no outside visual contact. The open-door policy requires any solid panel door be open at all times children are present. **Under no circumstances will a staff member give a child a ride home, take a child outside the building, or remain in the building alone with an unattended child.**

Reporting Procedures

Indiana law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and in an organization such as the Hamilton North Public Library, to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor.

In the event of suspected, reported, or discovered child abuse, the employee or volunteer shall immediately notify the Library director, or, in the absence of the director, the director’s designee. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or neglect, an employee or volunteer may also immediately make a report to the local child protection service or law enforcement agency, or they may leave that up to the Library authority previously mentioned.

Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the name of the recipient of the report, and a brief synopsis of the report.

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