

Child Behavior and Safety Policy

General

This policy is intended to inform the public and to guide Library staff and volunteers when they are confronted by children who are misbehaving or who are unattended. The Library recognizes that such circumstances may have widely varying facts and conditions, and this policy does not take the place of the exercise of sound judgment in addressing particular circumstances. In circumstances addressed by this policy, the Library staff or volunteer on duty will follow the guidance provided herein and will exercise sound judgment considering all relevant facts.

The Cattaraugus Free Library (The Library) welcomes and encourages children to use its facilities and services. However, the library cannot provide long or short-term care for children of any age. Parents, guardians and caregivers should remember that the Library is a public building, open to all and must use the same precautions for ensuring your child's safety as you would in any other public location. Parents, guardians or care givers are responsible for the care, safety and behavior of children of any age while the child is using the library.

Library staff and volunteers will not:

- Physically prevent a child from leaving the Library
- Assume responsibility for a child
- Accompany an unrelated child off Library premises

Children through age 7 must:

- Be directly supervised by a parent, guardian or caregiver while in the Library at all times

A caregiver must:

- Be 14 or older (New York States Child Care laws)
- Provide direct supervision of the child in their care
- Not be using the computers during the time they are supervising the child

Children 8 – 14 may use the Library on their own for a reasonable period of time provided they are able to maintain proper library behavior. Parents are still, however, responsible for the actions of their children. Children using what is deemed inappropriate behavior by Library staff may be asked to leave the Library. If a child of this age group is not able to leave the Library without an adult, he/she should not be in the Library alone. In this age group the Library must have a phone number of a parent or caregiver that may be contacted in an emergency.

Children of any age are not welcome in the Library if they are idle, unwell or disruptive.

Library staff and volunteers on duty who observe unacceptable behavior will inform the child and the parent or caregiver, if present, of this policy. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child will be asked to leave the Library. If the child is unaccompanied by a parent or caregiver, the staff or volunteer will follow the policy for unattended children.

Unattended Children

If a child under the age of 8 is in the Library without a parent or caregiver, Library staff or volunteer on

duty will:

- Attempt to comfort the child, if necessary;
- Make reasonable efforts to contact the parent or caregiver who is not in the Library to come and pick up the child; and
- Inform the Director or, in the Director's absence, a trustee who will then call the Sheriff's Department, to pick up the child if the parent or caregiver cannot be located after an appropriate time.

Library staff will exercise appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of unattended children when the Library is closing.

Parents are responsible for being aware of the times the Library opens and closes. Parents must also keep in mind that the Library may close unexpectedly for reasons out of the control of staff.

If an unattended child of any age is in the Library within 15 minutes of closing time Library staff or volunteer on duty will:

- Contact the child's parent or guardian and/or ask the child to do so. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive within 15 minutes following closing, Library staff or volunteer on duty will then call the Director or a trustee who will then call the Police, to pick up the child;
- Remain with the child until the parent or caregiver or police arrive
- Not transport any child from the Library to another location (Library staff cannot give rides to any unrelated child.)

Each incident in which a child has been asked to leave the Library or in which an unattended child has been present after closing will be reported in writing to the Director and the Board of Trustees.

Violation of these policies may result in the suspension of Library privileges for the family.

Adopted 05/27/2026