27 Safe Child Policy

The Hardin County Public Library welcomes children of all ages. It is a doorway through which all life-long learning takes place. A public library is just that: a public building. As such, anyone can come into it – law abiding or not. It is important that parents monitor the safety and wellbeing of their children just as if they were in a shopping mall, park, or any other public place. No public place, including the Library, can guarantee the safety of children.

Library staff is here to serve you and has many duties to perform in order to help all users of the library in the best possible way. As a result, they cannot monitor the whereabouts or behavior of our smallest users – your children. Library staff cannot assume the responsibility of a child's care when they use the Library. Therefore, the behavior and welfare of children in the library are the responsibility of the parents and legal guardians of the child.

A child could be lured away by a stranger or become ill. A child could wander outside and become lost or injured. The Library may have an emergency that dictates closing the building early due to inclement weather or may have to evacuate the building. Since we are primarily concerned about the welfare of your child's safety, we have adopted this policy to assure his or her well-being.

The Library asks parents and guardians to observe these rules to keep their children safe:

- Children ages (6) and under must have a parent or responsible caregiver (age sixteen (16) or older) stay in the children's room with them. Parents or the responsible caregiver may not leave young children unattended while using other areas of the library. Parents or the responsible caregiver must remain with preschool children while the child is attending library programs.
- Children ages seven (7) through the age of twelve (12) must have a parent or responsible caregiver (age sixteen (16) or older) on the library premises at all times.
- Children ages thirteen (13) and older may use the Library unattended for any length of time as long as their conduct is acceptable in a library setting and general conduct rules are observed.
- Children of any age with mental, physical, or emotional disabilities which may affect decision making skills or render supervision necessary must be accompanied by a parent or responsible caregiver at all times.

The Library has established procedures for closing the Library. If it is apparent to a library staff member that a child is unattended thirty (30) minutes prior to closing, the following will be observed:

- The child will be asked to call a parent or otherwise confirm that he or she has a ride or will be picked up no later than closing.
- If a child has been left unattended at the library at closing time, or during an emergency closing, every effort will be made to contact the parents or legal guardians.

- If none of the above arrives within fifteen (15) minutes of closing, the child will be treated as an abandoned child and the police in addition to the Cabinet for Health & Family Services (270-766-5099) will be contacted. Two staff members will stay with the unattended child/children until the police arrive. This is compensated time for the two staff members who remain with the child.
- Under no circumstances will library staff take a child out of the building and transport him or her to another location.
- In any instance in which the police are called because a child has been left unattended, the staff members will reassure the child they are not being punished and that the police are there to help them.
- Staff members will leave a note on the Library door stating, "Unattended child is in the custody of the Elizabethtown/Radcliff police department, with the street address and phone number." Names will NOT be stated on the sign.

Behavior on the Library premises:

- Disruptive behavior is any behavior that disturbs other borrowers while they are using the Library. This includes but is not limited to loud, offensive, abusive, or threatening speech or actions toward other borrowers or library personnel.
- Quiet voices should be used at all times.
- Running, throwing any object, hitting and noisy playing are not allowed.
- Library equipment and furniture must be used with care and only for their intended purposes.
- Pounding on keyboards and other potentially damaging activities are not permitted.
- Disruptive children will be asked to leave the Library. Any child unable to leave the Library without an adult should not be in the Library alone.
- Babies cry from time to time, but sometimes babies can not be consoled or comforted and are a distraction to other patrons and to the staff. Parents with babies who cry for an extended amount of time will be asked to leave.
- At no time will staff members accompany or assist children who need to use the restroom.

Disruptive behavior – Procedures

- A child whose behavior is disruptive of the Library environment will be approached by a member of the staff and asked to cease that behavior.
- Two or more staff members should be present when a disruptive child is going to be asked to leave the library.
- If the disruptive behavior continues, the child will be told to leave the Library property. If a child is in the charge of a parent or responsible caregiver, and is required to leave, the parent or caregiver must leave as well.
- Failure to leave the Library property immediately will be grounds for staff to call the Police for help.
- An incident report (policy # 29) must be written up for all occasions when a child is asked to leave the library.