

Hope Library Safe Children Policy

The Hope Library welcomes children of all ages. Library staff strives to provide a safe and appropriate environment for all Library users. Our libraries, however, are public buildings. Any public place may be dangerous for a child who is left unattended even for brief periods of time and staff may not always be available to monitor the Children's Room. In addition, Library facilities are neither designed nor licensed to provide childcare. A child left alone at the Library without a responsible caregiver may become bored, fatigued or frightened and this may lead to behavior that disrupts the Library services that staff provides to them and/or others.*

Parents and other caregivers are solely responsible for the welfare and the behavior of children using the Library. Additionally, **children under the age of ten must be supervised by a responsible caregiver at all times while they are in the Library.** If a child under the age of ten is found to be unattended in any area of the Library (or an unattended child ten or older is found frightened, crying, or otherwise in distress), staff will attempt to locate the child's caregiver. If Library staff cannot find the child's parent or caregiver, the Scituate Police will be notified and asked to assume care of the child.

Children Found Unattended during Library Hours

An unattended child found frightened or crying, or any unattended children under age ten (10), in the Library should be approached and reassured by a staff member. Staff interacting with the child should ask the child his/her name and the name and whereabouts of his/her parent/caregiver. At least one other staff member should be informed that an unattended child is being assisted. When Children's staff is available, the unattended child should be brought to the Children's area of the Library.

If the parent/caregiver is in the building, staff will:

- Attempt to locate the parent/caregiver
- Upon reuniting the child with the parent/caregiver, express the Library's concern for the welfare of children and explain the Library's policy regarding unattended children.

If the parent/caregiver is not in the building, staff will:

- Contact the supervisor in charge
- With the child's help, obtain the parent/caregiver's name and telephone number.
- Stay with the child until parent/caregiver can be located.
- Call the Scituate Police Department and ask that they assume responsibility for the child if the parent/caregiver cannot be located or does not respond to the phone request within 30 minutes.

Children Found Unattended at Closing

1. If staff judges that a child should not be left alone after the Library closes, two staff members, at least one of which needs to be the manager/supervisor in charge, should remain inside the Library with the child.
2. Library staff should identify the child and write his/her name, Library card number, and/or phone number. Staff will then phone the parent/caregiver or other responsible family member to pick up the child.
3. Staff members will wait with the child inside the Library building until the parent/caregiver/family member or police officer arrives.

4. If a parent/caregiver comes within 15 minutes, staff will inform him/her about the Library's closing time and policy regarding unattended children.
5. If a parent/caregiver does not come within 15 minutes, staff will call the Scituate Police Department and ask the police to assume protection of the unattended child.
6. Staff may leave after the police officer or parent/caregiver has picked up the child and assumed responsibility.
7. The following work day, staff must notify the Director about the incident and fill out an Incident Report.

*Children are subject to the same Rules of Behavior Policy as are adult patrons.

Approved by Board of Trustees, August 2013