

Safe Child Policy

The staff of the Fitchburg Youth Library strives to create a warm and inviting environment for children of all ages to encourage a love of books, reading and learning. The Library offers many programs and services that encourage children in this endeavor.

The safety and well-being of children at the Library is a matter of serious concern. Being a public facility the Library is open to all people, therefore it can never be considered a completely safe place to leave children unattended. Parents must be aware that responsibility for children using the Library, and its materials and equipment, rests at all times with the parent or caregiver and NOT the Library staff. To assure the safety and supervision of all children who use the Library, the Board of Trustees sets the following standards for the supervision of children in the building.

- All children under the age of 10 must be accompanied, and continually supervised, by a parent or caregiver while in the Library.

Definitions:

Supervised means accompanied by a parent or a parent's representative who is insuring that:

- The child's behavior does not present a safety hazard to himself/herself or other users, or Library property
- The child acts in accordance with Library Rules
- The child's behavior does not interfere with the use of the Library by others
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Caregiver is another adult or teenager (15 years or older) who has been designated by a parent to insure that his or her child is safe and acting in accordance with Library rules.

- Parents or caregivers, not Library staff, are responsible for the actions and safety of children visiting the Library.
- Parents or caregivers must stay in the Library building while their child under the age of 10 is attending a Library sponsored program. Parents or caregivers are responsible for escorting the child to the program and meeting the child at the conclusion of the program.
- At the discretion of the parent or caregiver, a child age 10 or older may be left unattended for no more than two hours. The child must know how to reach the parent or caregiver in case of an emergency. Children will be expected to display appropriate behavior, conducive to maintaining a peaceful atmosphere in the Library for all patrons.
- The parent or caregiver is responsible for insuring the appropriate behavior of their child(ren) in the Library. Disruptive behavior, such as shouting, running, pushing, or other loud or physical activities, will not be tolerated. Children who continue to be disruptive will be asked to leave the building. In the case of an unaccompanied child between the ages of 10 and 12 years old, an attempt will be made to contact a family member or caregiver to pick them up. If a family member or caregiver cannot be reached, the Fitchburg Police Department may be contacted at the discretion of Library

staff. The parent or caregiver is liable for all damage done by their children to the Library facility or equipment.

- Children under the age of 10 must be accompanied by an adult on the elevator.
- The Library cannot assume responsibility for children while a parent or caregiver is using the Internet, or participating in a Library program or other activity in the Library.
- Shoes and shirts must be worn while in the Library. (Toddlers who are walking need to have on shoes.)
- Food may not be consumed in the Youth Library unless prior arrangements have been made. Covered drinks are allowed.
- Bicycles should be locked on the racks provided outside the building. In-line skates, skateboards, balls or other such equipment may not be used in the Library.
- Online catalog and Internet computers in the Youth Library and throughout the Library building are not intended for use by children age 5 or under. It is the responsibility of a parent or caregiver to ensure appropriate use of the online terminals and other electronic Library resources by young children. Pounding on keyboards and other potentially damaging activities are not permitted.
- Children under age 5 who wish to use the computer must be supervised by an adult.
- Children Left At Closing: Children and their adult caregivers should be aware of the closing times of the Library and make arrangements to pick up the child 30 minutes before closing. If a child has been left at the Library at closing time, every attempt will be made to contact a family member or caregiver by telephone. Staff are not permitted to remain after hours with an unattended child nor give him/her a ride home or to any other location. If a family member or caregiver cannot be reached, the Fitchburg Police will be called to escort the child home or to keep the child until parents can be reached. Two staff members will remain with the child until the police have arrived. The Library Director will be informed whenever this action becomes necessary and will contact the child's parent or caregiver to explain the Library policy and why the action was required.
- Youth Library Use: If an adult is not accompanied by a child, is involved in inappropriate use of children's Library materials, or is observed by staff to be spending an unnecessary and unusual amount of time in the Youth Library, the adult shall be asked to use other areas of the Library.
- Children's bathrooms are for use by children and their parent or caregiver only. Doors are to be kept locked for security. The exception to this is if there is a program in the auditorium at which time the doors will remain unlocked during the program.
- Baby changing tables are available in several of the bathrooms. Diapers are to be changed in bathrooms only—not on tables in the Library, not on the floor, and not on the couch. Dispose of diapers in plastic bags available from the staff.

Parents, guardians and caregivers, not the Library staff, are ultimately responsible for the actions and safety of children visiting the Library.