

6.02 Unattended Children Policy – Rev 7/17/23

The North Shelby Library and its branch, the Mt Laurel Library, welcome patrons of all ages to use its public facilities in a manner consistent with the Patron Behavior Policy.

Children left unattended may become anxious, restless, or disruptive, and they may encounter situations or hazards that put them at risk. Their safety is a serious concern for the Library Board of Trustees and employees. Library employees cannot monitor each child's location, safety or behavior, and the Library has neither the staff nor legal authority to supervise children in the library. Library employees cannot accept caregiving responsibilities for patrons of any age.

Parents and/or legal guardians are fully responsible for their minor children/charges at all times and are expected to comply at all times with Library policies. Any patron whose behavior is disruptive or otherwise violates the Library's Code of Conduct is subject to reporting to the Pelham Police Department at North Shelby or the Shelby County Sheriff at Mt Laurel with or without warning or notice.

Children from birth through 5th grade must be accompanied by a parent, legal guardian, or responsible caregiver. In this instance, "Responsible Caregiver" is an individual designated by the parent or legal guardian who is responsible for monitoring or caring for a child or vulnerable adult and who must be at least 18 years old. The Library assumes that an adult with a child is either a parent, legal guardian, or parent-assigned responsible caregiver and staff will not question their decisions unless a child is in immediate physical danger.

The responsible caregiver accepts full responsibility for the child's behavior and safety, including staying in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. The only exception to this policy would be for children in grades K through 5 who are attending specified programs in one of the Library's programming rooms. The parent, legal guardian, or responsible caregiver may wait for their child outside of the programming room as long as they remain on the library's premises and return to pick their child up immediately after the program ends.

Notwithstanding the foregoing or any other policy or provision of policy, Library employees may report to appropriate management, law enforcement, public health, or other authority any circumstance, behavior or conduct that may, in their reasonable judgment, constitute a threat, danger or risk to themselves, the public, any individual on Library property or to property. The Pelham Police (non-emergency number 205-620-6550) will be asked to assume responsibility for any child left alone at the North Shelby Library at closing time. The Shelby County Sheriff's Office (non-emergency number 205-670-6000) will be asked to assume responsibility for any child left alone at the Mt Laurel Library at closing time

In regards to checking out material, the Library is not responsible for the choice of library materials for children's use. The responsibility for the choice of library material for children rests with their parents or legal guardians.

TEENS

The North Shelby Library Teen Department and its programming are designed for young adults who are in or entering grades 6 through 12 (typically ages 11-18). The Library recognizes that many young adults are responsible enough to be in the library without adult supervision. As such, these teens are treated as adult customers by the Library and are supervised minimally even during scheduled programs. Teens may come and go as they please during programs without asking permission or advising librarians of their intended whereabouts. Parents, legal guardians, or responsible caregivers are not required to stay in the building during teen programs.

In the event that teens are engaging in behavior that is disturbing or harmful to others or the operation of the library, the problem may be discussed with them at the time. If the behavior persists, the teen may be asked to leave.

Parents, legal guardians, and responsible caregivers should be aware of the library's closing times and make arrangements for their teen to have a ride. At closing time or in the event of an emergency (closing for weather or a power outage), staff will assist young adults in calling a parent, legal guardian, or responsible caregiver to pick them up. The Pelham Police (non-emergency number 205-620-6550) will be asked to assume responsibility for the teen if they are not picked up when the staff leaves at North Shelby Library. The Shelby County Sheriff's Office (non-emergency number 205-670-6000) will be asked to assume responsibility for the teen if they are not picked up when the staff leaves Mt Laurel Library.

In regards to checking out material, the Library is not responsible for the choice of library materials for teen use. The responsibility for the choice of library material for minors rests with their parents or legal guardians.