



Unattended Minors and Dependents Policy Revised and Approved by the Board of Trustees on July 9, 2020

The Bergenfield Public Library is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for children of all ages. Service to children is an important part of the Library's mission.

The well-being and safety of children and dependent persons (individuals of any age who are unable to make decisions about their own safety and well-being) can be of serious concern. The Library is a public building open to all individuals. It is not the Library staff's function or purpose to provide supervision or to care for children or dependent persons while parents, guardians or caregivers are unavailable.

The Library staff is not authorized to act in place of parents, guardians or caregivers. Staff members are responsible for assisting all Library customers and cannot adequately monitor unattended children.

Responsibility for the safety and behavior of minor children and dependent persons in the Library rests with the parent, guardian or caregiver, not with the staff. Parents or caregivers should not expect that staff can meet the specific needs of their child or dependent person nor expect that staff will know if a child or dependent person is leaving the building with parents or strangers.

For the protection of children and dependent persons who visit the Library, the following policy has been instituted:

- All persons, including children over the age of two (2) and dependent persons and their caregivers, are required to comply with any current Executive Orders relating to public health requirements, including, but not limited to, those that may mandate the use of facial coverings, maintaining social/physical distancing and/or occupancy limitations. Failure to abide by any such Executive Order will constitute a violation of the Library's Code of Conduct set forth in the Library's Conduct policy and may subject offending persons to penalties, including the suspension or revocation of Library privileges.
- Elementary school age children (Kindergarten-Grade 5) and younger must be accompanied by an adult or a responsible, mature caregiver (16 or older) when visiting the Library. Children under the age of six (6) years must be within eyesight of a parent, guardian or responsible, mature caregiver and supervised at all times in all parts of the Library building and on Library grounds. Running, pushing, shouting, rowdy activities and playing in the Library is prohibited and should be stopped at once.
- During storytimes or other library programs, caregivers must remain in the library and must return to the story or program area by the end of the event.
- Children under the age of 10 years must be accompanied by an adult or responsible, mature caregiver on the elevator.
- Middle school age children (Grade 6-8) should not be left unattended in the library for extended periods of time. Attendance at library programs, browsing for recreational reading, and after school use of the library for homework and study are encouraged and considered appropriate. After extended periods of time, or in case of a problem, library staff (after consultation with the Director or Person In Charge), may determine what is a reasonable length of time for the minors to be left unattended. An attempt will be made to notify a parent or guardian of such unattended minor to pick up and/or provide supervision for the minor. Where a parent or guardian cannot be contacted, the Library reserves the right to contact local law enforcement. In general, the library considers more than 2-3 (two – three) hours



depending upon the age and conduct of the child) to be excessive and inappropriate. This time limit may be reduced to comply with metered access building occupancy quotas.

- All patrons, including unattended minors using the Library alone or independent of parental supervision, are subject to the Library's Code of Conduct set forth in the Library Conduct policy. If the behavior of a patron of any age is in violation of this policy, Library staff may ask the patron to leave the Library and Library privileges may be suspended or revoked. Discipline problems are so varied that each situation will be handled as it occurs.
- If unattended children age twelve (12) years and under remain at the Library at closing time, staff will attempt to contact parents but may not and will not assume responsibility to care for or transport the child. Staff members are not permitted to take the child out of the building or to transport the child to another location. If staff cannot reach the parent or guardian within fifteen (15) minutes of closing, the Person In Charge will call the police. Two staff members will remain with the child until suitable arrangements are made with the police, parent or guardian.
- Action regarding an unattended or neglected child under age twelve (12) years or unattended dependent person, including contacting the police, social services, or another agency, will be taken when his/her health or safety become an issue or there is disruptive behavior that is caused by or affects the child or dependent person in question or other Library patrons.