

Policy Regarding Safety and Well-being of Children in the Big Rapids Community Library

Children are welcome in the library. The staff cares about their safety and welfare. However, the responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the Library rests with the parent or caregiver, not with the library staff.

Parents and caregivers are responsible for the safety and behavior of their child, for damage to materials, equipment and furnishings, and for injury to themselves and others. Children are subject to the same rules and consequences as other library users, including possible loss of library privileges and/or being asked to leave the library.

It is the policy of the Big Rapids Community Library:

- To encourage reading.
- To allow adults to read aloud to children.
- To help children find materials for school work and recreational reading.
- To provide an environment that encourages study and exploration.
- To plan short programs that inform and enrich.
- To permit children to study in small groups.
- To discourage inappropriate Library behaviors. Unacceptable behaviors and the consequences are described in the Big Rapids Community Library's Rules of Behavior and apply to all patrons, regardless of age.
- To make every attempt to restore appropriate Library behavior if a child or youth is bothersome or unruly. If this proves impossible, the disruptive individuals will be asked to sit in the lobby until picked up.
- To prohibit children from running in the Library, climbing on tables, chairs, shelves, and other furniture.

Children ages 3 and under

- Must be within visual contact of a parent or caregiver at all times while using the Library.
- Must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver through all Library programs.
- Must be accompanied to the restroom by the parent or caregiver.

Children ages 4 through 7

- Must remain on the same library floor as a parent, caregiver, or older sibling.
- Must be accompanied by an adult to all Library programs.
- If a child under age 7 is found unattended or violates the Rules of Behavior the child and parent or caregiver may be asked to leave the library.

Children ages 8 and over

- May be left on their own to attend Library programs, read, or to do homework. Even if the parent or caregiver is not present, the parent or caregiver is responsible for and liable for their children's behavior in the Library, for damage to materials, equipment and furnishings, and for injury to themselves and others.

All Children

- Children of any age with mental, physical, emotional or behavioral problems which necessitate supervision must be accompanied by a parent or adult (18 yrs.) caregiver at all times.
- Children habitually left unattended for long periods of time are an unacceptable use of the Library. The Library is not designed or licensed to provide basic child care needs. Children of any age should not be left in the Library to the extent that they are missing meals, have no responsible adult to contact or have no means to get home independently.

- Parents and caregivers are encouraged to consider the safety and well-being of their children and the needs of other library users of all ages.

Unattended Children at Closing Time

- Parents and caregivers should be aware of Library hours and make arrangements to meet or transport children under the age of 15 by closing times.
- Unattended children must be picked up 15 minutes before the Library's closing time.
- In the case of a child who is unattended at closing (or in an emergency), the Library staff will try to notify the child's parent or caregiver. If the child's parent or adult caregiver cannot be located within 15 minutes, the City of Big Rapids Public Safety Department will be called.
- Unattended children will not be left alone in the Library or on the Library premises. A Library Staff member will wait with the child until the child's parent or adult caregiver, the police, or a protective services worker arrives.

Library Staff will not take the child home or anywhere away from the Library site.

Emergency Situations

- Emergency situations may force the library to close without warning. All children must have the telephone number of someone to call for transportation if the need arises.
- Reasonable effort will be made to try and contact an unattended minor's parent or caregiver should the need arise; however, it may be necessary to notify the City of Big Rapids Public Safety Department or child protective authorities if:
 - a. An unattended child is being disruptive.
 - b. A child is habitually left unattended for long periods of time.
 - c. A child is deemed to be at risk of harm, as in the case of a child being left alone outside the building when the library closes.
 - d. An unattended child is injured or becomes ill.

Adopted November 13, 1997, by the Big Rapids Community Library Board;
amended September 30, 2004; February 12, 2015.