

# Mattapoisett Free Public Library

## Safe Child Policy

The staff of the Mattapoisett Free Public Library hopes that the children who use the library will find the facility to be a warm and inviting place that will encourage and develop their love of reading, curiosity, and appreciation of all library resources.

This policy is intended to address the welfare of children and is not intended to restrict the appropriate use of the library. For the purpose of this policy, an “unattended child” refers to a child who is left alone in the library, or a child whose parent or guardian is in the library but who is not adequately supervising that child, whether because they are in separate parts of the building, or when the adult is using materials or equipment and thus is not supervising the child.

The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/guardian/caregiver and not with library personnel.

Many programs are offered to make the library appealing to children. However, children left unattended for several hours when no library programs are offered may become bored, fearful, and/or disruptive. Young children are not safe when left unattended in the library. It is impossible for the staff to know whether children are leaving the building with parents, caring adults they know, or with strangers. In order to create an environment of safety and maintain an atmosphere where reading and study can be encouraged, the following rules have been established:

Children are expected to adhere to the same rules of behavior and appropriate library use as stated for all patrons with the following additions:

- Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children in the library and may not leave children under the age of 8 unattended. They should remain in the immediate vicinity of the child and in visual contact with the child.
- Children age 8 and older may be left unattended, at the discretion of their parents, for the period of time needed for browsing in the library, to participate in a library program or activity, or to complete homework assignments or special projects. Children left unattended should know how to reach a parent or guardian, and parents must

be aware of the closing time of the library. When children are left unattended, repeatedly and/or for long periods of time, the staff will notify parents of the library's policies.

- When children are attending library programs, parents must be aware of the times of the programs, so their children do not have to wait for unreasonable amounts of time to be picked up. Parents should have their children wait for them inside the building. Parents of children age 8 and under should remain nearby in the building or on library property throughout the program. In some cases, parent or adult participation is required along with the child's participation. This will be noted as part of the program registration information.
- Children should arrive for programs on time in order that programs in progress will not be disrupted.
- If a problem arises with children of any age and the staff is unable to locate the parent(s), or if the library is closing and the parents/guardian cannot be located, a police officer may be called at the discretion of the staff.
- Library staff members will not transport children from the library to any other location during or after normal business hours.
- In case of medical emergency involving a child, the library staff will call 911 first and then contact the child's parent or guardian.

The library staff is here to welcome and assist all families as they use the library and the town resources therein.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees on July 20, 2017.