

Section 2.3 **SAFETY & WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN POLICY**

The Matteson Public Library welcomes the use of its resources and facilities by children of all ages. This policy is written for the safety and well-being of children, and in order to provide for the general welfare of all persons using the library.

Library employees cannot supervise children in the library. Parents or childcare providers assume total responsibility for the behavior of all children they bring to the library. Preschool children may not be left unattended in any part of the library.

Even if not present, parents are 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.

1. **Appropriate behavior:** Reading is encouraged. Adults may read aloud to children. Quiet play with toys, games, and art materials is allowed. Children are allowed to study quietly in small groups of no more than four.
2. **Disruptive behavior:**
 - a. Unacceptable behaviors and the consequences of them are described in the Library Users, policy number 2.1. This policy applies to all patrons, regardless of age.
 - b. If a child or youth is bothersome or unruly, the library staff will make every attempt to restore appropriate library behavior. If this proves impossible, the disruptive individuals will be asked to wait in the vestibule until picked up.
 - c. Climbing on tables, shelves, chairs and other furniture is not allowed.
3. **Cleaning up:** Out of consideration for others, children should be encouraged to put away puzzles, toys, games and art materials in their proper places. Books should not be reshelved but left stacked neatly on the book cart.
4. **Children aged 9 and under**
 - a. Children age nine or younger must be accompanied by a responsible person who is at least sixteen years old.
 - b. Must be within the visual contact of a parent or caregiver at all times while using the library.
 - c. Children aged 5 and under must be accompanied to the restroom by a parent or caregiver.

- d. May attend designated library programs without an adult. However, an adult caregiver must remain in the library at all times during the program.
 - e. Must have a parent or caregiver within sight of the child when using computers.
5. **Children ages 10 and over:** May be left on their own to attend library programs or to do homework, providing they are not disruptive. Even if the parents are not present, the parents are 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.

When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, or the parent or responsible caregiver cannot be located, the library staff is authorized to call the police and stay with the child until the police arrive.

6. **Unattended children at closing time:**

- a. Unattended children must be picked up at least 15 minutes before closing time.
- b. In the case of a child who is unattended at closing (including emergency), the library staff will try to notify the child's parent or adult caregiver. If the child's parent or adult caregiver cannot be located within 15 minutes, the police will be called.
- c. Children will not be left alone in the library or on the library grounds. Two library staff members will wait with the child until the child's parent or adult caregiver, the police, or a protective services worker arrives.
- d. Library staff members will not take the child home or anywhere away from the library site.

7. **Library Responsibilities**

The library cannot and does not assume responsibility for the safety and well-being of children who are asked to leave the library because of disruptive behavior. If a child who has been asked to leave the library indicates to a library staff member that he/she needs transportation home or will not have adequate childcare when he/she reaches home, a library staff member will call the parents/guardians. If the parents/guardians cannot be reached, the police will be notified that the child is being asked to leave the library building.

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