

Johnson Public Library

CHILDREN'S DEPARTMENT GUIDELINES (A SUPPLEMENT TO BEHAVIOR RULES)

A. INTRODUCTION / OVERVIEW:

The staff of the Children's Department at the Johnson Public Library strives to create a warm and inviting environment for children. The library offers many programs and services that encourage children to develop a love of books and learning. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Johnson Public Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it. Parents and caregivers are both responsible for the behavior of children in their care as well as any damage that they may cause.

B. TERMINOLOGY DEFINED

B.1. ABUSE: Physical act intended to hurt a child.

B.2. DISRUPTIVE CHILD: Acting out behavior which is inappropriate in the library setting that interferes with the library business of other patrons or staff.

B.3. UNATTENDED CHILD: A young person, under the age of 10, using public library resources and facilities unaccompanied by someone 14 years or older while in the library.

C. GENERAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

C.1. The Children's Department serves children of all ages through grade 7, parents, teachers, adults with developmental disabilities and students who need children's materials. Other patrons shall use the general library collection and facilities.

C.2. Unaccompanied Adults in the Children's Department: For the safety of children in the library, adults unaccompanied by children are not permitted in the Children's Department unless they are searching for and checking out children's materials. Adults who wish to use children's materials in the library shall notify the staff on duty of that need, and take those selections to the main floor.

C.3. Groups of adults wishing to use children's materials shall schedule a visitation time in advance. A collection of children's materials can be made available for their use in the general library.

C.4. Use of restrooms in the Children's Department is restricted to children in grades 7 and under, or adults with children. All others must use the restrooms on the main floor or lower level.

C.5. Parents/guardians may not leave children under the age of 10 unattended in the

library. Older children caring for younger children must be able and willing to supervise the younger ones while in the library.

C.6. Parents/guardians are responsible for their children's behavior while in the library. Parents/guardians will be notified if their children require supervision due to disruptive behavior.

C.7. Disruptive children ages 10 or over may be asked to leave after receiving one warning.

C.8. All incidents of a child being left alone will be recorded by a staff member on the standard Incident Report forms.

C.9. The Children's Department computers are available exclusively for use by children in grades 7 and below. Children beyond grade 7 and adults seeking to access the Internet or other computer services shall be directed to the Reference Department computers on the main floor.

C.10. The general guidelines identified in the Johnson Public Library's "Behavior Rules" apply to all library users, where problem behavior is defined as any behavior that either consciously or unconsciously violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library; prevents library employees from doing their jobs, or jeopardizes the safety of library users, staff and/or property. Enforcement of behavior policy is the responsibility of every public service employee.

D. PROCEDURES FOR DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

D.1. A child who engages in disruptive behavior, whether intended or not, will be asked to stop.

D.2. If disruptive behavior persists, the child or adult and child may be asked to leave after one warning has been given.

D.3. If an unaccompanied child persists in being disruptive, a library staff person will try to reach the child's Parent/Guardian. The Parent/Guardian will be informed of the problem situation, the library's policy, and will be required to pick up the child within 30 minutes of being contacted or the police will be called. Furthermore, if the Parent/Guardian cannot or does not come for the child 15 minutes before closing, then the procedures for "Unattended Child after Library Hours" shall be followed.

D.4. If the parent cannot be located and child must leave (to catch a ride, e.g.), the staff member will give the parent's name, address, and an account of the disruptive behavior on a completed Incident Report to the Head of the Children's Department who will then write the Parent/Guardian describing the incident and informing her/him of the library policy.

E. CHILD LEFT UNATTENDED:

If it is determined that a child is lost or left unattended, a staff member shall try to identify and locate the Parent/Guardian or responsible adult according to the following procedure:

E.1. Walk around the area where the Parent/Guardian was last believed seen. If unsuccessful, check on other areas of the library. If the child is frightened or crying, the staff shall try to comfort and reassure them. The child shall be brought to the person in charge at the Children's Department.

E.2. Page the child's Parent/Guardian over the intercom system using the name if known. If no name is available, announce that a child is missing. If anyone claims to have lost a child, ask them to describe the child and to present identification.

E.3. When the adult is located, explain the library policy on unattended children.

E.4. If the Parent/Guardian is not found in the building, a staff member shall stay with the child until someone can be located.

E.5. If the Parent/Guardian cannot be located, or if the library is closing, the staff member will call the police.

E.6. Staff shall not take a child out of the building.

F. UNATTENDED CHILD AFTER LIBRARY HOURS:

If a child in grades 7 and below is alone at closing time:

F.1. Two staff members shall stay with the child until a Parent/Guardian can be located. If staff cannot reach Parent/Guardian, the Police shall be called after 15 minutes to assume responsibility for the child.

F.2. Two staff members shall remain with the child at the Moore Street entrance until the Parent/Guardian or Police arrive.

F.3. Library policy will be explained and a copy of this policy shall be given to the Parent/Guardian.

F.4. If there is an ongoing problem with a family, Police Department or Department of Social Services intervention may be necessary. The Library shall consult with the City Attorney regarding ongoing problems.

F.5. All incidents of a child being left alone shall be recorded on standard Incident Report forms.

F.6. Staff shall not transport or take a child away from the library building.

G. CHILD REPORTED MISSING OR LOST:

If a Parent/Guardian or caregiver reports a child missing, staff shall proceed as follows:

- G.1.** Obtain the name, age and description of the child.
- G.2.** Ask Parent/Guardian how extensively they have searched. Check outside the library immediately. Check entire library thoroughly, including rest rooms and offices.
- G.3.** Describe child to and request assistance from library staff in other departments.
- G.4.** Call Police if unable to locate the child.

H. CHILD ABUSE BY AN ADULT

- H.1.** If an incident of child abuse is observed or suspected of occurring, staff shall intervene to try to distract the adult if it can be done safely.
- H.2.** Staff shall use language that refers to library policy and does not in any way accuse the adult (i.e. "Hitting is not allowed in the library" rather than "You're abusing that child and you must stop.")
- H.3.** If the adult does not cease and the behavior is abusive, the police shall be called.
- H.4.** Try to obtain the name and address of the adult.
- H.5.** Complete an Incident Report form.
- H.6.** If the staff member has reasonable cause to believe that the child has been subjected to abuse or acts of abuse, they shall immediately report this information to the Library Director, who will notify the appropriate authorities.