

Unattended Children

Introduction

The Cranford public Library staff and board of trustees hope that children using the library will find it a warm, inviting place to be. Programs and resources are offered to make it enticing to children and to help them enjoy their visits and develop a love of books, reading, and libraries.

The happiness and safety of young children left alone at the library is a serious concern. Left on their own, they can become frightened or anxious; or, if left unattended for any length of time when no library program is being offered, can become bored, restless or disruptive. It is not the library's intention to seek out unattended children but, rather, to have a reasoned response prepared if problems present themselves. For that reason, the following policy had been established.

Policy Statement

Throughout this statement, the words *parent* or *parents* are also meant to connote *responsible adult caretaker* or *responsible adult caretakers*. Library services are offered to all residents of Cranford regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin, religion, or economic status. All patrons are entitled to courteous and efficient service from library staff, access to appropriate materials, and pleasant surroundings free from harassment, discomfort, and stress.

Library staff members cannot assume responsibility for the care, safety, or well-being of children in the library. Therefore, parents (or responsible adult caretakers) may not leave children eight years old or younger unattended in the children's room or in any other part of the library, and they are responsible for the behavior of their children of any age while in the library. Children in the sixth grade or any lower grade are not permitted in the library building after 6:00 p.m. unless accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult caretaker.

Procedures

1. Staff should comfort a lost or unattended child who is frightened, crying, or otherwise visibly upset and bring the child to the children's department desk (or reference desk if the children's department is not staffed).
2. Staff should try to locate the parent in the building by walking through the library with the child, paging the parent on the public address system using the parent's or child's name (or, if unknown, the child's physical description). Library staff are not to search the Cranford Community Center for parents. The library and community center are separate departments with separate operations and separate staffs.
3. If the parent or responsible adult is not in the building, a staff member shall stay with the child until the parent is located through a search of library files, telephone directories, etc.
4. When the parent is located, the staff person shall explain the library policy on unattended children. If the parent is reached by phone, the staff person shall request that he/she come to the library immediately.
5. If the parent cannot be located after a reasonable length of time, the staff person in charge shall call the police to take charge of the child.

6. Under no circumstance shall a staff member take the child out of the building or provide transportation elsewhere.

Approved by the Cranford Public Library Board of Trustees on October 22, 2015.