

## **Unattended Child Policy** (Revised and Approved May 2023)

The Norma Anders Public Library encourages children of all ages to visit the library and hopes they will find it a warm, inviting place to be. Programs and resources are offered to make the library welcoming to children, to help children enjoy their visits, and to develop a love of books, reading and libraries.

In an effort to provide a safe/secure environment for children using the Library, promote a patron friendly atmosphere, and insure a prompt, professional, effective response should a child become unaccounted for during a visit to the Library the following policy and procedures have been developed.

The Library Board of Trustees, Library Administration and staff are concerned for the safety and welfare of children who use the library unattended by a parent, guardian or caregiver. Library staff cannot provide babysitting, supervision, or childcare service for library patrons.

The Library Board respects the rights and privacy of all library patrons. Library staff will only intervene if children are left unattended and problems of safety, disruptive behavior, or well-being occurs.

No public place, including the library, can guarantee the safety of children. The staff cannot know if the children are leaving the building with parents or with strangers. A parent or accompanying caregiver is responsible for monitoring and controlling the child's behavior while at the Library.

It is not the library's intention to seek out unattended children, but rather to have a reasoned response prepared when a problem presents itself. If a child becomes anxious or disruptive the staff will attempt to find the parent or caregiver in the library. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible to pick up the child at any time, and children using the library should know how to contact their parents or guardian. If parents or guardians cannot be reached the Dysart Police Department will be notified.

### **Supervision Expectations**

The following supervision expectations shall be adhered to while at the Library.

**Ages Seven and Younger:** Children age seven (7) or younger must be accompanied by a responsible caregiver of at least 12 years old. Responsible caregivers assume responsibility for the safety, comfort, and behavior of their child/children on Library premises and must not leave the child unattended on Library premises. Library employees cannot assume the role of responsible caregiver. Children aged 12 to 18, if in charge of a younger child, may not use the computers while supervising the child. Caregivers may also be asked to keep the child in the direct line of sight.

**Ages Eight and Nine:** All children ages eight and nine may stay at the Library, unaccompanied unless their behavior becomes a problem, in which case the parent will be called. These children

are welcome to use the library unattended but should not be left alone for extended periods of time.

**Children 10 and over** are old enough to use the library responsibly.

The Library's Behavior Policy defines misconduct and states that some behaviors will result in a request for the person to leave the Library. Although young people age eight (8) and older may use the library on their own, their actions and well-being remain the responsibility of their parents and caregivers. A young person who cannot be responsible for themselves outside of the library should not be left alone on Library premises.

If problems arise, unattended children may be asked to leave and parents will be contacted. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible to pick up the child at any time. If parents or caregivers cannot be reached, staff will contact the Dysart Police Department.

**Child Remaining After Closing:**

Library staff cannot assume responsibility for unattended young people who are on library grounds after hours, nor can library staff extend open hours or remain in the building after hours with library patrons of any age. Staff members have no authorization to assume a guardian's role in these cases or to transport or assume custody of young library patrons.

It is the responsibility of parents to be aware of the Library's closing times. In the event that a child under 18 years of age is in the Library unattended at the time of closing, Library Staff and/or the child will contact the parents. If the parents have not been located or arrived within 15 minutes after closing, the Dysart Police Department will be notified.