

**LIBRARY POLICY MANUAL**

**YS-2 Safe Child Policy**

**Date Issued: 8.21.2002**

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**Attachment(s): 0**

While we encourage children of all ages to use the library, **the Mary Riley Styles Public Library is not responsible for unattended children.** Parents and caregivers are responsible for monitoring their children’s safety, activities, and behavior while visiting the library. The library does not provide babysitting nor assume any parental responsibilities for children while they are in the library.

<b>Ages</b>	<b>Parent/Caregiver in close proximity</b>	<b>Directly Supervised &amp; in the same area</b>	<b>Parent/Caregiver must remain in the library</b>	<b>Parent/Caregiver must remain in the library during Programs</b>
0-3 years old	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4-8 years old	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
9-10 years old	No	No	No	No
11-17 years old	No	No	No	No

**\*Length of time children may be left unsupervised is explained in more detail below.**

**Levels of supervision required:**

1. **Children 0 through age 3** must always be in close proximity and within sight of the adult responsible for their safety.
2. **Children age 4 through age 8** must be directly supervised by a parent or responsible caregiver at all times while in the library. Parents or caregivers must remain in the same general area of the library.
3. **Children age 9 and age 10** may be left unattended in areas of the library **for up to 1 ½ hours during daylight** providing they are mature enough to follow library rules and observe proper conduct. Such children are subject to the same rules of behavior as other patrons and the same consequences, including being asked to leave the library.
4. **Children age 11 and age 12** may be left unattended in areas of the library **for up to 3 hours** providing they are mature enough to follow library rules and observe proper conduct. Such children are subject to the same rules of behavior as other patrons and the same consequences, including being asked to leave the library.

5. **Children age 13 through age 17** may be left unattended in areas of the library providing they are mature enough to follow library rules and observe proper conduct. Such children are subject to the same rules of behavior as other patrons and the same consequences, including being asked to leave the library.
6. **Children under the age of 13** left unattended at closing time may be deemed at risk. Parents of children not picked up at closing time are to be given a letter stating the library's hours of operation and policy regarding children left unattended when the library is closed. A copy of this letter is provided in the Emergency Manual Appendices A-7: Letter to Parent for Unattended Children. If a parent or caregiver of a child cannot be contacted or has not arrived within 20 minutes of the library's closing time, the City of Falls Church Police Department is contacted to take custody of the child.
7. **Children age 13 and older** may be left in charge of younger children.
8. **Children of any age with mental, physical, or emotional disabilities which affect decision-making skills or render supervision necessary, must be accompanied by a parent or caregivers at all times.**

There may be situations, even within these guidelines, when it is not safe to leave a child unsupervised. **Parents are ultimately responsible for making decisions about their child's safety.**

**Whenever any child is unsupervised/unattended,** the following applies regardless of his/her age:

- a. There must be no emotional, medical, or behavioral problems that affect judgment or decision-making skills.
- b. The child must be comfortable being alone.
- c. The child must have a safety plan worked out with the parent/caregiver that includes:
  - i. How to access a parent or other responsible adult at all times
  - ii. What to do in case of an emergency
  - iii. Guidelines for acceptable behavior
  - iv. Knowledge of emergency phone numbers

A child left unattended in the library in violation of this policy, or a child of any age habitually left unattended, may be deemed to be at risk. In such situations, library staff may contact local law enforcement and/or child protective authorities to ensure the safety and well-being of the child. The library's policy is consistent with the Fairfax Child Supervision Guidelines, which are available on their website at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/familyservices/children-youth/child-supervision-guidelines>.