

Suffern Free Library – Unattended Children, Youth and Dependent Persons

Approved by Suffern Free Library Board of Trustees on December 20, 2022

This policy supersedes all prior policies and practices relative to this subject.

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

A **child** is a person younger than 10 years of age

A **youth** is a person aged 10 through 17.

A **dependent person** is a person who needs a caregiver for safety and/or other reasons. Dependent persons include persons incapacitated due to physical and/or mental disabilities or other conditions and who are dependent on others for their safety and wellbeing.

A **caregiver** is an individual who accepts and acknowledges the responsibility of care for a child, youth, or dependent person. This may be a parent, legal guardian or other person temporarily responsible for the care of the person.

Library staff members are not legally allowed to provide care and/or supervision for children, youth, or dependent persons of any age. When children, youth or dependent persons are left unattended in the Library, they may cause a disruption for other Library users. There is also a risk of harm to the unattended person or to others.

A **child or dependent person** should be with or in the immediate vicinity of the caregiver. If a child or dependent person is left unattended and is engaging in unacceptable behavior, Library staff may attempt to locate or contact the caregiver. Library staff may call the police to assist in locating the caregiver and/or to assume responsibility for the child or dependent person in need of attention. This decision is made at the discretion of the Library staff.

Youth may be in the Library without a caregiver, but the parent/legal guardian is still legally responsible for the youth's actions. Youth engaging in unacceptable behavior may be asked to leave the Library. The Library may require accompaniment of a caregiver for youths who have previously been asked to leave because of disruptive behavior.

Caregivers are responsible for:

- Behavior of children, youth, and dependent persons while they are in the Library or on Library property.
- Knowing the Library's User Behavior policy and the consequences of unacceptable behavior. Violation of the policy may be grounds for suspension of Library privileges. See also the Library's *Code of Conduct*.

- Ensuring that children, youth, and dependent persons have emergency contact information in their possession at all times;
- Knowing the Library's public operating hours so that youths are not left unattended for more than 10 minutes before or after the Library's public operating hours.

The Library staff cannot and will not provide transportation to unattended children, youth, or dependent persons, and do not desire or intend to leave them alone on Library property.

Police may be called during or after operating hours when youth are asked to leave or a caregiver is not present or can't be located.