**San Juan County Library**

**Unattended/Disruptive Children**

**September 2018**

**Preface**

The San Juan County Library encourages children to use its facilities and services. However, parents and legal guardians are responsible for their minor children, and their behavior in the library or on library grounds, whether or not they accompany them.The library has neither the staff nor the legal authority to supervise children in the library. A minor child left unattended in the library may become disruptive or frightened, ill or injured. They may also become bored and restless and could disrupt the enjoyment and work of others.

**Policy Statement**

The library in no way assumes responsibility for any minor left unattended in or on library premises and should not be considered a child care option.

For the safety and comfort of children, a responsible adult or caregiver must accompany children under the age of 8 years. A child of this age is considered unattended if he/she is in the library or on library premises without a parent or caregiver who is at least 12 years of age. A child is also considered unattended if they are in a different area of the library than the parent/caregiver, or parent/caregiver is pre-occupied with other activities, preventing them from being aware of the activities of the child.

If a child under the age of 8 years is found to be unattended in the library (that is, if the responsible adult/caregiver is not on the library premises) at closing time, library may take action necessary to resolve the situation. If necessary, the library may ask the police to take the child into custody for the child’s protection. Children 12 years and older who become disruptive will be asked to leave the library premises. Failure to comply may result in the police being called.

At no time is a staff member to give a ride to a minor.

If a minor child of any age becomes disruptive at any time the library staff may take action necessary to resolve the situation.

Disruptive behavior is defined as any behavior within the library or on library premises that infringes on the rights of others using the library or behavior that endangers the child or others.

**Guidelines For Staff Members**

A. Dealing with disruptive children:

1) If *any* child is being disruptive, library staff may remind the child that they should be quiet in the library.

2) If a child is disruptive **with a parent/caregiver nearby**, library staff may speak directly to the child or may inform the parent/caregiver that the child is behaving inappropriately and ask the parent/caregiver to correct the behavior. If the parent/caregiver refuses or is unable to control the child, they may be asked to remove the child from the library until the problem is resolved.

3) If the child is unattended (if staff cannot locate parent or caregiver on library premises),the child may be asked to take a “time-out” for 15-30 minutes outside or quietly sit on a chair with the option to read. This can be repeated as necessary. Staff is to use their discretion in these cases.

4) If disruptive behavior continues with *any* unattended child and with any unattended child 8 years and younger, all attempts, within reason, will be made to contact the parent/legal guardian. If library staff are unable to contact the parent/legal guardian, then law enforcement personnel will be contacted to pick up the child for the child’s protection and safety.

5) If deemed necessary, library staff may ask the child, if 12 years or older, to leave the library premises. Library staff may use their discretion in such situations (i.e. does the child live within walking distance; is it light or dark; etc.).

B. Dealing with unattended children **8 years and younger** at closing:

1) Twenty minutes prior to closing, the library staff will take inventory of any seemingly unattended children**.** (Note: this should be done throughout the day as well.) The staff will determine if a parent/caregiver is in the library, and if so, the staff member and child will attempt to locate that person. If a parent/caregiver is not in the library, the staff will attempt to contact the child’s parent/legal guardian using information provided by the child, the patron database, or the telephone directory.

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2) Once contacted, the parent/guardian will be reminded/informed of this policy and be advised that their child must be picked up immediately. If parent/guardian is unable to be contacted, the police will be called to escort the child home or keep the child until the parents can be reached.

3) Additionally, if parent/guardian is contacted, but the child’s transportation is not available within 15 minutes after closing, the police will be called to escort the child home or keep the child until the parents arrive.

4) Staff will make every attempt, within reason, to have two (2) staff members on duty while waiting for an unattended child to be picked-up by the parent/guardian. Library staff will not remain longer that 15 minutes after hours with an unattended child and are **not** permitted, under any circumstances, to give the child a ride.

The library is not responsible for children 12 years or older who are outside the building while awaiting transportation or are socializing.

**Remember that parents/guardians and caregivers, *not library staff*, are responsible for the safety and behavior of children within the library and on library premises.**