

UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY

The Heartland Regional Library System is dedicated to providing a welcoming and safe environment for patrons of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow The Library Code of Conduct established by the Board of Trustees and posted in each library building and on the Library website.

While on the Library premises, the safety and well-being of patrons under the age of 18 years, remain the sole responsibility of parents and/or legal guardians. The library is not a childcare facility and library staff members are not babysitters. Library employees cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior. In any situation, a host of factors influence whether it is appropriate for a child to be alone in a library, unattended by a responsible caregiver. These factors include:

- The child's age, developmental level, social awareness, and general health
- The length of time the child is left unattended
- How often the child is left alone
- Whether the child knows how to contact a parent, neighbor, adult friend or relative, if necessary

Note, too, that library staff cannot verify the ages of children who come into the facility. If a well-behaved five-year-old plays quietly in a part of the library, staff may not notice that she is unattended. Also, depending on the circumstances, an eight-year-old may require less supervision than a 14-year-old or a disruptive adult.

If a child is found unattended, the library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the rules. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child is found unattended again, the police will be called for assistance.