



Unattended Child Policy

Bluffton Public Library welcomes and encourages patrons of all ages to visit the library and take advantage of the programs, services and resources that it offers.

Children in the library should be accompanied by a parent or responsible caregiver, age 14 or older unless engaged in a library program that specifies otherwise. Accompanied is defined as “within sight”. Parents may not leave children under age eight unattended and are responsible for their children’s behavior while in the library. “Unattended” means that a parent or responsible caregiver is not on the premises with the child. Parents should not use the library as an alternative to daycare or latchkey service.

At age eight or older some children are mature and able to be left unsupervised. Unsupervised children in the library should clearly exhibit the following abilities:

- Understands and follows the Code of Conduct;
- Makes his or her selections independently;
- Demonstrates his or her comfort in being left alone;
- Knows at least one family member’s telephone number in case of an emergency.

If children over the age of eight are not able to exhibit these abilities they should be accompanied by a parent or caregiver.

If a child is left unattended in the library, the staff will attempt to locate his/her parents. If the parent/caregiver cannot be located within an hour of the initial determination that the child is unattended, library staff will contact local law enforcement to assist the child.

For the safety of the child, the staff will not leave a child under the age of ten outside to wait on a ride. Also if a parent of a minor cannot be reached by the time the library is to close, the police will be called to escort the child home or keep the child until parents can be reached.

Responsibility for the safety and behavior of minors always rests with the parent, guardian, or assigned adult caregiver, and not with library staff. Staff cannot act *in loco parentis*, nor can library staff supervise unattended youth. Children are also expected to adhere to the library’s Code of Conduct.

Library employees are not permitted to remain after hours with an unattended child nor give an unattended child a ride home.