

# Saugus Public Library

## Unattended Children/Adults in Need Policy

**General:** The Saugus Public Library strives to provide a safe, comfortable environment for users of all ages. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of unattended children and adults in need in our facilities. All library users, regardless of age, must conduct themselves lawfully and follow the Library User Behavior Policy

Library employees are not licensed care providers and cannot take the place of parents or guardians. Furthermore, library duties do not allow staff to actively monitor facilities or grounds beyond their work stations. Please remember that the library is a public place. The library staff may not know whether the person a child or adult in need is interacting with, or leaving the library with, is an appropriate chaperone or a stranger. As in all public places, “stranger danger” is a real concern.

**Parents or guardians are ultimately responsible for the conduct of minor children (under 18 years of age) in the Library or on Library grounds, regardless of whether they accompany their children or not.**

### 1. Definitions:

\* Unattended Child: Any child under the age of 18 on Library premises unaccompanied by a parent, guardian or caregiver.

\* Adult in Need: A person 18 years of age or older who, due to physical or developmental challenges, is incapable of adequately caring for himself or herself and his or her interests.

### 2. Unattended Children:

a. Children under the age of 8 must have a parent or caregiver within sight or conversation distance unless the child is participating in a formal library program. If the child is participating in a formal library program, a parent or caregiver must remain in the building and should join the child immediately when the program is completed. The caregiver must be at least 12 years of age.

b. Children ages 8 – 11 may use the Library unattended. Library staff will inform apparently unattended children behaving disruptively or inappropriately of the rules. If the disruptive or inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be asked to leave the Library. If a child in this age group is unaccompanied by an adult or appropriate-aged caregiver, the staff will follow the directions in Paragraph 3. (below). Library staff may not take responsibility for the care of any child regardless of age.

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c. Children ages 12-17 may use the Library unattended. Library staff will inform apparently unattended children behaving disruptively or inappropriately of the rules. If the disruptive or inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be asked to leave the Library.

3. **Adults in Need:** Guardians/caregivers are responsible for the behavior and safety of any adult(s) in need in the Library. As with unattended children, library staff may not take responsibility for the care of any adult in need.

4. **Procedures:** If a child under the age of 8, or an adult in need, is in apparent distress, or has been asked to leave the building and is in the Library without a parent or caregiver, Library staff will:

a. Notify the Librarian-in-Charge of the situation.

b. Attempt to verbally comfort the individual, if necessary. Do not lay hands on or touch them.

c. Locate the parent/guardian or caregiver in the Library and explain the Unattended Child/Adult in Need Policy.

d. Attempt to contact the parent/guardian or caregiver who is not in the Library and ask him or her to come to the library and pick up the child or adult in need. Staff will express the Library's concern for the individual's safety and explain the Unattended Child/Adult in Need Policy.

e. Should attempts to contact the parent/guardian of the unattended child/adult in need prove unsuccessful, call the Saugus Police Department, which will assist in the successful resolution of the situation

f. If it is within 15 minutes of closing time or in the case of an emergency closure of the facility due to inclement weather, utility failure, or other qualifying condition, encourage an unattended child/adult in need to contact the parent/guardian or caregiver. If a parent/guardian or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive by closing time, Library staff will call the Saugus Police Department (781-941-1199), which will assist in the successful resolution of the situation. **In the unusual event where staff members must accompany the child or adult in need to the Police Station, a minimum of two (2) staff members should accompany the subject.**

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g. Remain with the individual until the parent/guardian or caregiver arrives or until police resolve the situation.

h. Leave a note on the front and Taylor Street doors of the Library if police take custody of an unattended child/adult in need stating “Unattended [‘child’ or ‘adult in need’] is in the custody of the Saugus Police Department, 27 Hamilton Street, 781-941-1199.” The name of the individual will not be stated on the note.

i. Library staff may not transport any child/adult in need from the Library to another location. Library staff may accompany any unattended child/adult in need from the library, if necessary, to the Saugus Police Headquarters. However, this is a last resort and will only be taken after they call the Police to report the unattended child/adult in need and determine that the Police cannot come to the library to retrieve them.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, April 4, 2019