

# Berkeley Public Library

## Youth Policy

### Introduction

The Berkeley Public Library is dedicated to providing a welcoming environment that encourages children and families to visit the Library, to use the Library's collections and computers, and to attend programs designed to encourage reading and life-long learning and exploration. The Library encourages frequent visits by children and maintains the belief that visits should be a positive and enjoyable experience. While the health, safety, and well-being of children visiting the Library is of the utmost importance, the Library staff does not act *in loco parentis* (in place of parents). For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise specified, children are those between birth through 17 years old or dependent adults.

Parents, guardians, and/or caregivers are responsible for monitoring the safety, behavior, health, and activities of children at all times in the Library and on library property, regardless of whether they are accompanying the children or not. The Library is not able or equipped to provide short- or long-term childcare and is not a substitute for supervised after-school or daycare programs. Staff cannot be placed in a position of supervising unattended children. While staff is committed to assisting children with activities related to the Library, it is not their duty to serve as baby-sitters or disciplinarians. It is solely their duty to assist and support children using the Library.

In an effort to ensure the safety and well-being of children within a public facility and to maintain an atmosphere of appropriate library use, the following policies have been adopted.

### Policy for the Public

1. Responsibility for the welfare and behavior of children using the Library ultimately rests with the parent/guardian or an assigned caregiver.
2. Children under the age of eight (8) must be accompanied and adequately supervised at all times by a parent, guardian, or responsible caregiver fourteen (14) years of age or older. Children under the age of six (6) must be in the immediate vicinity of that caregiver at all times.

In the event that a child under the age of 8 is found unsupervised during normal library hours, a library staff member will make every effort to locate a parent or caregiver. If a parent or caregiver cannot be found within a reasonable amount of time, the local police department will be contacted.

3. Children between the ages of 8 and 17 may use the Library unattended for an amount of time appropriate for their age and maturity, provided that they comply with all library rules including the Patron Policy. An unattended child will be expected to actively use library services during their visit.

Parents/caregivers are responsible for the behavior of their unattended children. If children do not comply with library rules or the Patron Policy, library staff may ask them to leave the Library. If a child of this age group is not able to leave the Library without an adult, they should not be in the Library alone.

In the event an unattended child is asked to leave the Library and is unable to do so on their own, a library staff member will make every effort to locate a parent or caregiver. If a parent or caregiver cannot be found within a reasonable amount of time, the local police department will be contacted.

4. Children (or dependent adults) of any age with mental, physical, or emotional concerns which require supervision must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or responsible caregiver at all times.
5. All unattended children must be able to provide the telephone number of a parent/guardian or someone who can assist them in an emergency or other special circumstance. If a child is found to be unattended during a medical emergency, library staff will first call 911 and then attempt to locate the parent/caregiver. If the parent/caregiver cannot be located, library staff will contact the local authorities. Charges for ambulance services will be the responsibility of the parent/guardian.
6. Children participating in library programs are not considered to be supervised or 'attended' by library staff. During scheduled programs that are designed and suitable for attendance by children age 5-8, a parent or caregiver must remain in the building so they are available, if needed. Children under the age of six (6) must always be within sight of the adult/guardian responsible for their safety, including during scheduled programs. Children 8-17 may attend programming without supervision but all rules detailed in #3 will apply.
7. Parents/caregivers are responsible for being aware of the Library's hours of operation and must also keep in mind that the Library may close unexpectedly due to inclement weather, power outages, or other emergencies. Parents/caregivers must pick up children before closing time, and children must know how to contact parents/caregivers in the case of emergency.

In the event that a child, who cannot travel alone, is left at the Library at the time of closing, a library staff member will make every effort to locate a parent/caregiver. If a parent/caregiver has not arrived within 15 minutes, the police will be notified. Two staff members will remain with the child at the Library until authorities arrive. Library staff will not transport or escort a child to another location under any circumstance.

8. The Library does not encourage or condone truancy; but it is not the responsibility of library staff to enforce truancy ordinances. Local safety officers and police are obligated to do so, and may enforce such ordinances when present at the Library.
9. Parents/guardians are responsible for supervising the materials their child is allowed to borrow or use in the Library and should make their rules clear to their own child. The Library does not monitor library materials children choose.

### **Policy for Library Staff and Volunteers**

1. All library staff and volunteers who work with minors will be evaluated and approved before beginning work. This process will include a) an interview with the Library Director or other designated staff member; b) the name and contact information of at least one reference that is unrelated to the

applicant; c) all staff and volunteers will have their names checked using the State of Illinois Sex Offender Inquiry System, found at <https://isp.illinois.gov/Sor>.

2. The Library supports an Open-Door Policy. Parents/caregivers are permitted to visit and observe all programs at any time.
3. The Library supports a Two Person Rule. In any situation involving minors, no library staff member or volunteer is to be alone in a room with a minor unless both parties are clearly visible at all times via a window, open door, etc.
4. The Library supports a Physical Contact Policy. Appropriate affection between staff, volunteers, and minors is often important for a child's development and can be a positive force. However, discretion is necessary in regards to physical contact with children. A friendly hug or touch may be perceived as otherwise. Staff and volunteers should also be aware of cultural differences regarding physical contact.

Staff and volunteers should never attempt to physically remove a child from the library building or property. If a child behaves in an inappropriate manner and refuses to leave on their own, staff will attempt to contact a parent or guardian. If a parent/guardian cannot be reached or fail to remove the child, local police will be contacted.

*NOTE: This policy is intended to replace the existing 'Child Protection Management Policy' as approved by the Board in November 2018.*

*APPROVED by the Board on this 24<sup>th</sup> day of July, 2024. AYES: 6 NAYS: none.*