

Lyons Regional Library District Safe Child Policy

The Lyons Regional Library District (the “District” or the “Library”) is dedicated to creating and maintaining a welcoming and safe environment that encourages all children (defined as anyone under age 18) to visit the Library, attend programs and events, and use Library resources. Library staff are available to assist and support children and their caregivers in using the Library. While the Library encourages visits by children and their caregivers, staff does not provide child care or assume responsibility for a child’s safety.

Unattended Children

An unattended child is a child of any age who is apparently unaccompanied by a parent or caregiver. Children who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves may not be left alone in the Library or on Library grounds at any time and must have adequate supervision from a parent or caregiver. *Parents and caregivers acknowledge the risk and their own responsibility of leaving a child unattended in the Library.* To the extent permitted by law, parents and caregivers release the District and Staff from all claims which they may have or which they may have on behalf of their child/ward based on a child being left at the Library unattended or otherwise in violation of Library Policy.

Children age 8 and older may use the Library unattended provided they understand and follow the Library Behavior Policy and observe proper conduct as defined by the Library staff. Such children are subject to the same rules of behavior as other patrons and the same consequences, including being asked to leave the premises. Children must know how to reach a parent/caregiver in case of an emergency, and both child and parent/caregiver are expected to be aware of and follow the Library hours.

Children under the age of 8 should have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of the child. An exception would be children attending a Library program without a parent/caregiver in the room. However, the parent/caregiver is expected to remain readily available and able to join the child at the end of the program.

If a child in this age group is found unattended, Library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the Library. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child is found unattended again, the non-emergency Dispatch number may be called.

The Library and its staff members are not, under any circumstances, responsible for determining whether a parent/caregiver is a legally authorized caregiver.

Expectations

Children behaving in a manner inconsistent with the Library's Behavior Policy may be asked to leave the Library. All unaccompanied children at the Library should have the telephone number of a parent/caregiver who can assist them if they are asked to leave or in the event of an emergency.

It is the responsibility of parents/caregivers to make sure their children have transportation to and from the Library. If a child is alone at the Library at closing, Library staff may attempt to call a parent/caregiver. If staff cannot reach a parent/caregiver, or said person is not available to pick up their child then staff may call non-emergency Dispatch. At no time will a staff member or volunteer remain alone with or transport a child of any age.

The Library respects the privacy of all patrons and visitors and will intervene only when the staff member reasonably believes a child is at risk, is disturbing other patrons, or is endangering themselves or others.

Child Sexual Abuse Prevention

Additionally, in accordance with Colorado Senate Bill 21-088 (the Child Sexual Abuse Accountability Act), the Library has established the following provisions to reasonably protect its young patrons from verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, and to set clear expectations for the staff and volunteers who work with them.

Sexual abuse is inappropriate sexual contact or interaction with a child under 18 for the stimulation or gratification of any individual, including but not limited to, the following:

1. Looking at or touching the sexual or other intimate parts of a child
2. Engaging in sexually explicit conversation with a child, whether in person, by telephone, or by computer or other device
3. Nudity or actual or simulated sexual activity in the presence of a child under any circumstances or for any purpose.

Protective Measures

At least two adults (at least one of whom must be a staff member or volunteer) will be present in the Library or at Library sponsored programs if children are present. Library staff or volunteers should never be alone in a closed room with a child and all programming shall occur in areas open to observation.

The youth-specific areas of the Library are designed to serve the needs of age-appropriate users. Adults unaccompanied by a child in a designated youth area might be asked to use other areas of the Library.

All staff and volunteers who work with children will be evaluated and approved before beginning work. References and background checks are required.

Discretion is necessary in regard to physical contact with young people. The Library wants its patrons to feel comfortable with staff and volunteers, and expressions of affection, especially from younger children, are to be expected. However, it is important to remember that a friendly hug or touch may be perceived otherwise.

The Library does permit or sanction physical punishment of any kind or verbal threats by its staff or volunteers. Staff or volunteers should never attempt to physically remove a child from the Library or property.

Reporting Procedures

Reporting procedures will be in accordance with relevant Colorado law. The Library will periodically make its staff and volunteers aware of the Colorado Child Sexual Abuse Accountability Act and its ramifications. Any staff member or volunteer observing suspected harm to a minor in the Library or at a Library sponsored program is required to report it as soon as possible to the Library Director or her/his designee.

Approved and adopted by the Lyons Regional Library District: September 20, 2022