

CITY OF LINCOLN ADMINSTRATION POLICY	NUMBER:
PREPARED BY: Kathryn Hunt	DATE: February 2, 2022
SUBJECT: Minors in the Library	AUTHORITY : Director of Library Services
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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to clarify questions regarding the use of the Library facilities and collection by minors.

DEFINITION

“Minors” are unemancipated individuals between the ages of 0-17.

“Guardians” are individuals with responsibility for minors. These typically include:

- Parents
- A person who has legal custody of a minor
- A person with actual or apparent responsibility over a minor.

“Chaperones” are individuals with the age and maturity necessary to regulate the behaviors of a minor in a public place. These typically include:

- Older siblings
- Babysitters

POLICY

The Lincoln Public Library welcomes and encourages minors to visit our libraries and make use of the Library’s collections and services. Minors are an important part of the service we provide. This policy addresses issues related to minors in the Library and the responsibilities of staff, volunteers, patrons, and guardians.

Role of the Library

The Library provides resources and information that both entertain and educate minors. We are committed to promoting a learning environment and to foster a love of reading and books. Staff are happy to assist minors in learning to use the Library, including searching the catalog and finding materials. The Library also supports guardians in learning about library materials and services, so that guardians can make informed choices regarding the use of the Library by their charges.

Staff cannot act “in loco parentis”, or in the parental role. This means library staff cannot:

- Take responsibility for minors in the library.
- Restrict what minors access in the library
- Restrict what minors check out from the library
- Restrict what minors access on the internet, outside of the standard Internet Use Policy.
- Require minors to stay within the library or assess who is authorized to pick-up a minor.

Role of Guardians

Guardians play an important role in their charges' experience in the Library. They are encouraged to make the Library experience more enjoyable by being aware of their charge's reading activities and interests.

Only a guardian can monitor a minor's library use. This includes selection of materials and access to the internet. It is important to remember guardians are responsible for the minor's behavior and actions while in the Lincoln Public Library, whether they are present or not.

Unsupervised Use of the Library

The library takes great concern over the safety of all patrons, regardless of age. When a minor is left unattended at the library, staff or volunteers of the library cannot assume responsibility of the unattended minor. Therefore parents or those who possess legal custody of a minor should understand that the library cannot assure their minor's safety if left unattended.

Use of the library without supervision requires the following skills:

- The ability to independently observe the Library Code of Conduct
- The ability to independently navigate the layout of the Library
- The ability to communicate one's name, age, and the contact information for a guardian to a staff member.
- The ability to regulate one's emotions and behaviors in response to other patrons and library staff.

As such:

- Minors under the age of 5 must always be accompanied by a chaperone or guardian within the same area of the library (i.e., both the minor and guardian are in the Children's Library).
- Minors between the ages of 6 and 10 must always be accompanied by a chaperone or guardian within the library (i.e., the minor is in the Children's Library and the guardian is the DVD section). This guardian may be in another section of the library, provided the minor(s) in question are sufficiently mature to navigate the library and locate their guardian as needed.
- Minors over the age of ten may use the library unsupervised for short periods of time if they possess the skills mentioned above. If there is any question as to a minor's ability or maturity to be left alone, a guardian must continue to accompany the minor at the library until the minor possesses an appropriate maturity or ability to be left unattended.
- The Library is not equipped or licensed to provide long or short-term care for minors, and it is not the role or responsibility of Library staff members to supervise minors. The Library is a public place and cannot provide any safety guarantees beyond that of other

public spaces, and as such cannot be used as a replacement for daycare or other supervised care.

- The Library is unable to restrict minors to specific events, areas of the library, or within the library. Unsupervised minors are able to move throughout the library and leave the library at will. Staff are also not responsible for assessing who may pick-up a minor from the Library.

Library staff have the right to ask anyone, including minors, to leave the library when their behavior becomes unacceptable and violates the Code of Conduct. If it is judged by staff to be in the best interest of the minor, the minor may also be released into the care of the Lincoln Police Department if a guardian cannot be reached.

Minors left unattended at closing may be released into the care of the Lincoln Police Department, if there is no indication that the minor has transportation to a safe location in the near future, a guardian cannot be contacted, and staff feel it is in the best interest of the minor.

Children's Area

The Children's Area is intended for use by patrons aged 0-12 years old and their families, and its purpose is to centralize the information and recreation resources of this age group while offering a safe, supportive, and positive space that is uniquely their own. All patrons who are actively using the Children's collection materials are also welcome in the Children's Area for this purpose. Due to the large number of young patrons who use this space, and out of concern for the safety of these young patrons, adults who are unaccompanied by a child or children in the children's area of the Library may be questioned by staff and asked to move to another area of the Library if their use of the space is not in line with this policy.

Teen Space

The Teen Space is intended for use by patrons aged 12-17 years old, and its purpose is to centralize the information and recreation resources of this age group while offering a safe, supportive, and positive space that is uniquely their own. All patrons who are actively using the Young Adult collection materials are also welcome in the Teen Space for this purpose. Due to the large number of young patrons who use this space, and out of concern for the safety of these young patrons, adults who are unaccompanied by a teen in the Teen Space of the Library may be questioned by staff and asked to move to another area of the Library if their use of the space is not in line with this policy.

Children's and Teen Events and Programs

Attendance at events and programs oriented toward minors is reserved for patrons within the target age and/or developmental level, and guardians and chaperones accompanying them. Unless otherwise noted, guardians and chaperones are required to attend the full duration of all programs and events with minors in their care. Due to the large number of young patrons who take part in these events, and out of concern for the safety of these young patrons, adults who are unaccompanied by a minor at such events may be questioned by staff and asked to leave the event if their attendance is not in line with this policy.

For the safety of all parties, all Library staff and volunteers have a background check completed before beginning to work or volunteer in the Library. In addition, library staff and volunteers do not conduct 1:1 private programming with minors. All Library programs and events take place with multiple parties or in public, visible spaces.

Library Materials

The public, regardless of age, has free access to all Library material selected and placed in the collection. Placement of material within the Library is generally based upon assigned classification and appropriate age groupings. Some items need protection because of rarity, cost, susceptibility to loss or damage, fragility or format unsuited to heavy use. These items are often available by request only.

Any restriction of a minor's access to material is the responsibility of the parents or guardians, not library staff. The Library cannot act in loco parentis, thus staff cannot restrict access of Library material to minors. Please see Materials Selection Policy for further information.

Library Cards for Minors

Minors of all ages who reside in California are eligible for a library card, but a guardian must co-sign the account. All library cards provide the cardholder access to check out all circulating materials within the collection. Library staff are unable to restrict the materials checked out by a minor.

When cosigning a library card application for a minor, the guardian may designate whether the card may be used to reserve library computers. If the account is eligible to reserve computers, staff are unable to restrict what minors access on the internet, outside of the standard Internet Use Policy.

When cosigning a library card application for a minor, guardians agree to teach the minor to abide by the Lincoln Public Library Cardholder Agreement. Guardians are also responsible for loss or damage of library materials checked out by minors in their care.

All library cardholders, including minors, are protected by state confidentiality laws regarding library accounts. The signing guardian acknowledges in the Library Cardholder Agreement that "I am aware that confidentiality laws limit the information staff can share with me about my child's library use." Staff may only provide a guardian information concerning fees charged on the account. Staff may only reset the pin at the request of the cardholder.