

<b>CITY OF LINCOLN ADMINSTRATION POLICY</b>	<b>NUMBER:</b>
<b>PREPARED BY: Andi Adkins Pogue</b>	<b>DATE: April 24, 2015</b>
<b>SUBJECT: Children in the Library Policy</b>	<b>AUTHORITY :</b> <b>Director of Library Services</b>
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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and process for issues related to children in the library.

## **DEFINITION**

Children: minors age 0-17 or mentally disabled adults still under the care of others.

Parent: biological or adoptive father or mother who has legal custody of a child.

Guardian: someone other than parent who has legal custody of a child.

Caregiver: someone who has been given responsibility over a child by the parent or guardian.

## **GENERAL POLICY**

The Lincoln Public Library welcomes and encourages children to visit our libraries and make use of the Library's collections and services. Children are an important part of the service we provide. This policy addresses issues related to children in the Library and the responsibilities of staff, patrons, parents, guardians, and caregivers. In particular, that parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for the behavior and safety of their children while on the premises of the Lincoln Public Library.

### **Children's Area**

The Children's area of the Library is reserved for children, their parents, guardians, and caregivers, and adults interested in children's literature, such as grandparents, teachers, and college students taking children's literature classes. 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.

### **Library Role**

The Library provides resources and information that both entertain and educate children. We are committed to promoting a learning environment and to foster a love of reading and books. Staff are happy to assist children in learning to use the Library, including searching the catalog and finding materials.

Staff cannot act “In loco parentis”. This means that Library staff cannot assume the parental role or take responsibility for children in the Library or what children check out or access on the internet. It is not the role or responsibility of Library staff members to supervise children while in the Library. The Library is not a daycare facility and should not be used as such. It is not equipped or licensed to provide long or short-term care for children.

A library card issued to a child can only be used by that child. Due to confidentiality laws, staff may only provide a parent or guardian who has their child's library card with information concerning the number of items checked out, overdues, damaged items, and other charges on the account. This information is also available online.

### **Parent, Guardian, and Caregiver Role**

Parents, guardians, and caregivers 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 child's reading activities and interests.

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

When getting a child a card, parents or guardians agree to teach the child to abide by the Lincoln Public Library Cardholder Agreement. Parents or guardians are also responsible for loss or damage of library materials checked out by their children.

### **Materials Selection**

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.

## **Guidelines for Children Visiting the Lincoln Public Library**

The following guidelines are designed to create a safe and enjoyable Library experience for people of all ages.

- Parents, guardians, or caretakers are responsible for monitoring and regulating their child's behavior at all times. This applies whether they are present or not.
- Children nine (9) years of age or younger or children with special emotional and physical needs, must be accompanied and directly supervised by a parent, guardian, or caretaker while visiting the Library.
- Caregivers that are an older sibling or teenage babysitter must possess a maturity and skill level necessary to supervise a child age nine(9) or younger in a public place.
- Children age ten (10) and older are permitted to visit the Library without adult supervision for short periods.
- Parents should provide their children resources to contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver while at the Library, such as cell phone, money for pay phone and phone numbers.
- At times, the Library must close without prior notice due to unusual or emergency circumstances. In this event or in case of other emergencies, unaccompanied children who cannot transport themselves must be able to reach a parent or responsible adult caregiver for immediate pick-up.
- During storytimes and other children's programs, parents, guardians, or caretakers must stay with their children unless otherwise noted in the program agenda.
- Parents, guardians, or caretakers of children age nine (9) and younger using the Twelve Bridges Homework Center must be in the Library to pick up their child when it closes.
- Parents, guardians, or caretakers must be aware of Library hours and closing times and plan to pick up their children prior to or at closing.
- As with all patrons, children are expected to follow Library rules, guidelines, and policies. This includes respecting Library property, staff members, and other Library patrons.
- Children left unattended can exhibit inappropriate behavior, which can become a safety concern for staff members and other Library patrons. Library staff have the right to ask anyone, including children, whose behavior becomes unacceptable to leave the Library.
- When a problem arises with a child of any age and staff members are unable to locate or contact the parent, guardian, or caretaker, staff members may contact the Lincoln Police Department.

## **Children Left Unattended in the Library or at Closing**

At times children are left unattended in the Library or after the Library closes. This is a serious concern. Children left on their own in a public place can become frightened and anxious. Libraries are often thought of as safe places that is unfortunately not always the case. The Library or its staff cannot guarantee the safety of children.

When a child age nine (9) or under is left unattended or a child of any age is left after the Library closes, staff will abide by the following:

1. Attempt to comfort the child if necessary.
2. Write down the name of the child, his/her parents, guardian, or caregiver and their contact information (phone, address, e-mail). This information should be given to the Director.
3. Assist the child in locating their parent, guardian or caregiver by making phone calls, etc.
4. When parent arrives provide a copy of this policy and the letter from the director to the parent, guardian, or caregiver.
5. When a parent, guardian, or caregiver cannot be located within twenty (20) minutes, a staff member will contact the Lincoln Police Department's non emergency line 916-645-4040 for assistance.
  - a. The Director of the Library shall be notified if the police are contacted.
  - b. At least two (2) staff members will stay with the child until a parent, caregiver, or the police officer arrives.
  - c. Under no circumstances, is a Library staff member to transport children in any vehicle or be alone with a child.
6. A Library incident report will be completed and submitted to the Director within three (3) working days.
7. Parents, guardian, or caregiver abusing this policy will be sent a second letter from the Director explaining the Library's policy and that additional occurrences may affect their access to the library and its services.

## Sample Unattended Children Parental Notification Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I wanted to make you aware of a recent situation concerning your child(ren), \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. On the following date, \_\_\_\_\_ the child(ren) in question  
was/were left unattended at the Lincoln Public Library \_\_\_\_\_. This letter has been sent to  
address this concern.

A copy of the Library's policy on Children in the Library is enclosed here for your attention.  
Please review this policy and make every effort to follow it. In particular it is important that

1. Children, if nine or younger, be accompanied by a parent of guardian when using the library or arrange for a caregiver.
2. All children should be picked up by closing time or earlier.

In this situation it was/was not necessary to call the police.

If this situation occurs again, it may be necessary to suspend library privileges for you or your family. The safety of your child(ren) and others using the library as well as the daily operations of the Library is our responsibility. Please consider this during your or your child(ren)'s future visits.

If you have any questions regarding this policy or any other concerns please feel free to contact me.

Very Truly Yours,

Director of Library Services