

SAFE CHILD POLICY

See *also*: the Unattended Child policy and the Internet Safety and Use policy

This Safe Child Policy was created to minimize the safety risk to children in the library.

GENERAL:

Staff will not take over parental or child care responsibilities for children who come into the library.

It is the right and responsibility of a parent or guardian to determine what is appropriate material in order to meet personal family standards and guidelines. Therefore, parents are encouraged to accompany their children and to select material with their children or review their children's selections. The library is not responsible for a minor's selection of, or exposure to, print or electronic library materials.

Staff and volunteers will be screened according to City of Columbus and library policy. Staff and volunteers who work with other agencies who may be housed in the library facility will be screened according to City of Columbus and library policy at the tenant agency's expense.

The public will have access to public areas only. To the extent that building design permits, nonpublic areas will be closed off.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEER (OF ANY AGE) CONDUCT BOTH ON AND OFFSITE:

The Library expects exemplary behavior by all its staff and volunteers.

- Touching should be in response to the need of the child, not the need of the adult.
- Touching should be with the child's permission.
- Resistance to touching must be respected.
- Touching must never include the breast, buttocks, or groin.
- Touching should be done in the open, not in private.
- Touching should have a brief, limited duration.

While engaged in library service staff and volunteers will not:

- Smoke or use tobacco products in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol at any time while volunteering.
- Use, possess, or be under the influence of illegal drugs at any time.
- Strike, spank, shake, or slap children and/or youth.
- Touch a child and/or youth in a sexual or other inappropriate manner.
- Use any discipline that frightens or humiliates children and/or youth.
- Use profanity in the presence of children and/or youth.
- Humiliate, ridicule, threaten, or degrade children and/or youth.
- Use abusive statements such as those that deal with race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, gender, age, sex, or sexual orientation. In addition, physical, emotional, sexual, and ethical abuses are prohibited, as is neglect or endangerment of a child.

If children attempt to climb into a staff member's or volunteer's lap, they should be gently set aside or given to the caregiver.

Staff and volunteers will not be in one-on-one no-visibility situations with children or young people. Doors are not permitted to be closed for one-on-one conversations, assistance, tutoring, etcetera, unless there is a window in the door. Staff and volunteers will always be observable in interactions with children and young people.

Staff and volunteers will never conduct alone an after-hours program involving children or youth.

It is understood that staff and volunteers may have legitimate relationships with minors outside of their contact at the library (e.g. neighbors, family friends, church work, etc.). However, where such an offsite personal relationship does not exist, staff and volunteers may socialize with or contact children and youth they have met at the library providing they have parental or guardian permission, are conducting library business, or are in a public arena.

Staff and volunteers are not permitted to remain alone after closing time with a child. Staff or volunteers will not give a child a ride home. Staff and volunteers will not transport children to or from offsite activities.

Staff and volunteers are mandatory reporters under the law. Any staff or volunteer who witnesses or suspects child abuse or neglect will call the Abuse/Neglect Hotline 1-800-652-1999. Depending on the circumstances, local law enforcement may also be called.

“Any person who willfully fails to make any report shall be guilty of a Class III misdemeanor.”

For more information Nebraska Revised Statutes §§ 28-710, 28-711, 28-717

<http://uniweb.legislature.ne.gov/laws/laws.php>

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