



## **Safe/Unattended Minors in the Library Policy**

**Approved by Trustees: September 3, 2024**

The Nevins Library Trustees and library staff strive to make the Youth Services Areas of the Library a welcoming, safe, and fun place in our community where children are encouraged to develop a love of reading and learning. This policy is drafted for the protection and safety of families and children using the Library and to offer guidance to their accompanying parents, legal guardians and adult caregivers\*.

Parents, legal guardians and adult caregivers, please remember that the Library is a heavily-used public facility. The Nevins Library staff are not responsible for unattended children, nor are they able to monitor children and do not act “in loco parentis.” The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children rests solely with the parent, legal guardian, or adult caregiver. Nevins Library Behavior Guidelines apply to children and teens visiting the library, and attending programs. Children and teens are expected to follow directions given by Library staff. Children and teens who exhibit inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the Library. If the child is unable to leave the Library without an adult, they should not be in the Library without an adult.

Adults must remain with children in grade 4 and under \*\* during their library visit. A child can be left in the care of an older sibling if that sibling is at least 14 years old. This is especially important in large crowd situations that occur during events held in the library’s hall, outside on the library grounds and times of heavy use by the community.

Library staff reserve the right to contact community resources if unattended children frequent the Library during regular school hours.

The Nevins Library offers unfiltered Internet access as part of its informational services. Parents, legal guardians and adult caregivers are responsible for supervising their children’s usage of the Internet. We urge all adult caregivers to monitor their children’s usage on the Internet and to educate them regarding security and social etiquette while they are online.

### **Minors Attending Programs at the Library**

The Nevins Library Trustees and staff cannot emphasize enough that a responsible adult needs to accompany children to the library for events, meetings and programs. Children attending preschool programs must always have an adult caregiver present in the library program space, and they are requested to be an active participant with their children.

\* These terms may be used interchangeably in this document.

\*\* Homeschool children are considered to be in the grade that corresponds with their age.

School-aged children attending events at the library must have an adult present in the building for the duration of the program. Library staff reserve the right to ask an adult to remain in a program with their school aged child(ren) at any time. Children must be met at the end of the program by their adult caregiver. Parents are cautioned that library staff will not monitor children during events held in the library's meeting rooms or outside on the library's grounds.

### **Expectations for Minors Using the Library without an Adult Present**

Children who are in grade 5 and above \*\*, may use the library unsupervised by an adult. These children are subject to the same rules and regulations governing behavior and use of the facility as teens and adults. Children must have the telephone number of their parent, legal guardian or another designated adult available to contact in the event of an emergency or unexpected closing. Children and teens using the library who have become disruptive will be asked to stop the behavior. If the behavior continues after a second warning, the child may be asked to leave the library for the day and start off with a clean slate the following day. If the child is unable to leave the Library without an adult, they should not be in the Library without an adult. It is important that children and teens conduct themselves in a respectful fashion when they interact with staff and not disrupt other people using the library during their time at the library.

Anyone engaging in extremely disruptive behavior or vandalism will be asked to leave immediately. If a pattern of disruptive behavior in a child/teen or group of children/teens develops over several days or weeks, or if the library management has concern over a child or children who are regularly being left at the library for excessive periods of time, the Library Director reserves the right to contact parents or legal guardians who will be expected to resolve the situation. If the situation continues, the Library Director may contact the authorities.

### **Caregivers Attending Programs/Meetings, Researching at the Library, etc.**

Caregivers attending adult programs or meetings at the library with children in grade 4 and under are expected keep their children with them at the event. This means the adult caregiver and the children present are able to see each other and the adult caregiver is able to communicate and supervise the children. Caregivers engaged in research may want to seek out a librarian's advice and/or direction about the best location for balancing research and responsibility for the children.

### **Adults in Children's Room/Teen Space and Programs**

Library Staff will monitor adults unaccompanied by children utilizing the Children's Room for appropriate usage of collections, materials, computers and program offerings. Adult users may be referred to other areas of the library dependent upon staff assessment. Inappropriate use of the computers located in the Children's Room by teens and adults will result in limiting their computer privileges to the adult reference area. The Teen Space on the main floor of the Library is for use by teenagers, adults looking for a quiet space to study are encouraged to ask at any public service desk for guidance.

\*\* Homeschool children are considered to be in the grade that corresponds with their age.

Adults unaccompanied by a child are not permitted to participate in Youth Service's activities or programs designated solely for children/teens. Student teachers, teachers or library professionals may view Youth Services programming when permission has been secured by speaking with the Head of the Department or Library Director or designee prior to the event.

### **Expectations for Children When the Library is Closing**

Library hours are regularly publicized and readily available to anyone who calls the Library or visits the website. Adults are expected to make arrangements to pick up children before the Library closes. However, if a minor (under the age of 14 years old) is left unattended when the Library closes, library staff will call the Methuen Police Department to care for the child(ren) until an adult arrives. Children aged 14 years and older will be encouraged to wait near the front entrance of the Library OR walk across the street to the Methuen Police Station if they feel more comfortable waiting inside a building.