

## **Artesia Public Library Safe Child Policy**

Children are defined as individuals less than 18 years of age.

### **Purpose of Policy:**

Service to children is a high priority of Artesia Public Library. Children are welcomed and encouraged to use the library's materials, services, and programs. Visiting the library encourages literacy and fosters a love for lifelong learning. Because the library is a public building, the safety and well-being of unattended children is a serious concern. Children may become frightened, anxious, or restless and disruptive, especially when left alone for an extended period of time. This policy has been established to provide a safe and positive environment for children who use the library.

### **Responsibility:**

Responsibility for the welfare and behavior of children using the library is that of the parent, guardian or assigned caregiver (hereinafter referred to as caregiver). Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they are not licensed caregivers and cannot assume responsibility of the child's safety, behavior, and comfort while they are unattended in the library building or on library grounds. Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with, or leaving the library with, persons who are not appropriate caregivers. It is not the intention of the library staff to seek out unattended children, but rather to have a reasonable response prepared if necessary.

### **Responses**

- Children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by a caregiver at all times. This means the caregiver must maintain a line of sight with the child during the entire library visit. A caregiver must be at least 15 years old. Children aged 12 and over may be left unattended at the discretion of the caregiver.
- Children at least 8 years old may attend library programs alone as long as the library has a phone number to reach the caregiver and the caregiver is aware of when the program will end. The caregiver must pick up the child promptly at the program's end.
- Disruptive children will be required to leave the library. Children are subject to the same Behavior Policy rules as other library users, and the same consequences apply, including suspension from use of the library. Should it become necessary, and if the caregiver of a disruptive child cannot be located, the library will ask the Artesia Police Department to intervene.
- Children left unattended in violation of this policy will be considered endangered and they will be referred to the Artesia Police Department for appropriate action.
- The library is not responsible for children outside the building who await transportation or are socializing.
- Children must know how to reach a caregiver in case of an emergency, and both the child and the caregiver must be aware of library hours. Within 10 minutes of closing time, the Artesia

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Police Department will be called to escort unattended children from the library. Two staff members will remain with the child and will document the situation with an incident report.

- The library is not responsible for the care and supervision of children prior to opening or after closing.
- When staff recognizes a medical emergency concerning an unattended child, they will immediately call 911. Staff will not assume any responsibility for the treatment or transport of a child in medical distress. Staff will attempt to contact the child's caregiver.
- The children's area and young adult area are reserved for children, caregivers, and adults selecting books. Adults who are unaccompanied by a child may be asked to move to another section of the library.
- The library supervisor may make exceptions to these age-based rules depending on the behavior of the child and any other circumstances that may arise.