

Unattended Children

The Worth-Pinkham Memorial Library (hereinafter “Library”) is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for children of all ages. Service to children is an important part of the Library’s mission. For the protection and well-being of children who visit the Library, the following policy has been established:

1. Children under the age of 7 and dependent persons of any age must be accompanied by an adult (age 14 or older) caregiver at all times while on Library property.¹ Many of the Library’s story times and other youth programs require a parent or caregiver to attend the event with their child. In the case of those where this is not required, the parent or caregiver who does not attend the program must remain in the building and be visible when their child is finished. Community groups who utilize the Library for scheduled meetings or programs are the responsible caregivers for any children participating in the activity.
2. Staff will immediately try to locate the parent or caregiver of any child under the age of 7 or dependent person left alone in the building. Ho-Ho-Kus Police may be notified when the parents or caregivers of unattended individual cannot be contacted or located within 15 minutes.
3. At the discretion of the parent/caregiver, children between the ages of 8 and 13 may be left unaccompanied for a reasonable time required to use library resources, not to exceed 2 hours. While using the Library, children must know how to contact at least two adults in case of an emergency. They will be expected to act in accordance with the Library’s Code of Conduct. The Library is not a child care center and cannot legally function as such (N.J.S.A. 30:5B-1-15).² It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible, at any time, to pick up any child who has become anxious or disruptive in the Library. If a parent cannot be located, the police will be notified, as that child will be considered abandoned (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21).³
4. Thirty minutes before closing time, staff will approach all youths who are on Library premises to ascertain that they are aware of the impending closing time and that they have transportation home. Those needing rides will be asked to contact a parent or caregiver.
5. Two staff members will wait with any child under the age of 14 who has not been picked up by closing time. If, after 15 minutes, the individual is still left unattended, the Ho-Ho-Kus Police will be called to pick up the child. Please be aware of possible early closings due to inclement weather.
6. Parents, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior of their children using the library and may be held liable for any damage they cause.

¹ “Dependent persons” is defined as individuals of any age who are unable to make decisions about their own safety and well-being.

² N.J.S.A. 30:5B-1-15 prohibits the library from functioning as a childcare center unless licensed by the State of NJ.

³ N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.21 prohibits parents from endangering the welfare of children.