

Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System



Children in the Library Policy

(Revised May 27, 2014)

The Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System (MMRLS) welcomes all children **and their families to use its facilities, resources, and services. Library visits are an important part of children's creative and intellectual growth.** MMRLS staff wants each child's visit to be a safe, rewarding and positive experience that encourages a love of reading for pleasure and knowledge for a lifetime. Children visiting MMRLS libraries receive the same welcome, assistance, and respect as any other valued customer. **It is for the safety of each child that MMRLS has adopted the Children in the Library Policy.**

The safety of children left alone in the library is a serious concern of the library staff. The staff, however, has many duties to perform in order to service all residents within the MMRLS 5-county area of Attala, Holmes, Leake, Montgomery, and Winston Counties and its 13 branch library communities. **MMRLS libraries are not equipped to provide long or short-term child care.**

The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library staff. Therefore, the following rules have been established.

- 1. It is the responsibility of the parents or legal guardians to evaluate any materials accessed by their children.** This includes the internet, books, magazines, and other resources. Parents should be aware that there may be resources they judge inappropriate for their children and it is the parents' responsibility to evaluate these resources. We encourage parents to accompany their children and work with the library staff to foster a safe environment.
- 2. Children, like all library customers, are required to respect library property and to act in a manner appropriate to the use and function of the library. Children are subject to the same MMRLS Library Rules of Customer Conduct as other customers and the same consequences, including temporary expulsion from library property and suspension or permanent loss of library privileges.**
- 3. Staff cannot and do not take over parental or child care responsibilities for children who come into the library.**
- 4. Children not yet 6 years of age must be accompanied by a parent/responsible caregiver at all times throughout the library and on library premises. (Caregiver must be age 12 or older and carry emergency contact information)**
- 5. Children ages 6 to 9 may use the library on their own, but the parent/responsible caregiver must be in the building or on library premises and are responsible for the actions of the child.**

6. **If children under the age of 9 are left alone in the library or on library premises, the following steps will be taken by library staff:**
 - a. **The incident should be reported immediately to the Branch Manager or supervisor in charge.**
 - b. **The Branch Manager or supervisor should make every effort to contact a parent or immediate family member to either come supervise or pick up the children.**
 - c. **If none of the above can be reached, the Branch Manager or supervisor should contact local law enforcement.**
 - d. **The situation should be handled quietly without making the entire library aware of the situation or frightening the children. Do not talk negatively about the parent in front of the children or where other library customers can hear.**
 - e. **An incident report should be filled out and faxed to HQ.**
7. **If children ages 6 to 9 are participating in a supervised program, parent/responsible caregiver should remain in the building or on library premises.** It is important that the parent/responsible caregiver is available in case the child needs to leave the program.
8. **Youth ages 10 to 17 may be left alone in the library without a parent/caregiver. However, the responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library staff.** Youth using inappropriate behavior will be informed of library rules. If inappropriate behavior continues, a parent may be called to pick up the child. The library may require youths who continue to use inappropriate behavior to be temporarily expelled from the library or not to be readmitted without being accompanied by a parent/guardian.
9. **Any child old enough to use the library unaccompanied by an adult/caregiver must have the telephone numbers of a parent/guardian who may be contacted to pick up the child in case of a health emergency or other special circumstances.**
10. **Parents/guardians must be aware of the library's hours and must make arrangements to pick up their children before the library closes. If an unattended child is still in the library at closing time, the library staff will act according to the following guidelines:**
 - a. **Library staff will not transport or escort the child to any location off the premises under any circumstances, nor offer the child a seat in his/her automobile**
 - b. **Every reasonable effort will be made by the staff to assist the child in contacting a responsible adult.**
 - c. **If no responsible adult arrives by 15 minutes after closing, the library will contact the local Police Department to come and pick up the child.**
 - d. **Children under the age of 18 will not be left on library property unattended after library hours. The Police Department will be contacted to protect the interests of the child.**

- e. **One or two staff members will stay with the child inside the building or on library premises until responsible adult or the Police Department arrive.**
- 11. In the event of an emergency that forces the immediate closing of the library, children should know what procedure to follow as predetermined by their parents or adult caregivers.**
- 12. Violation of the Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System Children in the Library Policy may result in loss of library privileges for the family.**