

Bridgewater Public Library Unattended Child Policy

Bridgewater Public Library encourages children of all ages to visit the library and hopes that they will find it a warm, inviting place to be. Programs and resources are offered to make the library enticing to children, to help children enjoy their visits, and to develop a love of books, reading, and the library.

The happiness and safety of children left alone at the library can be of serious concern. Young children left on their own in the library often become frightened or anxious. Children may be able to occupy their time for a short while, but when left unattended for any length of time when no library programs are being offered, they become bored, restless, and disruptive. Young children are not safe when left unattended in the library. The staff cannot know if the children are leaving the building with parents or with strangers. It is not the library's intention to seek out unattended children, but rather to have a reasoned response prepared when a problem presents itself. For the protection and well being of the children who visit our library, the following policy has been established.

Responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library staff. Library staff cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior.

If a child is found to be unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver within the library and inform them of the Unattended Child Policy. If the parent/caregiver cannot be located the Bridgewater Police will be contacted.

Rules regarding disruptive behavior found in the Bridgewater Public Library Rules of Conduct Policy apply to children as well as adults.

Unattended Child When the Library is Open

Children Under the Age of eight (8)

- Children under the age of eight (8) years of age must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of (and in visual contact with) the child. A child under the age of eight (8) years of age may attend library programs appropriate to their age without the parent/caregiver in the room provided the parent/caregiver remains

within the library facility for the duration of the program and immediately joins the child at the conclusion of the program.

Children ages eight (8) to twelve (12) years

- Children ages eight (8) to twelve (12) years must have an accompanying parent/caregiver present within the library facility during the entire stay at the library. The library does not provide daycare services. The parent/caregiver is responsible for the behavior and wellbeing of the child.

Children ages thirteen (13) years and older

- Children ages thirteen (13) years and over are old enough to use the library responsibly. If problems arise, they may be asked to leave the library or a parent/guardian may be contacted. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to be accessible to pick up the child at any time. **THE CHILD MUST HAVE A MEANS FOR THE STAFF TO CONTACT THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER AT ALL TIMES WHEN THEY ARE LEFT UNATTENDED IN THE LIBRARY.**

Unattended Child When Library is Closed/Closing

- No child under the age of sixteen (16) may be unattended in the library 15 minutes prior to closing. In the event that a child is found unattended during closing time Library Staff will ask the child to contact someone to pick them up. If the child is not picked up by closing time, the Bridgewater Police will be contacted.

Unattended Youth During Emergency Closings

Bridgewater Public Library may close due to emergencies such as inclement weather, power outages, etc. If local public schools or other Town of Bridgewater departments close because of inclement weather the library may also close. No child may be sent to the library if schools close early due to emergencies.

When the library closes because of inclement weather or an emergency the office of the Town of Bridgewater Town Manager will be notified and an announcement will be made. Please remember that if your child is thirteen (13) to sixteen (16) years of age and is left unattended within the library **THE STAFF MUST HAVE A WAY OF CONTACTING THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER AT ALL TIMES THAT THE CHILD IS**

LEFT UNATTENDED WITHIN THE LIBRARY. THE PARENT OR CAREGIVER MUST HAVE DEFINITE ARRANGEMENTS TO PICK UP THE CHILD BEFORE CLOSING TIME.

Whenever possible, 30 minutes prior to closing the library in an emergency, an adult staff member will call the parent or caregiver of any unattended child in the library to verify that the child will be picked up prior to closing. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached after staff attempt to for 15 minutes the Birdgewater Police will be asked for their assistance in helping to get the child home safely.

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHALL LIBRARY STAFF DRIVE CHILDREN HOME.

STAFF WILL MAKE A WRITTEN REPORT CONCERNING THE INCIDENT.

For our children's safety we ask that adults refrain from using the children's room for personal use.