

Morrison-Talbott Library Unattended Child or Dependent Adult in the Library Policy

The Morrison-Talbott Library welcomes children and families to use its facilities. The purpose of this policy is to encourage parents, legal guardians and caregivers to exercise reasonably responsible care, supervision, and control over their minor children in order to prevent victimization and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of children and also to make the library a safe and enjoyable environment for everyone.

An “unattended child” is a child under 18 who is unaccompanied by a parent, guardian caregiver. Children who are unable or unwilling to act appropriately or care for themselves may not be left alone in the library or on library grounds at any time and must have adequate supervision from a parent, legal guardian or caregiver.

Adults who cannot care for themselves independently without the constant attention of a parent, legal guardian or caregiver may not be left alone in the library or on library grounds at any time and must have adequate supervision from a parent, legal guardian or caregiver at all times.

Guidelines

The library acknowledges that the maturity of children at different ages varies. These guidelines are subject to the discretion of library staff who may apply them to children other than the ages stated below, if they deem it necessary.

1. Children through the age of seven (7) years must have a parent, legal guardian or responsible caregiver in the immediate vicinity (within sight or conversation distance) and remain in visual contact with the children unless the children are participating in a library-sponsored program.
2. Children ages eight to eleven (8-11) years should have a parent, legal guardian or responsible caregiver in the building unless the children are participating in a library-sponsored program.
3. When a child participates in a library-sponsored program, the parent, legal guardian or responsible caregiver must sign the child into the program. Parents, legal guardians and responsible caregivers of children age eight (8) and younger are required to remain in the Library for the duration of the program. Children must be picked up promptly at the end of the program.
4. Children twelve (12) and over may use the library unattended for a period of time appropriate to their age and maturity. If a child in this age group is not able to leave the library without an adult, he/she should not be in the library alone. The library reserves the right to contact parents or proper authorities if a child is left alone in the library and presents behavior that is unacceptable.
5. All children should carry with them the phone number of a parent, legal guardian or responsible caregiver who is to be contacted in case of emergency.

6. Parents or legal guardians are accountable for their children's behavior while on library property. In the event that a behavior situation arises by a child left unsupervised while a parent or legal guardian uses the library (including in the computer lab), the library staff reserves the right to intervene in the situation directly to address the behavior themselves or indirectly by alerting the child's parent or legal guardian to the behavior. If the child is or continues to be disruptive, and the parent or legal guardian does not respond, both the child and the parent or legal guardian may be asked to leave library grounds. A child who is accompanied by an adult (other than a parent or legal guardian) or by a sibling who does not comply with a staff request to discontinue inappropriate behavior and who refuses to leave the library grounds shall be referred to the Waterloo Police Department for removal. Some behaviors and instances that may be cause for staff intervention include but are not limited to:
 - a. Fighting/bullying
 - b. Vandalism
 - c. Rough play
 - d. Excessive noise
 - e. Running
 - f. Misuse and/or disordering of library materials
 - g. Inappropriate language or subject matter

Library staff is allowed to use their best judgment if they witness a child being improperly supervised and putting themselves or anyone else in an unsafe situation.

7. If staff has reason to suspect that a child has been left at closing time, staff will ask if the child is waiting to be picked up, determine the child's name and may call the child's parent or legal guardian. If, after a reasonable time, there has been no response to calls and the child still has not been picked up, the Waterloo Police Department will be called to handle the situation and ensure the safety and well-being of the child.
8. In the event of serious or willful policy violations, the Waterloo Police Department will be notified immediately.