

# Safe Child Policy

Reviewed: February 20, 2024

The Owen County Public Library is dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming environment for families and children. To make the Library an enjoyable place and to encourage a love of books, reading and learning, we offer designated children's areas, programs and services for children. We hope you will help your children make effective use of the Library and assist them in selecting books and materials, using computers or attending programs. Together, we can provide a fun and positive experience when visiting the Owen County Public Library.

## Access to Children's Areas

The Children's area of the Library is specifically designed to serve the needs of young customers. Adults in that area not using Children's materials or not using the area for the purpose intended will be asked to use other areas of the Library. Staff members will place the safety of children first.

## Parent Expectations and Responsibilities

Because the Library is a public place, children's safety cannot be guaranteed. Children may encounter hazards such as doors, furniture, electrical equipment, or other Library customers. The conduct, safety and supervision of children while on Library premises are the responsibility of parents, guardians and caregivers. It is the responsibility of parents, guardians and caregivers to determine the supervision needs of their children and to provide accordingly. While our staff values the safety of children, only parents, guardians and caregivers can provide appropriate supervision of children. Appropriate supervision provided by parents, guardians and caregivers will assist Library staff in creating a pleasant and safe environment for Library customers of all ages.

## The Library asks parents and caregivers to observe these rules:

1. Parents, guardians or caregivers may not leave young children unattended while using other areas of the library and must remain with preschool children while the child is attending library programs.
2. A responsible caregiver must be at least 14 years of age.
3. Children ages 10-18 may use the Library unattended as long as their conduct is acceptable in a library setting and general conduct rules are observed.
4. Children ages 8 and older may attend library programs without a parent, guardian or caregiver, but must be promptly picked up upon conclusion of the program.
5. Children must have the telephone number of their parent, guardian or caregiver so that a responsible adult may be contacted, if necessary, to come and pick the child up.
6. Parents, guardians or caregivers should be aware of the Library's hours and are expected to make advanced arrangements to pick up their children prior to closing.
7. Patrons of any age with mental, physical, or emotional disabilities which may affect decision making skills or render supervision necessary, must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or caregiver at all times.

Unattended child (13 years or less) at closing:

1. 15-30 minutes before closing, the child will be asked to call a parent or otherwise confirm that he or she has a ride or will be picked up no later than closing.
2. If a child has been left unattended at the library at closing time, or during an emergency closing, every effort will be made to contact the parents, guardians or caregivers.
3. If none of the above arrive within 15 minutes of closing, the child will be treated as an abandoned child and the police will be contacted. Two staff members will stay with the unattended child/children until the police arrive. This is compensated time for the two staff members who remain with the child.
4. Under no circumstances will library staff take a child out of the building and transport him or her to another location.
5. In any instance in which law enforcement is called because a child has been left unattended, the staff members will reassure the child that the officers are there to help them and will stay with the child until the officers arrive.
6. Staff members will leave a note on the Library door stating, "Unattended child is in the custody of the Owen County Sheriff's Office 484-3363 or 1-800-222-5555, 103 W. Perry Street." Names will NOT be stated on the sign.

The Library hours are:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 9:30am-8pm

Wednesday, Friday, Saturday: 9:30am-5pm

Sunday: Closed