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Children's Policy

Yarmouth Town Library welcomes children of all ages to use and enjoy the facilities, collections and programs offered by the library system. We offer many programs and services that encourage children to develop a love of books, reading and learning. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Yarmouth Town Library provide a safe and pleasant experience for all. To enable the Library staff to promote use and access while ensuring safety of children in their use of the facilities, the Town Library Board has established the following policies:

1. **Supervision:** Parents/Guardians may not leave children aged 8 and under unattended in the Library. Children 8 and under must be attended by a person 14 years of age or older. Children 9 or older may use the Library unsupervised. Children should know how to reach a responsible adult should a need arise. Children should not be left for long periods of time, as the Library does not provide daycare services. Parents/Guardians are responsible for their children's behavior in the Library. Staff will notify Parents/Guardians if their children are left in a vulnerable situation* or require supervision due to disruptive behavior.

Children and their adult caregivers should be aware of closing times of the Library and should arrange pick-up times to be at least fifteen (15) minutes before closing. The Library's staff is not responsible for children who are not picked up by closing time. While every effort will be made to contact the parents/guardians by phone, Library staff will neither drive unattended children** home nor supervise them until a parent arrives. (See procedures for Unattended Child After Library Hours, page 3.)

The Yarmouth Town Library assumes no responsibility for children of any age left unattended at the Library. Parents/Guardians assume all liability for damage done by their children to the facility.

For the safety of children in the Library, adults unaccompanied by children are asked to remain in the Adult section of the Library unless they are actively using materials or services in the Children's Room.

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2. **Elevator:** (South Yarmouth Library only). The Library encourages parents and caregivers with young children and baby carriers to use the elevator to move between Library levels. Children 8 and younger must be accompanied by an adult on the elevator. Children 9 years and older who abuse the privilege (by using excessively, fooling with elevator controls, etc.) will lose elevator privileges and will be asked to use the stairs.
3. **Use of Computers:** Yarmouth Town Library has computers available for public use. We encourage children of all ages to use them on a regular basis. Please note that there is a 30 minute time limit per family, if patrons are waiting. Parents with toddlers should use the computers with their children and discourage their children from pounding on the keyboards or sticking objects in open spaces. The computers are expensive pieces of equipment and should not be treated as toys. Children should not bring food or beverages to be consumed in the Children's Room. The exception is when food or drink is served as part of the Children's Room program or celebration.
4. **Library Cards:** Children must be entering kindergarten to be eligible to receive a CLAMS card. The CLAMS card entitles the borrower to borrow as many books as he/she likes and unlimited VHS and 6 DVDs per card. Fines on children's cards accrue at the same rate as adult cards: \$0.10 per day per book and \$1.00 per video/DVD per day. The cost to replace a lost library card is \$1.00. Parents/Guardians of children 13 or younger must sign their Children's Library card application and has full access to view their child's account. Parents/Guardians of children 14 years or older will not have access to their child's account.
5. **Borrowing Privileges:** The Library staff cannot restrict the books, videos or other materials which children choose to borrow. Children have access to all materials in the Library. We have adopted the ***ALA Library Bill of Rights. In this document it states "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." The Yarmouth Town Library encourages parents and caregivers to visit the Library with their children to guide them in their selections.

PROCEDURES

Disruptive Behavior: A child who engages in disruptive behavior, whether attended or not, will be told that his/her actions are inappropriate and will be told to stop. The librarian will make every attempt to engage the child in one of the libraries resources, such as books, puzzles, games, homework assistance, etc. Parents/Guardians are expected to monitor children at all times.

If disruptive behavior persists, the child or adult will be told to leave after two warnings have been given. If vulnerable children persist in being disruptive, a Library staff person will try to reach the children's Parent/Guardian. The Parent/Guardian will be informed of the Library's Policy and will be told to pick up their child. If the Parent/Guardian cannot or does not come for the children, the procedure for "Child Left Unattended" (below) should be followed.

Child Left Unattended: If it is determined that a child is lost or left unattended, a staff member should try to identify and locate the Parent/Guardian or responsible adult according to the following procedure:

1. Walk around the Children's area with the child, looking for the Parent/Guardian. If unsuccessful, check other areas of the Library. If the child is frightened or crying, staff member should try and comfort and reassure him/her.
2. Page the child's Parent/Guardian using the name if known. If no name is available, announce that a child is missing. If anyone claims to have lost a child, ask him/her to describe the child, and to present identification.
3. When the adult is located, explain the Library Policy on unattended children.
4. If the Parent/Guardian is not found in the building, a staff member should stay with the children until someone can locate through searching the database, phone book, etc.
5. If Parent/Guardian cannot be located, or if the Library is closing, the staff member will call the Police.
6. Staff members will not take children out of the building.

Unattended Child after Library Hours: If a child is alone at closing time and appears to be vulnerable:

1. A staff member should stay with the child until a Parent/Guardian can be located through searching the database, phone book, city directory, etc. If staff cannot reach Parent/Guardian, the person in charge will call the Police to assume responsibility for the child.
2. Two staff members will remain with the child inside the Library entrance until Parent/Guardian or Police arrive.
3. Library Policy will be explained and a copy of written policy will be given to the Parent/Guardian. If there is an ongoing problem with a family, Police Department or the Department of Social Services intervention may be necessary. Consult with Town Counsel regarding ongoing problems. All incidents of a child being left vulnerable should be recorded on an incident form.
4. Staff members will not transport or take child away from the Library building.

Child Reported Missing or Lost:

If Parent/Guardian reports a child missing, staff will follow this procedure:

1. Obtain name, age and description of the child. Ask Parent/Guardian how extensively they have searched. Check outside the Library immediately. Check the Children's area thoroughly, including bathrooms and offices.
2. Describe child to and request assistance from Library staff in other departments.
3. Check elevator, where appropriate, all floors, rooms and areas of the Library.
4. Call Police if unable to locate the child.

Appendix 1

Definitions

*A vulnerable child is an unattended child whose safety or well-being could be endangered either in the building, or if they were to leave.

Circumstances such as darkness, severe weather conditions, fire alarms, or missed pick-up times may put children of a variety of ages at risk. Parents must realize that Library staff has no way of knowing whether a person leaving the building with their child is a family member or not.

**An unattended child is any young person under the age old 9 using the Library facility unaccompanied by a responsible person 14 years or older or left alone in one part of the Library while the adult is in another.

Because children develop and mature at different rates, there is no magic age at which all children are ready to cope with the variety of circumstances they may face alone in the Library.

Library staff must use their judgment and discretion in determining whether or not an unattended child is vulnerable or at risk.

Appendix 2

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

Adopted June 18, 1948, by the ALA Council; amended February 2, 1961; amended June 28, 1967; amended January 23, 1980; inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 24, 1996.

Approved by Yarmouth Town Library Board on October 21, 2010