

Unattended Children Policy

Please see the Public Health Emergency rules in addition to this policy.

The Wilton Public and Gregg Free Library welcomes the use of its facilities and services by all children. As a public institution, its doors are open to all regardless of origin, age, background, and views. The Library is a public building, and as such, is not a safe place to leave a child unattended. The Library cannot assume responsibility for the safety of unattended children. Staff members are concerned when parents leave their young children alone or in the care of a slightly older sibling or friend. When young children are left unattended in the Library, even for a few minutes, they can become frightened. A slightly older child left in charge can be easily burdened by this responsibility.

The Library should not be viewed as an alternative to daycare. Unlike a daycare facility, the Library is not a closed environment. Staff cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all patrons are free to use any public area within the Library. For safety's sake, parents should make sure that their children are sufficiently mature before allowing them to visit the Library by themselves. Parents should be advised that if their children misbehave, they may be told to leave the library and the library grounds. Parents should further realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's behavior.

While in the library, children under the age of 11 must be in the company of a parent or responsible adult over the age of 15. This includes children participating in library events; a parent or other responsible adult over the age of fifteen must remain in the library during the program.

At the discretion of a responsible adult, a child age 11 to 14 may be left unattended for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, read, or attend a program. Children should not be left for longer than two hours. Children must always observe library rules.

Parents, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior of minor children at all times, even if they are not in the library with the child. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Library staff does not serve in loco parentis, in place of the parents.

Parents and guardians are responsible for the conduct of their children on Library premises and must provide such reasonable supervision of their children as is appropriate based on the age and level of responsibility of each child.

When the safety of an unattended child is in doubt, the Library staff will attempt to contact the parents. If the parents are unavailable, the staff will contact the Wilton, NH Police.

Children must leave the library at closing time. If necessary, parents must arrange to

pick up their children. Youngsters left to wait outside for a ride after the Library has closed are placed in a vulnerable position. Staff is not responsible for the safety of a child once the Library has closed. However, staff will attempt to contact parents. If they are unsuccessful, the police may be summoned to assist the youth.

- 1) If the police are called when a parent or guardian fails to pick up the child, it is considered 'risk of injury to a minor' and is a criminal offense.
- 2) Under no circumstances should a staff member transport children home or to any other destination.