



Hagaman Memorial Library **Unattended Children Policy**

Mission Statement

The East Haven Library Inc., colloquially known as the Hagaman Memorial Library, is a center for community enrichment and, as such, seeks to provide information, resources and programs for lifelong learning, and to improve to the quality of life of local residents through access to an excellent collection of materials in multiple formats, current technology, and cultural and other programming opportunities.

Purpose

In order to maintain a comfortable and safe environment for children and families, this policy of the Hagaman Memorial Library (the “Library”) has been established to inform parents and guardians, librarians, and library staff members on the rules around bringing your child to the library. The purpose of this policy is to maintain a comfortable and useable library environment and to ensure the safety of children and other library users, thereby helping to facilitating access to Library Services for all.

Children’s Policy

The Library welcomes families and children of all ages to visit the Library. We encourage your family to take advantage of the many resources available, including family programs, materials, toys, and play spaces. The Library is free and open to all children with caregivers, and to unaccompanied children who are aged 12 and over, who are independent enough to use the resources of the Library respectfully for education, entertainment, and enrichment. To understand whether your child is old enough to be left in the Library, consider whether your child is 12+, and old enough to get home from the Library unaccompanied. **If a child is not able to leave the Library without an adult, they should not be in the Library without an adult.**

The Library supports the right of parents and guardians to supervise their children’s behavior, safety, and material choices; the library does not and will not act *in loco parentis* (in place of parents). In order to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for all Library users, and to ensure the Library’s resources continue to be made available for other Library patrons in the future, please use the following guidelines regarding the supervision of children in the Library:

1. **The Library is not responsible for the care or supervision of unattended children.** Library staff are not permitted to supervise or take responsibility for children, even for short periods. Please plan accordingly.
2. All children under the age of twelve must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver, age 18 years or older, at all times. Caregivers should stay within eyesight of any children in their care at all times within the Library and on Library grounds.



3. It is a crime to knowingly leave a child under the age of 12 unsupervised in a place of public accommodation, as it creates a risk to their health and safety (Connecticut General Statute 53-21a). In the event that a child under the age of 12 is found unaccompanied in the Library, Library staff will make a good faith effort to locate the caregiver of the child. If the caregiver is located elsewhere in the building, a Library Supervisor will explain the policy on the first offense, and offer the caregiver a copy of this policy; an incident report will be filed. On any subsequent offense or if the caregiver cannot be located within the building with a brief search of the facility, the police will be called.
4. Caregivers are expected to be aware of the opening and closing times of the Library, bearing in mind that these can and do change. Power failures or other emergencies can occur and require unexpected closing of the building. With this in mind:
 - A. **If a child is not able to leave the Library without an adult, their caregiver should remain in the building at all times.**
 - B. If a child under 12 years old is found unaccompanied at any time, the police will be called (see #3 above). If a child age 12 years or older that requires transportation is found to be unaccompanied in the Library 15 minutes before closing, including emergency closures, staff will attempt to call a caregiver. If a caregiver cannot be reached by closing time, the police will be called. If the child is not picked up within 15 minutes of closing, the police will be called. Library staff cannot drive the child home or to another destination. Two staff members will remain inside the Children's Department to wait with the child for parents or police to arrive.
5. **Emergencies can and do happen. Your child and Library staff should be able to get in contact with a caregiver at any time that your child is in the Library. Please plan accordingly.**
6. Parents or legal guardians are responsible for the conduct of their children at all times while on the Library premises. This includes when children visit the Library with a guardian's chosen caregiver, and when children visit the library unsupervised. Legal guardians may be held accountable for any costs incurred due to damage caused by their child through improper use, destructive behavior, or intentional harm of materials, furniture, or other equipment owned by the Library. In allowing your child to enter the Library, you are agreeing to this policy.
7. The library is not responsible for children or teens outside of the building, including those who are awaiting transportation or socializing. If their behavior is disruptive or blocks other patrons from using the Library easily and safely, the police may be called.
8. Behavior for Young Children & Children with Neurodivergence:
 - A. We understand that children under 12 years of age and children with neurodivergence may require grace and patience in regulating their behavior. Boisterous play and tantrums are a part of growing up.
 - B. If your child is disrupting other Library users or a Library program, we ask that you as their parent, guardian, or caregiver respectfully take them out of the situation to self-regulate; then you are welcome to continue your visit. If your child is unable to regulate their behavior, to avoid disturbing other Library patrons, we ask you to end your visit for the day, and try again another time.



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- C. If you would like to request information on sensory-friendly programming, please contact the Youth Services Librarian or the Library Director. For more information on appropriate behavior, please see the **Patron Behavior Policy**, available on the Library website.
9. Behavior for Children and Teens, Ages 12+:
 - A. Like all Library users, children are required to respect Library property and to act in a manner appropriate to the use and function of the Library. In allowing your child to visit the Library unsupervised, you are agreeing that they are old enough to regulate their own behavior and follow Library rules.
 - B. Inappropriate language or inappropriate or destructive behavior such as hitting, spitting, yelling, or rudeness toward staff and other patrons will not be tolerated. Older children and teens may be required to leave the Library and their parents and/or the police may be called at the discretion of a Library Supervisor. Children may face additional consequences, including more long-term bans and legal consequences, at the discretion of the Library Director.
 - C. For more information on appropriate behavior, please see the **Patron Behavior Policy**, available on the Library website.

Relevant to CT State Statues: Sec. 53-21a Leaving child unsupervised in place of public accommodation

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