

Safe Child

The Mountainside Public Library is dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming environment for families and children. While children of all ages are welcome and encouraged to use the library's materials, programs and services, parents and caregivers must be aware that the library is an open, public building and the well-being and safety of young children left alone or unsupervised is a serious concern. It is for the safety of each child that the library has adopted the Safe Child Policy.

An unattended minor may be defined as a child unable to care for themselves when left in the library without a parent or responsible adult within sight or sound range, any child left unattended for long periods of time, or any child not picked up at closing time. **The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library always rest with the parent or caregiver and not with the library staff.**

Policy

- Children ages 10 and under must be immediately supervised at all times by a parent or caregiver (age 16 or older).
- Children over the age of 10 are welcome to use the library unattended provided they comply with the library's Patron Code of Conduct, which includes, but is not limited to, the prohibition of food and drink, foul language, disruptive cell phone usage, horseplay and loitering. Those children using the library unaccompanied are still the legal responsibility of their parents.
- A child age 10 and under with no means of getting home when the library closes is considered a stranded minor.
- Parents/caregivers are responsible for being aware of the library's hours of operation if leaving their child unaccompanied at the library.
- Library staff will not physically prevent a child from leaving the library, assume responsibility for a child, accompany or transport an unrelated child off library premises.

Procedures

If the library is closing due to inclement weather or other emergency, and an unattended minor is left at the library without transportation home, the library staff will allow the child to call for a ride home using a library phone. At all regular or early closings, if a child is unable to contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver, the Mountainside Police will be contacted and the child will be placed in their care. Library staff will remain no longer than 15 minutes after closing.

If a child is found without a parent or caregiver during library hours, the following procedures will be followed:

- Staff will attempt to comfort the child, if necessary.
- Staff will try to locate the parent or caregiver in the library and provide a Safe Child Policy to the parent or caregiver.
- Staff will call the Mountainside Police to pick up the child if the parent or caregiver cannot be located within the library. Staff will notify the Director and Librarians of the situation when police are called.
- Staff will encourage an unattended child to contact the parent or guardian if it is within 15 minutes of closing time. If a parent or caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive upon closing, the library will call the Mountainside Police to pick up the child. Staff will notify the Director that police have been called.

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- If the Library is closing two staff members will remain with child, outside the building, for 15 minutes. If the parent or caregiver has not arrived after 15 minutes the police will be called and the staff members will remain with the child until police arrive.
- A sign will be left on the library door stating “Unattended child is in the custody of the Mountainside Police, 1385 U.S. Highway 22 East, Mountainside, NJ, 07092,” once the child is in the care of the police. The child’s identity will not be stated on the sign.
- Under no circumstances will library staff provide transportation to stranded children or other patrons.

VIOLATION OF THE SAFE CHILD POLICY MAY RESULT IN SUSPENSION OF LIBRARY PRIVILEGES FOR THE FAMILY.