

## Shutesbury Public Library

### Unattended Child in the Library Policy

**Adopted by the Shutesbury Board of Library Trustees, March 30, 2026.**

#### **Purpose**

The Shutesbury Public Library strives to be a welcoming, engaging, and safe environment for children of all ages. To ensure the safety and well-being of children and to maintain an appropriate environment for all library users, the Library has established the following Unattended Child Policy.

#### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy:

- An **unattended child** is a child whose parent or caregiver is not present in the library building.
- A **parent or caregiver** is a responsible person age 14 or older who is authorized by the parent or legal guardian to supervise the child.

#### **Attendance Requirements**

- Children **under the age of 10** must be accompanied at all times by a parent or caregiver age 14 or older.
- Children **age 10 and older** may use the library without a parent or caregiver present.

The Library may not be used as a substitute for day care, babysitting, or extended after-school supervision. Library staff are not responsible for supervising unattended children.

#### **Responsibility**

Parents and caregivers are responsible for:

- Their child's safety, behavior, and well-being while using the library
- Their child's use of library materials, services, computers, and the internet
- Ensuring that children are picked up before closing time

Unattended children must be able to independently provide accurate contact information for a parent or caregiver, including a current phone number, in case staff need to make contact.

The Library is not responsible for the actions, safety, or personal belongings of unattended children.

## **Behavior Expectations**

All children using the Library are expected to follow the Library's Conduct Policy. The Library is an indoor space designed to support both social interaction and quiet study.

Children must:

- Walk at all times (running is not permitted)
- Use voices and behavior that do not disrupt other library users

If a child's behavior is disruptive or unsafe, library staff may:

- Ask the child to correct the behavior
- Contact the parent or caregiver
- Require the child to leave the library

Repeated or serious behavior issues may result in loss of library privileges, in accordance with other library policies.

## **Closing Time and Late Pickup**

Parents or caregivers must pick up unattended children **at least five (5) minutes before the library's scheduled closing time.**

If an unattended child remains in the library at closing:

1. Library staff will attempt to contact the child's parent or caregiver using the information provided by the child.
2. A staff member will remain with the child for up to **10 minutes after closing.**
3. If the child has not been picked up after 10 minutes, the **Shutesbury Police Department** will be contacted to assume custody of the child and continue efforts to reach the parent or caregiver.

Library staff are not permitted to transport children under any circumstances.

## **Emergencies**

In the event of a medical emergency, evacuation, severe weather, or other emergency situation, library staff will follow established emergency procedures and may contact emergency services as needed.

## **Special Circumstances**

The Library recognizes that children develop at different rates. Parents or caregivers are responsible for determining whether a child age 10 or older, including those with developmental disabilities or special needs, is able to manage themselves independently in the library. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to speak with library staff to discuss appropriate supervision arrangements. While staff are always happy to provide general assistance and support to all patrons, they are not able to provide ongoing supervision or individualized care.

## **Policy Acceptance**

Use of the Library by children constitutes acknowledgment and acceptance of this policy by parents and caregivers.

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