



POLICY: Child Safety

Adopted by Library Board: October 16, 2019

Last revised by Library Board: May 21, 2025

Pauline Haass Public Library is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for children and families by setting policies and procedures that promote safety within the building. A caregiver is defined in this policy as a parent, legal guardian, or responsible person fourteen years of age or older who provides direct and uninterrupted care for a younger child.

Library staff members will always respond with care and concern, but responsibility for the welfare of children using the Library ultimately rests with the caregiver. Staff members cannot and will not assume responsibility for unattended children.

- **All children** are expected to use the Library appropriately and must follow the Library's Code of Conduct, Library Computer Use Policy, and Public Internet Access Policy, regardless of age. It is the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to ensure that their children comply with these rules.
- **Children age five and under** must be accompanied by, and within view of, a caregiver at all times and in all areas of the building, including the Children's Area and the restrooms.
- **Children ages six through nine** must be accompanied by a caregiver who remains in the building and readily available (able to be recalled vocally and visually in less than ten minutes).
- **Children age ten and over** are welcome with or without a caregiver provided they abide by the Library's rules and policies.

STAFF INTERVENTION

Staff may:

- Notify a caregiver if a child needs additional supervision or is violating Library rules.
- Ask a child who is violating the Library's Code of Conduct to leave the Library.
- Contact local authorities if a child's safety is at risk, a caregiver cannot be reached, or disruptive behavior presents a serious concern.

Library staff are trained to enforce policies **in a consistent, courteous, and non-discriminatory manner.**

CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY AFTER CLOSING

If the Library is closing and a child under the age of 16 is left unattended:

- Staff will attempt to contact the child's caregiver using any available information.
- If no caregiver or responsible adult arrives or is reachable within 15 minutes of closing, staff will contact local law enforcement or appropriate authorities to ensure the child's safety.

- Two staff members will remain with the child in a safe, visible area until the child is picked up or until authorities arrive.
- Under no circumstances will staff transport a child.

Minors age 16 and older who are capable of independent transportation (e.g., driving, walking, public transit) may remain on Library premises after closing only if they have a clear plan for safe departure. However, if a 16- or 17-year-old appears unable to leave safely or becomes distressed or stranded, staff may, at their discretion, initiate efforts to contact a caregiver or law enforcement to ensure the minor's well-being.

Caregivers are strongly encouraged to pick up children before closing and to ensure that all minors have a safe and timely method of leaving the Library.

ADULTS IN CHILDREN'S AREA

- The Children's Area is designated for use by children from birth through age 12 and their accompanying caregivers.
- Adults not accompanied by children may browse and check out materials but may not use the seating, toys, or supplies intended for children.
- Restrooms located in the Children's Area are reserved for use by children and their accompanying adults.

Library staff may ask adults to relocate if their presence in the Children's Area is not aligned with this policy.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Children with disabilities or who require accommodations may need different levels of supervision. The Library will make reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Caregivers are encouraged to ensure children know how to contact them and to equip them with emergency contact information in a written form kept on the child's person (e.g., in a backpack, pocket, or wallet), so that staff or other responsible adults can use it if the child forgets it or is unable to communicate.