

Marshall-Lyon County Library Board Policy			410
Policy Name: Unattended/Vulnerable Person		Originally Adopted	New
Current Version Adopted	October 2016	Next Review	September 2019

Section 1. Purpose

The safety and security of the children who use the Marshall-Lyon County Library is paramount to the Library Board and Staff. This policy and accompanying rules are in place to provide as safe an environment as possible while creating pleasant surroundings for all who use the Library's spaces.

Section 2. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A child is anyone under 8 years old, unless otherwise noted.
- A caregiver is any individual 12 years of age or older who has the authority from a parent/guardian and has the responsibility and maturity to care for a child under the age of 8.
- An unattended child is one whose parent/guardian or caregiver is not in the immediate vicinity, visible to the child and attentive to the child's needs and behaviors.
- A vulnerable child is a child of any age under 18 years old whose safety would be at risk if left alone for too long, too often or sent outside the Library's premises. Further, a vulnerable person is anyone of any age who is mentally and/or physically challenged to a degree that significantly impairs the individual's ability to provide adequately for his/her own care or manage his/her own behavior without assistance.
- Library includes the premises of all buildings run by the Library Board in Marshall, Balaton and Cottonwood.

Section 3. Policy

While the Library aims to create a safe and welcoming environment for children and families, it is the responsibility of parents/guardians and caregivers to care for and oversee their children while using the library and not leave them unattended. The Library is not equipped nor has the responsibility to act *in loco parentis*, overseeing the safety and welfare of all children who use the facilities. As such, the Library cannot prevent a child from leaving the building or recognize who might be accompanying a child leaving.

If an apparently unattended child or vulnerable person calls attention to him/herself through inappropriate actions or behaviors, the Library staff will attempt to locate the parent/guardian or caregiver within the building. If someone accompanying the child or vulnerable person is unable to be found, the staff will ask for the name and phone number to call the parent/guardian or caregiver. If the child or vulnerable person cannot identify him/herself and/or the contact information of a parent/guardian or caregiver, the local police will be informed. Likewise, if a parent/guardian or caregiver is not able to be reached, the local police will be called.

If a situation presents itself that a child of any age appears to be vulnerable, the staff will intervene and attempt to reach a parent/guardian or caregiver or have the child do so. Such situations might include:

- A child who appears to be frightened or is crying.
- A child perceived to be endangering him/herself or others.
- There is a perceived threat to a child.
- A child has exhibited disruptive or inappropriate behavior and has been asked to leave the premises.
- A child has not been met at closing time.
- A child is unable to reach a parent/guardian or caregiver at a regular or emergency closing time.

In such situations, if a parent/guardian or caregiver is not found within the Library or is unable to be reached, the local police will be asked to intervene. Likewise, if a vulnerable person presents him/herself in similar situations as listed above, the staff will proceed in the same way.

Children and vulnerable people are expected to behave in a manner conducive to maintaining an appropriate atmosphere on the Library premises, as all customers are. As long as they can follow the rules of behavior and change their behavior when corrected by staff, children 8 years and older, as well as vulnerable adults, are welcome to be unattended in the library. However, parents/guardians and/or caregivers are responsible for their children's or vulnerable people's actions and behaviors in the Library, regardless of whether they are present or not. Parents/guardians, caregivers, children and vulnerable people who are in violation of this policy may have Library privileges suspended temporarily or, in an extremely egregious violation, permanently banned.