

Safe Child Guidelines at PPLD

The Pikes Peak Library District provides books, audiovisual materials, story times, tours, computer programs, Internet access, reader's advisory and a variety of other services for children and families. The library encourages frequent visits by children and their families.

Policy:

(From the PPLD Code of Conduct)

- Parents or caregivers must be present and responsible for the supervision of children age 11 and under. The Pikes Peak Library District does not assume responsibility for children left unattended.
- Staff may restrict adult use of Children's areas, including Children's restrooms.

Purpose of the Guidelines:

The Pikes Peak Library District is concerned about the safety of all of its patrons and especially the safety of its youngest patrons. When a staff member realizes that a child has been left unattended, the staff member follows the guidelines outlined in this procedure.

Library staff cannot provide childcare or assume responsibility for children's safety. Staff cannot be placed in the position of supervising unattended children. No public place, even the library can guarantee safety of children.

Children are expected to behave in a manner conducive to maintaining a welcoming atmosphere in the building for all patrons.

Restricted Use of Children's Areas

The children's areas of PPLD facilities are designed for the use of children, their families and caregivers. Use of the children's areas by adults who are not parents, guardians, teachers, caregivers or people researching children's literature may be restricted to ensure that children and their families have adequate access to the resources provided specifically for them.

Staff Procedures for dealing with child safety situations:

Unattended children

Children left unattended for lengthy periods may become bored, disruptive or frightened. Of even more concern, a child left without supervision is at risk for abduction or abuse.

If it is determined a child is unattended:

1. Comfort the child and locate the parent or responsible caregiver.
2. If the parent or caregiver is found in the building, explain the situation and advise the parent of our concerns, inherent risks, and the library policy and procedures. (See also Code of Conduct)
3. If the responsible person is not found in the building:
 - a. Obtain the parent's name and phone number if possible.
 - b. Call the parent. Inform them of the library policy and request that he/she pick up the child immediately. When the parent arrives give him/her a copy of the policy statement and the unattended child letter signed by the director and co-signed by the in-charge staff member.
 - c. If the parent has not been reached within one hour, or the parent does not arrive within the agreed upon time, call law enforcement, either the Colorado Springs Police or El Paso County Sheriff's Office to assume responsibility for the child. Each facility should identify the appropriate number to call for assistance and provide that to staff members.
 - d. Keep the child in the children's area or at a safe, staff-designated area. Notify Security, if applicable.
 - e. Under no circumstances will library staff transport or take children away from the library.
 - f. Complete an incident report form.

Disruptive Child

If it is determined that a child is disruptive and no parent or responsible caregiver is present:

1. Call the parent to inform the parent of the situation and the library's policy.
2. When the parent arrives, give him/her a copy of the policy statement and the unattended child letter signed by the director and co-signed by the in-charge staff member.
3. If a parent cannot be reached within an hour, call authorities to assume responsibility.
4. Under no circumstances will library staff transport or take children away from the library.
5. Complete an incident report form.

Unattended Child or Vulnerable Minor (17 and younger) at Closing

1. Security guards at East and Penrose or the staff in-charge at the branches walk through the library 15 minutes prior to closing to look for children and minors who are not accompanied by a parent or caregiver. The child/minor should be asked if a ride is coming. The child/minor should be allowed to use the telephone to call a parent if needed.
2. If an unattended child or vulnerable minor is present at closing:

- a. Ensure that two staff members remain with the child/minor inside the library.
 - b. Obtain the parent's name and telephone number, if possible.
 - c. Call the parent so that the parent can be informed of the library policy and request that he/she pick up the child/minor immediately.
 - d. Require the parent to come inside to pick up the child/minor. Give the parent a copy of the policy statement and the unattended child letter signed by the director and co-signed by the in-charge staff member.
 - e. Call law enforcement if the parent cannot be reached within 15 minutes after closing. Two staff members will remain with the child/minor until authorities arrive. The child/minor will be placed in the care of the authorities.
 - f. Leave a note on the front door of the library stating that the child is now with law enforcement. Include a telephone number for them to call.
 - g. Under no circumstances, give a child a ride home, take the child outside the building, or remain in the building alone with an unattended child.
 - h. Complete an incident report form.
3. If unattended children or minors have gone outside the library to wait for parents:
 - a. If a security guard or branch monitor is present, he/she should offer the use of his/her cell phone so the youths can call a parent.
 - b. If security staff is not available, a staff member should offer the use of a cell phone so the children can call a parent.
 - c. If the child is still waiting outside for 15 minutes after closing, staff members follow procedures as outlined under "unattended children" above.

Definitions:

Unattended child: Any child, age 11 or younger, who is left without a parent or responsible caregiver in the building, and, any child, age 7 or younger, not accompanied (within close proximity) by a parent or responsible caregiver.

Caregiver: A person (age 12* or older) entrusted with the care of children (11 or younger) within the library.

**Colorado Child Labor Law deems 12 years as the minimum age for employment, for example a babysitter.*

Vulnerable minor: An unaccompanied youth, age 17 or younger, whose safety and well being would be endangered if he/she were sent out of the building. Examples of vulnerability might include the minor being too young to be on his/her own, a minor being sent out into an unsafe area, a minor being left alone outside the library facility or a minor who is still in the library at closing.

Disruptive behavior: Any noisy, boisterous, destructive or acting-out behavior that is inappropriate in a setting where library business is conducted. This behavior may present a physical danger to the child or others, or may serve to interfere with the legitimate library business of other patrons and staff.