

Bernardsville Public Library

Unattended Children in the Library Policy

U- Unattended

Revised January 17, 2023

Adopted March 17, 2015

The Bernardsville Public Library encourages individuals of all ages to visit the library and hopes they will find it welcoming and useful. The library strives to serve children and adolescents of diverse abilities and needs through library materials, resources, programs, and environments to support youth in their journeys in reading, personal development, information seeking, and civic discourse. All patrons, regardless of age, sex, racial, or ethnic origin, religion, or economic status are entitled to courteous and efficient service, access to materials, and pleasant surroundings free from harassment, discomfort, and stress.

It is not the library's intention to seek out unattended children but rather to have a reasoned response prepared if situations arise.

The well-being and safety of young children left alone is a serious concern. Children on their own are vulnerable to harm and may become frightened or anxious.

Library staff can never assume responsibility for the care or supervision of a child or other vulnerable individual who might be using the library's facilities. Parents or guardians are solely responsible for the care and behavior of their children in the library whether or not a guardian is present.

Understanding that children mature at different rates, the following guidelines have been established to ensure that children are safe and cared for while in the library:

- Children under 10 – A parent or responsible caregiver (age 13 or over) must remain with the child at all times.
- Children 10-12 – These children are welcome to use the library independently as long as a parent or responsible caregiver (age 13 or over) remains in the library at all times.
- Children 13 and over – These children may use the library in the absence of a guardian as their abilities permit.

If problems arise while youth of any age are using the library, library staff may attempt to reach the parents or may contact law enforcement. Law enforcement may be called if it appears an unattended minor has inadequate supervision, even if their behavior is acceptable.