

# Safe Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy

## Our Safe Child Rules and Expectations

We want the Lamar County Library System to be a welcoming, safe place for your children. Our staff has many duties to perform in order to serve all customers in the best way possible. For this reason, the staff cannot monitor the whereabouts or behaviors of our youngest customers – your children. Staff cannot assume the responsibility of your children's care when they are in the library. No public place, including the library, can guarantee the safety of children. A child could be approached by a stranger, become ill, wander outside, or become lost or injured. We are primarily concerned with your children's safety, and we believe that our policy helps assure their well-being.

We expect parents/caregivers to be responsible for their children's behavior in the library.

We expect parents to understand and explain the library rules to their children. The rules and policies have been developed to safeguard the collection and ensure fairness for all library users.

We expect all children under the age of 8 to be accompanied by an adult at all times while visiting the library. Children of any age with special needs which affect decisionmaking skills must be accompanied by a caregiver at all times. Children 8 and older may be left unattended provided they understand and follow the rules of the library.

The library in no way assumes responsibility for any child left unattended in the building. We expect all children and teens to use appropriate language and behavior in the library. Those who do not will be asked to leave.

We expect parents to set reasonable time limits for their children's library visits. Parents/caregivers must remain in the library during programs if their child is under 8 years of age.

We expect parents to let us know if they or their children are unable to find the type of material they seek. We welcome suggestions for materials that will broaden our collection and improve our services.

We expect parents to be responsible for the types of materials checked out by their children and their selection choices. The library staff does not limit choices or censor materials.

We expect parents to see that overdue fines are promptly paid. Parents are financially responsible for any damages to library materials, equipment, or property incurred by their children.

We expect parents to maintain control of their children while visiting the library—this includes times when parent/caregiver is using the computers. Please remember that the library staff's professional services do not include babysitting.

We expect parents to help their children arrive on time for programs.

We expect parents who attend children's programming with their children to demonstrate good listening habits.

We expect parents/caregivers of children between the ages of 8 and 15 to have a responsible plan for picking up children by closing time.

We expect parents to keep sick children at home and not bring them to the library, especially during children's programming when illness may easily be spread to other children.

### **We Care About the Safety of Your Child**

A parent/caregiver is defined as someone 16 years and older.

If a child under the age of 8 is found unattended while the library is open, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care.

Within 30 minutes of closing time, library staff will conduct a walkthrough, inside or outside the library building, to ensure children between the ages of 8 and 15 have transportation home. If necessary, library staff will assist children in calling parents/caregivers.

If a child age 8 through 15 has not been picked up by a parent/caregiver by closing time, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care.

If a child age 8 through 15 is found unattended when the library is open and the child has become ill or frightened, has become disruptive and will not respond to verbal warnings from library staff, is upset because of weather conditions, long hours out of contact with the parent/caregiver, or other special circumstances, law enforcement officials may be called, and the child may be placed in their care.

After a child has been placed in the care of law enforcement personnel, the staff will leave notes about the child's whereabouts at the front desk. If after library operating hours, parents will need to contact local law enforcement. Other emergency library numbers are posted on the front door of the library.

Under no circumstances will a staff member give a child a ride home, take a child outside the building, or remain in the building alone with an unattended child (unless only one staff member is working at a particular branch.)

Parents who disregard library policy regarding this matter may be reported to the appropriate social services agency and may lose all library privileges.