

Service Policy 435

## **Children and Vulnerable Adults at the Library**

Adopted: January, 1992

Last Revised: March 19, 2025

The Spring Lake District Library encourages visits by children and vulnerable adults. We desire to make these important visits both memorable and enjoyable. A child is defined as a minor under the age of 18. A vulnerable adult is defined as an individual aged 18 or over who, because of developmental disability, mental illness, physical disability or other similar reasons, either requires supervision or personal care or lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently.

The Library is a public building. You should not assume that children or vulnerable adults will be safe on their own in the library. Library staff cannot act in place of a parent or caregiver and are not responsible for the whereabouts or behavior of a child, nor can staff guarantee a child's safety. Caregivers are responsible for the safety, behavior, and supervision of a child or vulnerable adult at all times in the Library and on Library property. A caregiver's role is to teach their child or vulnerable adult how to use the library respectfully, by keeping voices to a reasonable level, respecting library materials, furnishings, and equipment, and listening to instructions from library staff. All patrons, including children and vulnerable adults, are expected to comply with the Library's policies.

The Children's Area is for children and their caregivers. All patrons may actively browse the collection or retrieve a book. Library patrons without a child should not use the Children's Area for reading or study. Patrons who are not accompanied by a child or actively seeking children's materials will be asked to leave the area if they are lingering or without purpose. This is for the safety of all children.

Children ages 8 and older do not need the supervision of a caregiver and can be in the library unattended as long as they follow library policies. They should have contact information for someone who can assist them in an emergency.

Vulnerable adults who can understand and follow the Patron Behavior Policy and who can care for themselves are allowed to be in the Library unattended. They should have contact information for someone who can assist them in an emergency.

Children ages 7 and younger and vulnerable adults who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves or do not have the ability to use the Library independently may not be left alone in the Library and must have adequate supervision while in the Library or during a library-sponsored program, including visits to the restroom.

Children and vulnerable adults of any age who, because of developmental disability, mental illness, physical disability, or other similar reason, require supervision or personal care, should be attended by a caregiver at all times.

A caregiver who will be providing supervision must be at least 12 years old and is responsible for monitoring or caring for the child or vulnerable adult. Caregivers must maintain direct supervision and visual contact with the person they are in charge of caring for while in the library or during a library-sponsored program, including visits to the restroom.

Library staff may attempt to contact a caregiver when the health or safety of an unattended child or vulnerable adult is in doubt, a child or vulnerable adult is frightened while alone at the Library, or the behavior of an unattended child or vulnerable adult violates library policy. Children may request to use the library phone to contact a caregiver at any time, especially if they need to arrange transportation. If a child or vulnerable adult is left unattended at closing or against Library policy, two library staff members shall remain with the unattended child or vulnerable adult until a caregiver or law enforcement arrives. Staff will attempt to call a caregiver and wait with the child or vulnerable adult for a reasonable length of time before calling law enforcement officials to take over. Library staff will not be responsible if unattended children or vulnerable adults of any age leave the library premises alone or with other persons. Further, staff will not be responsible for children who may be asked to leave the library if the child is in violation of Library policy. Library staff are not permitted to transport an unattended child or vulnerable adult under any circumstance.