**LIBRARY SAFE CHILD PLAN**

**Prepared for:`**

**(INSERT YOUR AGENCY HERE)**

Reviewed by (print name): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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*Leaders of the Library should review this policy with their local law enforcement agency. They should fill in red items with locations or staff members in their organization. The policy should be formally adopted, and the staff should be educated and trained in its contents.*

**----------REMOVE ABOVE PARAGRAPH----------**

# PURPOSE

The insert library name recognizes that the public Library is a unique institution that welcomes customers of all ages to use its facilities, services, and resources.

Children and their safety are of great concern to libraries. We encourage families and youth to use libraries and, while doing so, also affirm parents’ responsibility for their children’s safety and upbringing.

Children, like all library patrons, are expected to behave appropriately. Parents and caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior and supervision of their children in the library.

# REFERENCE

[**NJLA Statement on Children and Libraries**](https://njla.memberclicks.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=86:njla-statement-on-children-and-libraries&catid=26:njla-executive-board-statements-and-resolutions&Itemid=161)

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# DEFINITIONS

Child For the purpose of this policy, the age of a child shall be up to the age of 16 years, the age of consent in New Jersey.

Unattended An unattended child is a child of any age who is apparently unaccompanied by an adult.

Abandoned Any youth who is unable to care for himself or herself, and who is left in the Library without a guardian for any period of time and/or who is not picked up at closing time is considered abandoned by the Library as set forth in New Jersey Statutes Annotated 9:6-1: *Abandonment of a child shall consist in any of the following acts by anyone having the custody or control of the child: (a) willfully forsaking a child; (b) failing to care for and keep the control and custody of a child so that the child shall be exposed to physical or moral risk without proper and sufficient protection*

# CHILD AGE AND LIBRARY USE:

*In New Jersey, the law does not prescribe a certain age at which a child may be left alone. The New Jersey Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) uses age 7 as an estimate of the youngest age at which a child can be left safely at home. (Note: Children who are alone in a library are not considered to be legally “neglected” or “abandoned.”)*

*A host of factors influence whether it is appropriate for a child to be alone in a library, unattended by a responsible caregiver. Note, too, that library staff cannot verify the ages of children who come into the facility.*

Children through age 7 years must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity unless they are participating in a Library program.  Parents or caregivers for children age 7 years or under who do not attend the program with the child should remain in the building.

Children aged 8 to 12 years may use the library unattended for an amount of time appropriate to their age and maturity.

Children who have special needs because of disabling conditions such as impaired physical and mental ability, disruptive behavior, emotional problems, inadequate attention span, incomplete social skills, etc., shall be attended to by a responsible person at all times.

# DISRUPTIVE CHILDREN:

A library staff member will inform the child of the rules.

If the behavior continues, the staff member will notify the parents of the child. If the behavior still persists, the child and parent/guardian will be asked to leave the library.

Disruptions caused by children 8 to 12 years who apparently are unaccompanied will be informed of the rules.   Locate the parent or caregiver in the library and explain the Child Safety Policy. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child and parent / guardian shall be asked to leave the library.

If a child in this age group is behaving inappropriately and is unaccompanied by an adult or appropriate-aged caregiver, the staff will follow the directions below for disruptive children found on Library premises without a parent or caregiver.   All children should have the telephone number of a parent or guardian.

1. Make every effort to contact the parent or caregiver who is not in  the library to come and pick up the child.  Staff will express the library’s concern for the child’s safety and explain the Child Safety Policy.
2. If the parent or caregiver cannot be located within 30  minutes, call insert name of law enforcement agency to pick up the child.
3. Staff will notify the Director that the police have been called.
4. Two staff members shall remain with the child while the child is on Library premises until the parent, caregiver or police arrive.
5. Once the child is in the care of the police,  leave a note with the Main Desk leader advising the child is with the insert name of law enforcement agency.

# SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE, ABANDONMENT OR MALNUTRITION

The library reserves the right to contact insert name of law enforcement agency to take custody of any youth that library staff members, in their sole discretion, feel is abused, abandoned, or suffering malnutrition.

The library staff cannot know if a youth is with a guardian, friends, or strangers.

# LOST CHILD

When the staff notices a child in distress,

1. The staff members will ask the child where their parents are.
2. The staff employee will search for the parents with the child.
3. If the parents are not immediately found, insert name of law enforcement agency will be called.
4. Two staff members will accompany the child until law enforcement officers arrive.

# CLOSING:

*Libraries need to adopt clear statements regarding children who remain unattended at closing time, who are asked by library staff to leave when they are misbehaving, or who leave when it is dark, inclement, etc.*

Children who do not have transportation home at closing time will be asked for telephone numbers of people who can pick them up at the library. If a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of closing, Library staff will call insert name of law enforcement agency. Two staff members will stay with the child until the situation is resolved.

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.

# MEDICAL EMEGERENCIES:

If a child age 8 through 12 years 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, call insert name of law enforcement agency, and the child may be placed in their care.

In case of a medical emergency, when parents cannot be reached, the library staff will dial 9-1-1. One staff member will stay with the child while a second staff member brings first aid equipment to the location. All staff members who are involved in providing care shall wear medical exam gloves.

After a child has been placed in the care of law enforcement personnel or transported to a medical center, the staff will leave notes about the child’s whereabouts at the front desk.

# REPORT OF A MISSING CHILD:

To assist parents/guardians and caregivers in keeping children safe in the library building, the library staff, in cooperation with the insert name of local law enforcement agency, will implement the following Code Adam Procedure upon report of a missing child.

*Code Adam Procedure*

When a staff member is notified of a missing child by a parent or caregiver, the staff member will immediately:

1. Notify the Main Desk, which will announce a Code Adam over the public address (PA) system.
2. Another staff member will quickly search the immediate area with the parent, guardian, or caregiver. If the child is not immediately found, staff will call 9-1-1 and request “immediate police assistance for missing child at insert name of library”.
3. Obtain a detailed description of the child, including:
   1. Name
   2. Age
   3. Hair color
   4. Eye color
   5. Approx. weight and height
   6. What the child is wearing (color of shirt, jacket, pants, etc., type of shoes, etc.)
   7. Where and when did you see the child last?
4. If a missing child alert begins in the Children’s Room, notify the Main Desk, and then all staff members will assist with the Lockdown Procedure.
5. Children’s Room staff will remain to observe the Children’s Room exit and begin monitoring for the missing child.
6. A staff member from the Main Room should immediately cover the main exit and observe the meeting door and the restrooms. Employees will request that all people attempting to leave the building remain within the library and will request any people attempting to enter to remain outside. Direct service to patrons will be suspended while Lockdown Procedures are in progress.
7. Employees will wait for police to arrive and assist the responding officer as requested.
8. If any employee(s) encounter a suspect with the missing child, other than the parent or caregiver, employees should use reasonable measures to delay the exit of the suspect and child without placing themself or the child at risk. The employee should obtain and immediately record a full description of the suspect, including the make, model, and license number of the vehicle (if any) and direction of travel, and pass this information on the insert name of local law enforcement agency.
9. When the child is found, inform all staff members (and police as needed).

Inform the Library Director (describe how) and document the incident. The Library Director shall debrief the incident with those involved to evaluate the timely response