

Waltham Public Library Safe Youth Policy

The Waltham Public Library is dedicated to providing a warm, welcoming, and safe environment for people of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow the **Library Rules** adopted by the Board of Library Trustees and posted around the library and on the library's website. Library personnel use their very best judgement to make every attempt to create a safe environment for all users. **However, ultimately the responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library personnel.**

For the purposes of this policy, "youth" is defined as anyone under 18 who would use the Children's Room or the Teen Room at the Waltham Public Library.

Use of Youth Spaces:

The Children's Room is primarily for children ages 0-12 and their caregivers, and the Teen Room is primarily for youth aged 12-18 during all library hours. Adults without a child present who are not actively using or searching the youth collections or seeking help from staff are not allowed in the Children's or Teen Room, or P.I.E., regardless of whether or not a minor is present in the space. Waltham Public Library staff are expected to be vigilant about this policy and are expressly forbidden from making an exception to this rule.

Children's programs and events are an extension of the Children's Room and thus this policy applies. Adults without a child will not be allowed to attend Children's events, without permission from the Waltham Public Library staff.

The Children's restroom is for the exclusive use of children and their caregivers. In rare plumbing emergencies exceptions may need to be made, however patrons who continuously disregard this policy could lose their library privileges.

Unattended Children Policy:

While librarians work to create a safe environment in the library, this work does not extend to acceptance of responsibility to care for or watch over any child or children left unattended. The presence of unattended children in the library is a safety issue.

All children under 9 years of age must be attended and adequately supervised by a responsible caretaker who remains with them. Children under 9 years attending our elementary school book groups may be left unattended, but caretaker must remain in the building for the duration of the program.

Children ages 9 and up may be left unattended, at the discretion of a responsible caretaker for the period of time necessary to complete homework assignments and projects, to attend a library program, or for quiet reading and thinking. The child should know how to reach an adult, and both child and adult should be aware of the closing time of the library and have plans for when the library is closed.

It is the responsibility of the caretaker to ensure the appropriate behavior of their children in the library. Children are expected to handle books, toys and other library materials with care. Disruptive or destructive children will be asked to leave the library after appropriate warning. **If a child of this age group is not able to leave the library without an adult, he/she should not be in the library unattended.**

If it is determined a child is lost, or unattended to the point where staff on duty is concerned, the police may be contacted for assistance.