

Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Valley City Barnes County Public Library

Adopted and Approved by Library Board October 17, 2019, Revised and
Approved April 17, 2025

Purpose Statement

The Valley City Barnes County Public Library welcomes all ages and strives to provide an environment and space for all to enjoy. The library is a public building open to all individuals and the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults at the library is of utmost importance. Library staff are committed to helping children find materials, planning programs that inform and entertain, and providing an environment that encourages study and exploration. Any public place may be unsafe for a child or vulnerable adult who is left unattended even for brief periods of time. Library facilities are neither designed nor licensed to provide childcare or specialized care and should not be used for this purpose. Vulnerable adults and young children should be supervised by age appropriate, responsible parties at all times. Parents and caregivers are responsible for monitoring the activities and regulating the behavior of persons in their care while they are in the library. The Library Board and staff respect the rights and privacy of all library patrons. Library staff will intervene only when juveniles or vulnerable adults are left unattended or issues relating to safety, disruptive behavior, or well-being occur. Library staff will follow established procedure for the protection of the involved party and to maintain an environment free from disruption in accordance with the Patron Conduct Policy.

Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults

An unattended child is a minor of any age whose behavior requires them to be accompanied by a parent or caregiver. A vulnerable adult is a person over the age of 18-years-old who is unable or unwilling to care for themselves.

The library does not have staff, staff training, or State Certification to act as a child care facility or in lieu of trained staff or family for vulnerable adults.

The library staff is not responsible for the care of unattended children and vulnerable adults and does not assume responsibility from the parents or caregivers for providing for the welfare of persons in their care.

Library staff is not responsible for children or vulnerable adults interacting with or leaving the library with persons who are not appropriate caregivers.

Library staff is not responsible for any consequences of parents or caregivers forfeiting their responsibilities.

Library staff may refer to the police those children or vulnerable adults who are left unattended in the library when a parent/guardian cannot be reached or if the behavior of the minor child or vulnerable adult falls outside that of acceptable behavior in the library.

Please refer to the Patron Conduct Policy for more information regarding acceptable behavior.

Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities

Parents/caregivers should remain with persons in their care at all times and are responsible for the care of those persons while inside the Library building and on the premises.

Parents/caregivers should encourage positive behavior by persons under their care while in the library and all areas of the facility.

Parents/caregivers should cooperate with the library staff if persons in their care are disruptive or if they interfere or endanger others or cause damage to property.

Parents or guardians with children who are mature enough to be left alone at the library are expected to set reasonable time limits for their children's visits to the library and provide a means of transportation home from the library by the time the library closes.

Age Guidelines for Supervision

Children through age 6 must have a parent or caregiver in the immediate vicinity. It is NOT acceptable to leave a child unattended in the children's area or any other area of the library.

Children 7 to 12 years may use the library unattended. However, parents are still responsible for the actions of their children.

Young adults 13 to 17 years are treated as adult patrons in this policy. However, parents are still responsible for the actions of their children.

The library reserves the right to determine when a minor must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or assigned caregiver.

Staff Guidelines

Library staff will attempt to contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver when:

- The health or safety of a child or vulnerable adult is in doubt;
- A child or vulnerable adult is frightened while alone at the library;

- The behavior of a child or vulnerable adult disturbs other library patrons and has caused staff to ask the individual to leave the library;
- A child or vulnerable adult has not been met by a parent, guardian, or caregiver at closing time.

In instances of contacting a parent, guardian, or caregiver, an incident report will be filled out, given to appropriate personnel, and kept on record.

If a parent, guardian, or caregiver can't be reached, the police will be notified at the nonemergency number and asked to assist in the successful resolution of the situation.

At Closing

Library employees will notify the Library Supervisor on duty of any unattended child or vulnerable adult still present in the library 10 minutes prior to closing. Staff will help contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver for a ride.

If an unattended child under 12 or a vulnerable person of any age has not successfully contacted a parent, guardian, or caregiver at closing or that caregiver has not arrived by closing, staff will contact the police at the non-emergency number. Two staff will stay with the child up to 10 minutes after closing.

Under no circumstances will staff take the unattended person to another location.