

Policy Title: Safe Child Policy**Effective Date: November 8, 2021**

The Flagler County 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's Facility Rules and Code of Conduct** adopted by the Library Board of Trustees and posted around the library and on the library's website.

The Flagler County Public Library wants children to use its facilities and services; however, the safety of children left alone in a public building is a serious concern of the library staff. **The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library personnel.**

In order to prevent undue disruption of normal library activities; to provide for the general welfare of all library patrons; and the general safety of children, The Board of Trustees of the Flagler County Public Library has adopted the following rules:

- 1) **All children 9 years or younger must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child.** The assigned caregiver must be at least 13 years old and must carry emergency contact information. The parent/caregiver must stay with the child and actively supervise the child during all library story classes and other programs unless otherwise specified by library staff. When a child 9 years or younger appears to be lost or unattended, library staff will immediately try to locate the parent/caregiver and inform her/him of the rules. A staff member will stay with the child while the search is in process. **If the parents/caregiver cannot be located within 10 minutes, the Flagler County Sheriff's Department will be called to pick up the child.**
- 2) **Children 10 years and older may use the library unattended, subject to the rules and regulations of the library.** However, children who have special needs related to physical or mental ability, disruptive behavior, emotional problems or lack of adequate attention span shall remain with their parent/caregiver at all times.
- 3) **Parents** should not view the library as an alternative to day care or after-school programs. Parents are advised that if the conduct of their child is inappropriate, the child may be instructed to leave the library and even in their absence, they are legally responsible for the behavior of their children. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.
- 4) **Closing Procedures:** Staff are instructed to do a "walk through" about 15 minutes prior to closing time in order to ask children if they need to call for a ride home and, if so, the staff have the children call at that time. When a child age 13 or under is unattended at closing time, staff will immediately attempt to contact the parents or guardians. If parents have been contacted and are "on the way," two staff members will remain with the child up to 15 minutes after closing time. After 15 minutes, the Sheriff's Department will be notified to pick up the child. Under no circumstances will a staff member transport a child home or to any other destination.
- 5) **Ensure the "teen zone" space has appropriate acceptable use and age policies to make teens feel welcome and safe.** The teen space is intended for use by customers age 12-18 years old, and its purpose is to centralize the information and recreation resources of this age group while offering teens a safe, supportive, and positive space that is uniquely their own.