

## **Children in the Library Policy**

### **Purpose**

The Mid-Mississippi Regional Library System (MMRLS) welcomes all children and their families to use library services and facilities. The library's goal is for a child's visit to be a safe, rewarding, and positive experience that encourages a lifelong love of reading. Children visiting MMRLS libraries will receive the same welcome, assistance, and respect as any other of our valued customers and are also subject to the same rules of conduct and consequences outlined in the MMRLS Customer Code of Conduct.

### **Responsible Adults and Caregivers**

Library staff cannot supervise or care for children on library property. MMRLS relies on the judgment of responsible adults and caregivers to oversee and ensure a child's safety, welfare, content access, and appropriate behavior while in the library. Responsible adults and caregivers are accountable for the conduct and activities of a minor patron, even when the adult or caregiver is not present in the library. A responsible caregiver should be at least 16 years of age or older and able to respond appropriately in an emergency.

### **Children Aged Birth to Nine Years of Age**

Children aged birth to nine years of age must be supervised by a responsible caregiver aged 16 or older at all times and may not be left unattended in the library or on library premises. If a child under ten is found unattended, or his/her behavior is disruptive to the other library users, the responsible adult or caregiver will be informed of the issue and asked to correct the behavior. If the caregiver cannot be located, the police may be called to escort an unattended child to a safe location until the responsible adult or caregiver can be reached.

### **Children Aged Ten to Seventeen Years of Age**

Children aged ten to seventeen years of age may use the library independently. Staff may ask children in this age group to correct disruptive behavior or other activities in violation of MMRLS policies as necessary. If the behavior continues, staff may attempt to contact a responsible adult or caregiver and/or proceed with enforcement of consequences as defined in the MMRLS Customer Code of Conduct.

### **Unattended Children at Closing**

Responsible adults and caregivers must be aware of the library's hours of operation and are responsible for picking up children before the library closes. If a child is left unattended and without transportation at the library at closing time, staff will make a reasonable effort to locate the child's responsible adult by phone. If a responsible adult cannot be located to pick up the child within 15 minutes after the library closes, the police may be called to escort the child to a safe location. Under no circumstances will staff transport unattended children or allow a child to sit in a staff person's vehicle.

### **Emergency Closures**

Situations may arise when, due to unusual or emergency circumstances, it may be necessary for the library to close without prior notice. In this circumstance, unaccompanied children under eighteen without transportation must be able to reach their responsible caregiver to be picked up immediately. If a responsible adult or caregiver cannot be located within 15 minutes, police may be called to escort the child to a safe location until a responsible adult or caregiver can be reached.