



Policy No.: GVL-003
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GOLETA VALLEY LIBRARY UNATTENDED CHILDREN POLICY

PURPOSE

The City of Goleta welcomes families and children of all ages to the Goleta Valley Library. The City strives to provide a safe and appropriate environment for all library patrons. Library staff are committed to helping children find materials, planning programs that inform and entertain, and providing an environment that encourages study and exploration. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone abide by the Rules of Conduct established by the City Council.

Our Library is a public facility. Any public place may be unsafe for a child who is left unattended even for brief periods of time. In addition, our library facility is neither designed nor licensed to provide childcare and should not be used for this purpose. The City encourages parents to consider the safety and well-being of their children as well as the needs of other library users of all ages. Parents and other caregivers are solely responsible for the welfare and the behavior of children using the library. Library staff cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they use the library.

AGE GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISION

The library acknowledges that the maturity of children at different ages varies. These rules are subject to the discretion of City staff who may apply them to children other than the ages stated below if they deem necessary.

- Children age **five and younger** must be in close proximity and within sight and conversation distance of the adult responsible for their safety. Parents using computers are still responsible for the behavior of their children and should remain conscious of where their children are and what they are doing.
- Children age **nine and younger** must be supervised by a responsible caregiver age fourteen or older in the same service area at all times while they are in the library unless they are participating in a library program (see below). Caregivers (age fourteen and older) must be able to effectively supervise young children and be willing and able to provide contact information for a parent or guardian upon request.
- Children age **ten and older** are free to use the library's resources unattended provided that their behavior is not disruptive to other patrons and they are mature enough to follow library rules and observe proper conduct; otherwise they should be adequately supervised by a parent or responsible caregiver. Parents are still responsible for the actions and the well-being of their children. Children using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. If a child in this age

group is not able to leave the library unaccompanied by an adult, he/she should not be in the library alone.

- Children of any age with mental, physical or emotional disabilities which affect decision-making skills or render supervision necessary must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver at all times.

If a child age nine (9) or younger is found to be unattended in any area of the Library (or an unattended child ten or older is found frightened, crying, or otherwise in distress), staff will attempt to locate the child's caregiver. If City staff cannot find the child's parent or caregiver, the Santa Barbara County Sheriff Department will be notified and asked to assume care of the child. All children should carry with them the phone number of a parent or caregiver who can be contacted in case of an emergency.

PROGRAMS

A child may attend a program in the Community Room (or Children's Area) by him/herself; however, the caregiver must be ready to meet that child promptly when the program ends. Staff does not monitor the arrival or departure of any child from a program or the building.

- During toddler story time sessions, parents/guardians are required to sit with their children in the story time area.
- During the preschool story time sessions, parents/guardians are required to remain in the library building. Parents are not required to sit with their children the entire time and may browse the collection if the children are comfortable with the parent doing so. However, parents are encouraged to participate in the stories and activities with their child(ren) during story time.

CLOSING TIME

When library staff observes unattended children on library premises at closing time, the staff member will ask the child if prior arrangements have been made with a parent or caregiver. If the caregiver has not arrived at closing, the Sheriff Department will be called and asked to assume care of the child. Library staff will remain with the child until the police officer arrives.