**Safe Child Policy**

**Purpose Statement**

The Mitchell County Public Library wants children who visit the library to perceive it as a welcoming and fun place to visit. Library staff is available to assist children in finding resources and materials. The safety and welfare of children at the library is of upmost importance. Parents, guardians, or caregivers are responsible for monitoring the activities of their child and regulating their children’s behavior while their children are in the library. Library staff will follow established library procedure for the protection of the child and to maintain an environment free from disruption in accordance with Library Behavior Policy.

**Unattended Children in the Library**

1. Children aged 10 and under must be accompanied by parent, guardian, or caregiver.
2. Children aged 11 and over may be in the library without a parent, guardian, or caregiver present provided that their behavior is not disruptive and are mature enough to follow library rules.
3. Library staff is not responsible for a child’s care or well-being while the child is on library premises. Library staff does not assume responsibility from a parent or guardian nor can they act “in loco parentis” while the child is on library premises.
4. The library is not a child care facility nor provides any type of babysitting services.
5. Library staff is not responsible for children interacting with or leaving the library with persons who are not appropriate caregivers.
6. Library may refer to local law enforcement those children who are left unattended in the library when a parent/guardian cannot be reached. Library staff may also contact local law enforcement if child’s behavior is disruptive but only after library staff has given the child a warning and child’s parents/guardians have been contacted without a response.

**Parent/Caregiver Responsibilities**

1. Parents/caregivers must remain with or in the same area as their children who are ages 10 and younger in the library.
2. Parents/caregivers are responsible for caring for the child and the child’s behavior, regardless of their age.
3. Parents with children who are 11 and over who can be left alone at the library are expected to provide a means of transportation home from the library before the library closes.
4. Encourage positive behavior by their children while in the library.
5. Parents/guardians/caregivers should cooperate with the library staff if their child is disruptive or if they interfere or endanger others or cause damage to property.

**Staff Guidelines**

Staff will use these guidelines for addressing unattended children or those with conduct issues.

1. If a child’s behavior causes a disturbance or other concerns, the child will be given a warning. If the behavior continues, the parent/guardian/caregiver will be contacted to pick up the child. In the case that a parent/guardian/caregiver cannot be reached, the staff will contact the proper authorities.
2. If a child 15 or younger is left unattended after closing, 2 staff members are required to remain with the child until the parent/guardian/caregiver can be reached and/or arrives. If a parent/guardian/caregiver cannot be reached and/or does not arrive 15 minutes after the library closes, staff will contact the appropriate law enforcement authorities.
3. Under no circumstances is library staff to transport children in personal vehicles.