

Washington Parish Library

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Section: Facility Policies and Procedures	

Policy on Unattended Children and the Protection of Minors.

The Washington Parish Library welcomes the use of its facilities and services by children of all ages. Our services and programs are offered to make the library enticing to children, to encourage them to visit the library and to develop a love of books, reading and libraries.

The safety and welfare of young children left alone in the library is a serious concern of Library Board of Control and the administration. Young children, left unattended, often become frightened and anxious. Even older children, though they may be able to occupy their time for a short while, often become bored, hungry, and disruptive, disturbing the enjoyment of the library by others.

It is not desirable to have unattended children in the library. The library is a public building and staff cannot know if the children are leaving the building with parents or strangers or even by themselves. Parents are responsible for their children's care and behavior at all times while in the library. The library staff cannot be responsible for children left alone without proper supervision.

For the protection and well being of children who enjoy our libraries and to prevent undue disruption of normal library activities, the Washington Parish Library Board of Control has adopted the following rules. Library supervisors and staff have been authorized to enforce these rules and procedures, effective November 11, 2004.

Rules

1. Children age 11 and younger may not be left unattended in any branch of the Washington Parish Library. They must be accompanied by a responsible person - an adult . Responsible parties not attending children's program with children age 11 and younger must remain inside the library facility.
2. The parents, guardians and assigned chaperons are responsible for their children's behavior while in the library and while attending library programs.
3. Children age 12 and older may use the library unattended, but must display acceptable library behavior, conduct, and demeanor.
4. Staff members are not allowed to assume responsibility for any child in the absence of an adult or assigned chaperon, even for a very short time.

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B. Sex Offender Regulation

In accordance with its Rules and Regulations the Library Governing Board of Washington Parish has adopted on this 15th day of November, 2012 the following (regulation/ordinance/policy) for the purpose of:

1. Compliance with the statutory mandates set forth in La. R.S. 14:91.2
2. Protecting children from contact with persons who have been convicted of sex offenses where the victim was under 13 years of age

Regulation:

- I. Effective January 1, 2013, persons who have been convicted of sex offenses where the victim was under the age of 13 (referred to as "sex offenders" for purposes of this policy/regulation) are restricted in their access to public library property, as follows:
 - a. Children's Areas – No sex offender shall be physically present in any area of the library designated as a "children's area" or "young readers' area"
 - b. No sex offender shall be physically present on public library property during major children's programming events. A schedule will be posted on-line and at the entrance of the library branch.
 - c. Loitering within 1,000 feet – No sex offender shall loiter within 1,000 feet of public library property.
 - d. Employment - No sex offender shall apply for, work for, or otherwise provide services to a library branch as an employee, contractor, sub-contractor, or volunteer
- II. Exceptions to these restrictions are:
 - a. Police station/courthouse/polling station – There shall be no violation of this regulation if the sex offender is reporting to a police station, courthouse, or polling station that is within the restricted area.
 - b. With special permission – There shall be no violation of this regulation if the sex offender has requested and has been granted written permission to be physically present on public library property from the library branch director or his designee, and the sex offender complies with any special restrictions contained within the permission.

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III. The Library Director shall be responsible for developing and implementing administrative and management procedures in furtherance of the policies stated herein. Recommended procedures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Background checks – Implement procedures to provide that library employees, contractors, sub-contractors, and volunteers who will interact with children or will be required to work in the restricted areas may be subject to criminal background checks.
- b. Configuration – To the extent possible, each library branch shall be arranged in a manner to ensure that areas devoted to children and young readers may be easily supervised by library staff, and such areas are segregated from other library resources and facilities.
- c. Notice – Implement procedures to ensure adequate public notice of each library branch’s times and dates of children’s programming. Adequate notice may include posting such information in a prominent location near the library’s entrance and on the library’s website.
- d. Surrogate – Implement procedures to allow sex offenders to authorize a surrogate to check out library materials using the sex offender’s library card.
- e. Enforcement – Implement procedures to update policies, where necessary, and enforce policies regarding unattended children.

IV. The Library Director and members of the public are invited to make recommendations to the Library Board to improve this regulation or suggest legislative changes that will allow public libraries to more effectively achieve the public purposes set forth herein.

Authority Note

Act 693 of the 2012 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature amended and re-enacted R.S. 14.91.2. The effective date of the Act is January 1, 2013.