

Every child (ages 17 and under) has a right to feel safe and secure at the Morrisson-Reeves Library. All library staff and volunteers have the responsibility to ensure that this protection is provided. This policy provides guidelines and a framework of best practices to make the library a safe place for a child to use and enjoy.

GENERAL LIBRARY REQUIREMENTS: Prior to beginning employment the library will conduct a criminal history check of all employees ages 18 and over. All employees will be subject to a National Sex Offender Registry check. MRL will repeat criminal history checks and sex offender registry checks at each 5-year anniversary.

All volunteers that apply to voluntary work at the library will be subject to a National Sex Offender Registry check. Any volunteer with duties that require them to regularly have contact with children may also be subject to a criminal history check.

Adults or youth who have been convicted of or are currently under suspicion of either sexual or physical abuse of a minor, or who have a history of inappropriate conduct involving a minor, may not interact with minors in any library sponsored event or activity. This includes performers or persons hired or volunteering to conduct a program or event for the library.

The Children's and Teen areas of the library are reserved for children in their respective age groups, parents/guardians of those children, and adults interested in the materials contained within. Adults who are unaccompanied by children may be questioned by staff, and may be asked to move to another area of the library.

The library fully complies with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) which requires an internet use policy and the filtering of materials that could be harmful to children. While no filter is perfect, the library uses advance filtering software on its wired and wireless network that prohibits access to any sites in violation of federal, state, or local laws and other prohibitions such as profanity, sexually explicit material, expressions of bigotry, racism, and violence gambling, and information on the manufacture of drugs, weapons, and bombs.

UNSUPERVISED or UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN: Our library welcomes children of all ages to use our facility. However, the responsibility for the care, safety, and behavior of children using the library rests with the parent, legal guardian, or designated caregiver. The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. The library is a public building, open to all. It is not in the child's best interest to be left unsupervised.

For the safety and comfort of children, a parent, legal guardian, or designated caregiver (at least 13 years of age) must accompany children under the age of 8, while they are using the library. Young children may not be left unattended anywhere in the library, including areas designated for children. The library reserves the right to require children over age 8 to have a parent or guardian present for a particular program or event.

We ask for our cooperation in keeping the library a safe and happy place for all children.

In implementing this policy, staff will make a reasonable attempt to find/contact the caregiver of an unattended child. If no one can be identified, staff will contact local law enforcement officials to assume responsibility for the child. Staff will wait with the child until law enforcement officers arrive.

The parent/guardian is responsible for arranging for transportation home by closing time.

- The child will be given a chance to call home for a ride 10 minutes before the library closes.
- If the parent/guardian cannot be located, two staff members will either allow the child to remain at the library under close supervision or will contact local law enforcement authorities.
- A child left at the library for more than 10 minutes after closing is considered to be an abandoned child, and the police department will be contacted. The police officer will be asked to provide transport to the police department until the police can locate a parent/guardian.
- At least two staff members will remain with and supervise the child.
- A library staff member will not take an unaccompanied child outside of the library building, even at the request of the parent/guardian.
- A library staff member will not transport an unaccompanied child to another location, even at the request of the parent/guardian.

GENERAL GUIDELINES for PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Library staff make every effort to ensure the library is safe and secure, but they cannot monitor the behavior or whereabouts of each child, nor can they monitor or control behavior or whereabouts of all people using the library. They cannot assure the safety of an unattended child.

In all situations, the parent/guardian/caregiver who brings a minor child to the library property or program, is responsible for the care and safety of the child. Library staff members cannot assume parental responsibilities for children who are in the library.

Parents are asked to speak with their children about safety among strangers. The library is a public building, and anyone may enter and spend time there. Children should know they can always go to a staff member if another patron is making them feel threatened or uncomfortable.

Parents and guardians play a vital role in their child's library and learning experience. They are encouraged to make the library experience more enjoyable by being aware of their child's reading activities and interests. Staff cannot assume the parental role or take responsibility for what children check out or access on the internet beyond our ordinary policies and procedures. Upon request, our professional staff will guide children to materials that are appropriate for their reading level and interest, but will not censor materials. As a library, it is our responsibility to purchase, collect, and display materials that represent and benefit all members of the community, regardless of their age, sex, religion, gender, nationality, identity, and so forth. We understand that there may be materials present in the collection that you feel are inappropriate for your child(ren). It is your responsibility as a parent or guardian to preview materials and, if necessary, limit your child's access to those you deem inappropriate. We are always happy to offer or take suggestions for alternative titles and are happy to help parents and children navigate resources and find materials that fit their world view and beliefs.

Adopted 02/21/2022