

## Unattended Child Policy

Rutherford Public Library (hereinafter "Library" or "RPL") strives to provide a safe and welcoming environment to patrons of all ages and abilities. The Library is a public building open to all, and staff members are unable to supervise children or dependent persons (individuals of any age who are unable to make decisions about their own safety and wellbeing) when their parents or caregivers are unavailable.

Responsibility for the safety and behavior of minors and dependent persons rests with the individuals' parent, guardian, or caregiver, not the Library staff. Parents or caregivers should not expect that staff can meet the specific needs of their child or dependent person nor expect that staff will know if a child or dependent person is leaving the building with parents or strangers.

In order to create the safest environment possible, RPL has instituted the following policy:

**All children under the age of 9, as well as dependent persons of any age, must be accompanied by a parent or caregiver over the age of 13 at all times when visiting the Library.**

In the case of children under 9 attending Library programming unchaperoned, a parent or caregiver is encouraged to remain in the building and must be immediately visible when the child exits the event.

**Unaccompanied minors aged 9 and older must know how to contact a parent or caregiver in the event of an emergency.** If an emergency arises, RPL staff may attempt to contact the child's guardian. If contact cannot be made, staff may enlist the assistance of the Rutherford Police Department as needed.

**All unaccompanied minors must abide by the Library's operating hours - including early closings due to inclement weather or other emergencies - and should be picked up prior to closing time.** RPL staff will attempt to contact the child's parent or caregiver if necessary in order to facilitate a safe departure. Staff will make every reasonable effort to make this connection. If contact is unable to be made at closing time, staff may contact the Rutherford Police Department and request that an officer be dispatched to wait with the child and a library staff member until he or she is picked up. The Rutherford Police Department may also attempt to make contact with a parent or guardian.

Serious and ongoing violations of Library policies, including the Unattended Child Policy, may result in further action including, but not limited to, suspension of Library privileges.