

Hicksville Public Library Policy on Unattended, Lost, Missing or Disruptive Children  
Adopted by the Board of Trustees, December 16, 1992  
Revised by the Board of Trustees, May 20 2009

### Statement of Purpose

The Hicksville Public Library Board of Trustees and staff welcome all children into our library and hope that they perceive our facilities as a warm, inviting and interesting place to visit. Many programs and services are offered to children to help them enjoy their visit and develop a love of books, reading and the library. Children of the community are encouraged to come into the library to do homework, write reports, do research, browse for books or other library materials, think, reflect or read.

However, responsibility for younger children using the library rests with the parent/guardian or assigned caregiver, not with the library personnel. The library recognizes that when young children are left unattended for an extended period of time and no library programs are being held, they may become bored and disruptive or wander away. Unattended children are left also vulnerable in that their safety and well-being are endangered because they may be too young to be on their own.

Older children may come into the library unattended. However, it is expected they will not display disruptive behavior such as running, throwing, eating, loud talking, abusive language, fighting, moving furniture, vandalism, excessive socializing or any other activities which disrupt the library. These types of behavior may represent a physical danger to the child and interfere with the legitimate library business of other patrons or staff.

For the protection and well-being of children who enjoy our library and the right of others to use the facilities without disruption, the following policy and procedures have been adopted.

#### I. Unattended Children

1. Parents/guardians or assigned caregivers are responsible for the behavior of their children while in the library and may not leave children who have not as yet completed 5<sup>th</sup> grade unattended.
2. Two staff members together may comfort frightened or crying unattended child.
3. Unattended children will be brought to either the circulation desk of the Children's Room or Adult Services.
4. the staff will try to locate the parent/guardian or assigned caregiver of the unattended child.

- a. Walk through the library with the child and look for his/her parent/guardian or caregiver.
- b. If the parent/guardian or caregiver is not in the building, a staff member will stay with the child until they are contacted.
- c. When the parent/guardian or caregiver is located, they will be informed of the library's policy and asked either to join the child at the library or come for him or her immediately.
- d. If the parent/guardian or caregiver has not been located within an hour, or if the library is closing, the staff member shall call the police, who will assume responsibility for the child. Two staff members will remain with the child inside the library entrance until police arrive.
- e. Library policy will be explained and a copy of the written policy will be given or sent to the parents.
- f. Under no circumstance will a staff member take a child out of the building.
- g. If an unattended child becomes ill in the library, the caregiver will be notified to come to the library for the child. The child will remain in the library until the parent/guardian or assigned caregiver comes for the child. If they cannot be located within a reasonable time, the police will be called to assume responsibility for the child.
- h. If the police are called because of an unattended or an ill child, the staff member involved shall file an incident report with the director's office as soon as possible.

## II. Disruptive Behavior

### 1. Disruptive Attended Children

- a. The staff will ask the child to correct his/her behavior.
- b. If the disruptive behavior continues, a staff member will inform the parent/guardian or caregiver that the child is disturbing other patrons.
- c. If the parent/guardian or caregiver refuses or is unable to correct the behavior, they and the child will be asked to leave the library for the day

in accordance with the library's policy concerning proper code of conduct in the library.

2. Disruptive Unattended Children

- a. Staff will instruct the disruptive child to behave appropriately and inform him/her that this is a warning and that next time he/she will be asked to leave the library.
- b. If disruptive behavior continues, staff will tell the youngster to leave the library. Staff accompanies the child to the door and informs other staff members that the child is not permitted to return that day.
- c. If the child appears vulnerable, or in danger if left unattended, library staff should attempt to contact the parents about the child's disruptive behavior. After informing the parent of the library's policy, staff will ask the parent to come for the child.
- d. If the parent cannot be contacted within the hour, staff at their discretion may call the police to assume responsibility for the child. The staff member involved shall file an incident report with the director's office.
- e. If a child exhibits disruptive behavior on a regular basis, the person in charge may request that the Library Director impose temporary restrictions on library use. The director may at his/her discretion send a letter to the child's parents, hold a conference with the parent or contact the police department.

III. Child Reported Lost or Missing

If a parent/ guardian or assigned caregiver reports a child missing, the staff will follow this procedure:

1. The name, age and complete description of the missing child will be obtained from the parent or assigned caregiver as soon as possible. The staff member will first check the children's area including the restrooms and the Kenneth S. Barnes Community Room and then proceed through the library. The staff member may request assistance from other personal.
2. If the child has not been found, the outside area of the library will be checked.
3. If the child was not located on library premises, the police will be called and an incident report shall be filed with the director's office.

