

## **Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults**

The Amery Area Public Library welcomes visits by children, vulnerable adults, and their families and caregivers. However, library staff cannot provide or assume responsibility for unattended children and vulnerable adults. Parents, guardians, and caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior and safety of children and vulnerable adults visiting the library. Staff cannot be placed in the position of supervising unattended children or vulnerable adults. As in all public places, safety is a real concern. Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving with people who are not the appropriate parent, guardian, or caregiver.

- An unattended child is a child seven years of age or younger who is apparently unaccompanied by a responsible adult. A vulnerable adult is defined as “any adult who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs their ability to care for their needs...”<sup>1</sup>. A caregiver is defined as a responsible person who is at least 15 years or older.
- If a child seven years of age or younger, or a vulnerable adult, is found to be unattended or is involved in behavior that violates the Library Patron Expectations and Behavior Policy, library staff will attempt to find their parent, guardian or caregiver and explain the library’s policy. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child seven years of age or younger or vulnerable adult is found unattended or engaged in behavior that violates library policy again, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable adult and other library patrons. These measures may include contacting the police.
- Children aged eight or over may remain in the library unattended, provided they abide by the Library Patron Expectations and Behavior Policy. If a child aged eight or over is involved in behavior that violates the Library Patron Expectations and Behavior Policy, library staff will attempt to find the parent, guardian or caregiver and explain the library’s policy. If the parent, guardian or caregiver cannot be found, or if the child aged eight or over is found to be engaged in behavior that violates library policy again, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure the safety of the child and other library patrons. These measures may include contacting the police.
- If at closing time, whether at a regular time or in an emergency, and a parent or guardian of a child or vulnerable adult cannot be located in the building, the Amery Police Department will be called to take responsibility for the child or vulnerable adult. Two staff members will remain with the child or vulnerable adult until police officers arrive.

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<sup>1</sup> (Wis. Stat. §55.01(1e))

- Under no circumstances will a staff member drive a child (any person under the age of 18) or a vulnerable adult home or to any other destination.
- An Amery Area Public Library incident report will be filed for unattended children and vulnerable adults left at the library.
- The library is not responsible for any consequences of parents forfeiting their responsibilities.

*Approved by the Amery Area Public Library Board of Trustees, September 9, 2013, revised March 27, 2023, revised April 22, 2024.*