

LAKE BLACKSHEAR REGIONAL LIBRARY
UNATTENDED CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY

The Lake Blackshear Regional Library system is dedicated to providing a warm, welcoming, exciting, and safe environment for people of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that all follow the Rules of Conduct of the library system established by the Board of Trustees and posted in each library building.

The Lake Blackshear Regional Library wants children to use its facilities and services. The public library is not a childcare provider but a public institution where all patrons have an equal right to quality library services in a safe and relaxed environment. Children in the library always should be accompanied by a parent/guardian or assigned caregiver. When children are left alone, they may become frightened or anxious. If they wander through the building, they may encounter hazards, such as stairs, doors, furniture, or electrical equipment. They also may become bored and restless and could disturb the enjoyment and work of others.

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library personnel. Librarians cannot be responsible for children who are unattended or are demonstrating inappropriate behavior. The following guidelines will be followed concerning the care and behavior of young library users:

Children through age 6 must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of the child. The assigned caregiver must be at least 16 years old and must carry emergency contact information. An exception would be children attending a story time or other library program without a parent/caregiver in the room. However, the parent/caregiver must remain in the library building and immediately join the child at the end of the program.

If a child in this age group is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the Rules of Conduct. If the parent/caregiver is not found in the library, law enforcement personnel will be asked to pick up the child. If a child in this age group violates the Rules of Conduct, the child and parent/caregiver will be informed of the Rules of Conduct. If inappropriate behavior continues, the family may be asked to leave the library at that time.

Children ages 7 through 11 may use the library on their own, but the parent/caregiver must be in the library building. However, parents are still responsible for the actions of their children. Children using inappropriate behavior will be informed of the Rules of Conduct. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child and family may be asked to leave the library.

Youth ages 12 through 16 may be in the library without a parent/caregiver. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency

contact available. Youth using inappropriate behavior will be informed of the Rules of Conduct. If inappropriate behavior continues, the youth may be asked to leave the library.

Closing Time: Youth of all ages should arrange for transportation before arriving at the library. All children at the library at closing time will be asked for telephone numbers of people to pick them up at the library. If transportation is not available by 15 minutes after closing, the library staff will contact law enforcement personnel to pick up the youth. When law enforcement personnel have picked up the youth, the staff will leave a note on the door notifying the parent/caregiver that law enforcement personnel have their child.

Library staff will stay with the youth after closing until the parent/caregiver or law enforcement personnel have picked up the youth. Children will not be left outside to wait on a ride. Staff is not permitted to drive any children home. In any situation involving youth safety and specifically whenever parents/caregivers or law enforcement personnel are contacted, staff will complete an Incident Report. In cases of serious violations of the policy, the Library will notify the Department of Family and Children's Services.

This policy is posted in each library facility.

Approved by the Lake Blackshear Regional Library Board of Trustees, February 18, 1999.
Amended by the Lake Blackshear Regional Library Board of Trustees, August 16, 2001.