



UNATTENDED CHILDREN AND CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Union Library Company of Hatborough (“ULCH”) welcomes children of all ages to use its materials and services.

While in the library and on library grounds, the general responsibility for the care, safety, and behavior of children lies with parents/guardians or caregivers. Staff members cannot/will not take responsibility for the care, safety and behavior of children nor act as a substitute for daycare. Regardless of any child’s age, parents/guardians are responsible for damage to library property caused by children in their care, as well as cleaning up library premises and materials to leave the library as they find it.

For the purposes of this policy, a caregiver is defined as an individual **aged 18 or over** who is assuming responsibility for a younger child with the permission of the child’s parent(s)/guardian(s). This may include, for example, siblings, babysitters, or teachers.

For the purposes of this policy, a child is defined as a person under the age of 18.

As a public library, ULCH is **mandated by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania** to report suspected child abuse.

REGULATIONS

Children of any age who exhibit disruptive, destructive or potentially harmful behavior will be subject to the policies and procedures set forth in the library’s Patron Conduct Policy.

1. Children **aged 9 or under** must be accompanied by a parent/guardian or caregiver at all times. The parent/guardian/caregiver must remain within sight and conversation distance of children at all times.
2. A child **aged 10 – 13** need not be in the immediate presence of a parent or caregiver at the library, but the parent/guardian or caregiver of the child must be somewhere in the library at all times.
3. A child **aged 14 and over** may use the library unattended for an amount of time appropriate to his/her age and maturity, subject to the child complying with the ULCH Behavior Policy and Regulations. While these regulations are age specific, ULCH reserves the right to modify these regulations and apply them differently to certain children on a case-by-case basis. For example, the library staff could review a situation and determine that a particular 14-year-old child must be accompanied by a caregiver at all times if they are disruptive. **All children aged 14 – 17 unaccompanied by a caregiver will be required to sign in at front desk for security purposes.**

PROCEDURES IN THE EVENT OF UNATTENDED CHILDREN

1. If a child **aged 13 or under** is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/guardian or caregiver in the library. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care.
2. If a child **aged 14 or older**, who has been left unattended by his/her caregiver, falls ill, or requires special care, library staff will attempt to contact parents/guardians to request that they immediately come to the library to pick up the child. If the library staff is unable to contact a parent/guardian, law enforcement officials or emergency medical services may be called depending upon the circumstances, and the child may be placed in their care.
3. **Closing Due to Inclement Weather or Closing Time.** Under no circumstances will a staff member give a child a ride home, take a child outside of the building, or remain in the building alone with an unattended child.
 - a. If a child **aged 9 or younger** is left unattended when the library is closing because of inclement weather or closing time, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care. Library staff will wait with the child until law enforcement arrives.
 - b. Children **aged 14 and older** will be encouraged by library staff to call and arrange rides home from the library at least 30 minutes before closing because of inclement weather or closing time. Children will be permitted to use the library telephone (or staff may place the phone call for them) to request to be picked up from the library. If at closing time a parent/guardian has not arrived to pick up the child, law enforcement officials will be called, and the child will be placed in their care.
4. **Internal Documentation:** All such occurrences will be documented by staff.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Violation of the Unattended Child Policy and Child Safety Policy will lead to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action will be carried out by the library staff and/or director. Disciplinary action will take the form of:

- a verbal or written warning along with a copy of the policy for review.
- banning the child and caregiver from the library for one or more days.
- requiring that the caregiver resolves the matter with assistance from social/family services and/or law enforcement officials before returning to the library.

Library users may appeal against any actions taken by library staff to enforce the Unattended Child Policy and Regulations by submitting a letter to the ULCH Board of Directors at 243 S. York Rd. Hatboro PA, 19040.

TRUANCY

Children of school age left unattended in the library during school hours must present a written permission slip to library staff. The permission slip must be written by a parent or guardian and explain why the child is missing school.