

## WESTBROOK PUBLIC LIBRARY CHILD SAFETY POLICY

The Westbrook Public Library is a department of the Town of Westbrook and is a taxpayer-supported institution. As a result, the Library Board is responsible for establishing policies and rules of conduct to protect the rights and safety of all library patrons, volunteers, and staff, and for preserving and protecting the Library's materials, equipment, facilities, and grounds.

In accordance with Connecticut State Statute 53-21a, children under 12 need to be accompanied by a responsible adult, 18 years of age or older. At all times, parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for the conduct and safety of their children on Library premises. Parents, caregivers, and guardians must provide appropriate supervision based on the ages, the abilities, and the levels of responsibility of their children.

This Child Safety Policy defines permissible and non-permissible use of the Children's Room facilities and equipment at the Westbrook Public Library and the scope of the staff's responsibility to minors.

### Permissible and non-permissible Children's Room use includes, but is not limited to:

All children under 12 must be accompanied by a responsible adult age 18 or older when using the Children's Room. The responsible adult must remain in the Children's Room with the child or children at all times.

The Children's Room is reserved for the use of children. Adults unaccompanied by a child may use the Children's Room only if they are looking for materials to check out and must leave the room once they have located the items. Adults unaccompanied by a child may not use the Children's Room to lounge. Any adult found in the Children's Room not supervising a child or browsing for materials to check out will be asked to leave the Children's Room immediately.

The use of the children's computers is reserved for children through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Adults and teens beyond 8<sup>th</sup> grade should use the main area computers.

Patrons on the sex offender registry are not permitted in the Children's Room.

Adults unaccompanied by a child are prohibited from using the restroom in the Children's Room.

### Children and Intellectual Freedom:

The Westbrook Public Library does not filter the Internet access on its computers. We encourage children to use the library. However, the library does not have the right to act in loco parentis. Therefore, if you are concerned that your children might bring home a book or audiovisual item or access internet content which does not meet your personal standards, we urge you to accompany them when they use the library's collection. We cannot forbid your child to read, hear, or view anything. That is the responsibility of the parent, guardian, or caregiver. Our staff is available to help you and your child find materials which meet your specific needs.

### Unattended Children:

Parents, guardians, and caregivers should be aware that the Library is a public building open to all individuals. It is not the Library staff's responsibility to provide supervision for children or to care for children while parents, guardians, or caregivers are outside the Library. The Library staff is not authorized to act in place of parents. Staff members are responsible for assisting all Library patrons and cannot monitor unattended children. Staff will not monitor children leaving the Library.

Parents, guardians, and caregivers are referred to Connecticut General Statute Section 53-21a - Leaving child unsupervised in place of public accommodation or motor vehicle.

*(a) Any parent, guardian or person having custody or control, or providing supervision, of any child under the age of twelve years who knowingly leaves such child unsupervised in a place of public accommodation or a motor vehicle for a period of time that presents a substantial risk to the child's health or safety, shall be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.*

### Unattended Children, Closings:

Caregivers are expected to be aware of the opening and closing times of the Library, bearing in mind that these can and do change. Sudden emergencies may occur in the Library and in such cases the Library assumes no responsibility for unattended children. Power failures or other emergencies can occur and require unexpected closing of the building. Parents, guardians, and caregivers should be sure that their children know what to do or where to go when the Library closes.

If a child is left at the Library after closing time, or as the result of an emergency closing, staff will attempt to contact the child's parent, guardian, or caregiver. If no responsible person can be contacted, the police will be called. Under no circumstances will library staff escort a child off library property or transport children to another location. A minimum of two library staff will remain with the child until a parent/guardian/caregiver or the police arrive.

Violations of this policy will result in increasing levels of action, ranging from a verbal request; to asking the patron to leave the Library for the remainder of the day; to permanent loss of Library privileges; to referral to legal authorities. The level of action shall be determined on a case-by-case basis and shall be within the sole discretion of the Library Director or his/her designee. All patrons, adults and children, are expected to follow these policies.

Adopted October 2020