

Child & Vulnerable Adult Policy

The Catskill Public Library and Palenville Branch Library (the Library) strive to provide visitors with a welcoming and safe environment. We encourage children of all ages to visit our libraries and hope they will find a warm, inviting place to be. Programs and resources are offered to make the library enticing to children, to help children enjoy their visits, and to develop a love of books, reading, and libraries.

While the Library is concerned for the safety of children and vulnerable adults on Library property, the Library does not act "In loco parentis" (in place of parents), and Library staff cannot provide parental-type oversight or guidance to children or vulnerable adults. A parent, guardian, or caregiver (PGC) is responsible for monitoring the activities and managing the behavior of children and vulnerable adults during their Library visits.

The following policy has been established for the protection and well-being of children and vulnerable adults visiting our libraries.

Children under 6

Children under the age of 6 must be supervised by a parent, guardian, or caregiver who is at least 12 years of age at all times. Adequate supervision requires that the responsible person is always near or in sight of the child.

Children age 6-9

Children 6-9 years old must be accompanied to the library by a parent, guardian, or caregiver at least 12 years of age. The PGC must remain in the building and maintain the responsibility for the child. PGCs of this age group must notify staff of their whereabouts before leaving the children's services area for a different location within the building.

During story times or other programs, PGCs who do not attend the program with their child/children from this age group must remain in the building and be visible when the program is over.

Children aged 10-17

Children ages 10 to 17 are old enough to use the library responsibly. If problems arise, they may be asked to leave, or the parent, guardian, or caregiver on record may be contacted. The PGC is responsible for being accessible to pick the child up when called.

Disruptive Behavior

Suppose a child of any age behaves in a disruptive manner, even when a responsible adult accompanies them. In that case, they will be warned that they must correct their behavior or leave the Library.

If the child continues to be disruptive after this warning, the Library Staff will ask the PGC to remove the child from the library. For children ten or older, the Library Staff will contact the PGC and advise them that their child has been asked to leave the premises.

Unattended Children After Closing Time

The Catskill Public Library and Palenville Branch Library will exercise appropriate procedures to ensure the safety of children when the Library is closing. PGCs must be aware of the Library's hours. It is the PGC's responsibility to make arrangements to pick up their child or make advance arrangements to have their child picked up by a responsible adult by closing time.

If a child under the age of 13 or a vulnerable adult is still at the Library after the Library closes to the public, the Person-In-Charge and at least one other staff member will wait up to 15 minutes before contacting 911.

For their protection, children under 13 or vulnerable adults not picked up 15 minutes after the Library closes will be placed in police custody. Attempts will be made during those 15 minutes to reach a PGC, but staff will never take anyone home. If staff are concerned for the child's or vulnerable adult's safety, they will contact 911 immediately.

Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult is an individual over the age of 18 who is mentally or physically challenged to a degree that may significantly impair that person's ability to provide adequately for their personal needs or manage their behavior without assistance.

Vulnerable adults must have a parent, guardian, or caregiver 18 years or older with them while in the Library that can manage their behavior and adequately provide for their personal needs.

Physically challenged adults capable of providing for their own needs are welcome to remain in the library without supervision so long as a contact person is available if the adult's health or safety is in doubt.

The Library does not have staff, staff training, or State Certification to act as a childcare facility or as a substitute for trained staff or family for vulnerable adults. No public place, including the library, can guarantee the safety of children. The parent, guardian, or caregiver is responsible for their behavior.

During Library hours, when the safety of an unattended child or vulnerable adult is in doubt, Library staff will attempt to contact the PGC before calling 911. In the case of an immediate safety concern, staff will contact 911 first and then try to reach out to the PGC. Staff will stay with the person until help arrives.

Violations of the Child and Vulnerable Adult Safety Policy may result in suspending library privileges for the individual and/or family.

Staff Guidelines

1. Library staff will attempt to comfort an upset child.
2. Library staff will attempt to contact the parent, guardian, or caregiver to address concerns.
3. An incident report will be filled out, given to the Library Director, and kept on record.
4. Library staff may only take children or vulnerable adults out of the building when a PGC is within sight of the staff and child or vulnerable adult.
5. Library staff are to encourage minor children to contact the PGC approximately 15 minutes before closing time.
6. For safety reasons, 911 will be contacted to take custody of any child or vulnerable adult left unattended in the Library or beyond 15 minutes after closing.
7. Library staff may not answer questions about patrons of any age using or being at the Library as per the “**Law Enforcement Inquiry Policy**” unless to address disruptive behavior or concerns.

Resolution: Adopted on July 17, 2019 by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees of the Catskill Public Library.

Resolution: Amended on May 18, 2022 by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees of the Catskill Public Library.

Resolution: Amended on April 19, 2023 by unanimous vote of the Board of Trustees of the Catskill Public Library.