



Child Safety Policy

East Morgan County Library District (the “Library District”) welcomes and encourages children to use the materials and services at the library. As libraries are essential to the lives of children, we strive to provide useful, safe and inviting spaces for youth on our property. The Library District has established this policy in an effort to protect its young patrons from verbal, physical, and sexual abuse; and to protect staff and volunteers who work with them from false accusations.

Children’s Use of the Library

The library is a public place and open to everyone, and the Library District cannot ensure the safety of children or other patrons. Library staff cannot provide childcare or assume parental responsibility for children. Neither the Library District nor its staff members act in *loco parentis*. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for the conduct, safety, and supervision of children while on library premises and while attending library events. For purposes of this policy, “caregiver” means an individual responsible for supervising a child while using the library; caregivers must be 12 years of age or older.

Parents, guardians, or caregivers must accompany children under the age of eight on library visits to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. If any child appears to be lost, is being disruptive, disorderly, left alone for long periods of time, or if in the judgment of staff his or her safety is jeopardized, staff will attempt to locate the parent, guardian, or caregiver.

The Library District’s Behavior Policy extends to children and teens. Library District staff will inform children and teens when their behavior is inappropriate for the library. If the disruptive behavior continues, staff will attempt to contact the child’s parents, guardians, or caregivers. Persistent inappropriate behavior may result in suspension of library privileges.

The Library District does not monitor library materials children choose, nor does it limit children’s access to any materials available in the library. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are responsible for the materials their child views, uses or borrows and should make their rules clear to their own child and supervise their child’s use of library resources.

The youth areas of the library are designed to serve the needs of age-appropriate users. Adults unaccompanied by a minor may not use designated youth areas in the library without the express permission of Library staff (for example, to obtain children’s books).

Parents, guardians, and caregivers should not direct their children to the library in the event of emergency school closings, because the same conditions that have caused a school closing may also affect library operations.

Prevention

Staff will respond to children with respect and consideration. All children are to be treated equally, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, religion, disability, national origin or any other status protected by federal or state law, subject to such reasonable requirements of the Library District as may be permitted by law.

Staff shall not abuse children or knowingly allow children to abuse each other, including

- Physical abuse: to strike, spank, shake, or slap



- Verbal abuse: to humiliate, degrade, threaten, or haze
- Sexual abuse: verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature
- Mental abuse: to shame, withhold love, haze or treat cruelly

At least two adults (one of whom must be a staff member or a volunteer) will be present in the library or at library sponsored programs if children are present. At no time may a staff person be alone with a single child where they cannot be observed by others. Staff shall never leave a child attending a library program unsupervised during the scheduled time of program.

All staff and volunteers who work with children must pass reference and background checks.

Discretion is necessary in regard to physical contact with young people. The Library District wants its patrons to feel comfortable with staff and volunteers, and expressions of affection, particularly from younger children, are to be expected. However, it is important to remember that a friendly hug or touch may be perceived otherwise. Staff will respect children's rights not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable and their right to say no. Fist bumps, elbow bumps and high fives are encouraged as appropriate contact.

The Library District does not permit or sanction corporal punishment of any kind or verbal threats by its staff or volunteers while at the library or at a library sponsored program. Staff and volunteers should never attempt to physically remove a minor from the library building or property. Staff must use positive techniques of guidance, including redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement.

Reporting Procedures

The Library District will endeavor to do periodic training for staff and volunteers with respect to this policy and any related legal requirements. Any staff member or volunteer observing suspected harm to a minor in the library or at a library sponsored program is required to report it immediately, or as soon as possible, to the Library Director or Assistant Director. In addition, suspected child abuse may be reported to the proper authorities in accordance with Colorado law.

When an unattended child has not been picked up at closing time, the child has a health emergency, or other similar circumstances, staff will encourage the child to contact an appropriate adult. If the child or staff cannot locate the parent, guardian, or caregiver within the library or by phone, staff will contact local law enforcement to pick up the child.

Two staff members will remain with the child until a parent, guardian, caregiver, or law enforcement arrives. Staff is not to transport children in their own vehicles. Once the child is in the protective care of law enforcement, a note will be attached to the library entrance with the following information: "Unattended child is in the care of law enforcement." Neither the name of the child nor the name of the parent, guardian, or caregiver will be listed on the note. The library and its staff members will not under any circumstances be responsible for determining whether an apparent caregiver, custodian, or parent is a legally authorized caregiver, custodian or custodial parent of the child.

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