

## Amherst Town Library Unattended Children Policy

The Amherst Town Library welcomes children of all ages to use and enjoy the facilities, collections and programming offered by the library. The library attempts to provide a safe environment for children to select books and other materials and to attend library programming. However, young children are not safe when left unattended in the library. The staff cannot know if children are leaving the building with their parents or with strangers. For the safety of minor children and the enjoyment of all patrons using the library we have developed a specific policy regarding unattended children.

1. The Library Staff recognize that all children are unique and mature at different rates. We recommend that children under the age of ten not be left unattended in the library. We highly recommend that children under the age of eight not be left unattended in the children's room. A child is unattended if a parent, teenaged sibling or responsible adult is not present with the child at all times while in the library.
2. At the discretion of a responsible adult, older children may be left unattended for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, read, or attend a program. The child must know how to reach the adult in case the need should arise. Children should not be left for longer than three hours; the library does not provide child care services.
3. Parents are responsible for the behavior of minor children at all times, even if they are not in the library with the child. Library staff does not serve *in loco parentis*, in place of the parent. If a child's behavior is inappropriate for the library, and he/she does not respond to appropriate guidance from library staff, the parent will be contacted to remove the child from the library. If the parent cannot be reached and the child's behavior is deemed dangerous or unduly disruptive, the Amherst Police Department may be called.
4. If a child is left at the library without a way home at closing time, library staff may call the child's home or parent's place of business using information provided by the child, the patron database, or the telephone directory. If contacted, the parent will be told that their child must be picked up immediately. If the parent cannot be located or if a parent has not picked up the child within one half hour, the library staff may contact the Amherst Police Department.
5. Under no circumstances will a staff member take a child out of the library or give a child a ride home.
6. The Amherst Town Library and its staff do not assume responsibility for any child left unattended in the library.
7. All library patrons, regardless of age are subject to the "Patron Behavior Policy" concerning disruptive behavior.
8. As used in this policy, the term "parent" may include legal guardians or other persons having custody or control of a minor.