



Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adult Policy for the Southwest La Plata Library District

I. Purpose

The Southwest La Plata Library District (SWLPLD) strives to provide a safe and pleasant environment for library patrons. The library welcomes everyone; however, the library is a public place with all of the risks associated with public spaces. SWLPLD recognizes that parents, guardians and qualified caregivers are best equipped to ensure the safety of the children and vulnerable adults in their care. This policy informs the public of the principles upon which SWLPLD strives to provide quality library service to all users, so that each may enjoy the library and feel secure in the library space.

II. Definitions

Child: A human being between the developmental period of infancy and puberty.

Library: Any portion of the library building, library property or any location in which a library activity is taking place.

Library Staff: Any library employee or volunteer

In Loco Parentis: Someone other than a biological parent or legal guardian taking on parental duties.

Vulnerable Adults: Individuals over the age of 18 who are mentally or physically challenged to a degree that significantly impairs the individual's ability to provide adequately for his/her own care or to manage his/her own behavior without assistance.

III. Patron Responsibilities

A parent, guardian or caregiver is responsible for monitoring the activities and managing the behavior of children and vulnerable adults while visiting

the library and participating in library activities. Vulnerable adults and children who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves must be attended and have adequate supervision at all times.

Vulnerable adults and children who can understand and follow the rules of conduct and who can care for themselves are welcome to be in the library unattended. These patrons are expected to follow the rules of conduct described throughout this document. Additionally, they should have contact information for a parent, guardian or caregiver who can assist them in an emergency.

Any emergency situation which causes a school closure will cause an SWLPLD facility within a school building to close. Therefore, parents should not direct their children to the library in the event of emergency school closings.

IV. Staff Responsibilities

Library staff are trained to assist children and adults regarding library services and materials. Staff are not trained in social work, child development or care, or other aspects of human services. Therefore, staff are not expected to monitor behavior or provide short-term or long-term care for children or vulnerable adults. Additionally, staff are not expected to prevent patrons from leaving the library or grounds. Staff do not act *in loco parentis* and are not expected to assume responsibility for patron behavior.

Staff will attempt to contact a parent, guardian or caregiver under the following circumstances:

- When a vulnerable adult or child's actions violate any of behaviors listed in section V of this document
- When a vulnerable adult or child's health or safety is in doubt, or the person appears to be lost or frightened
- When a vulnerable adult or child's behavior disturbs other library users
- When a vulnerable adult or child is causing harm to him/herself or others
- When a vulnerable adult or child appears to have been left alone for a long period of time
- When a vulnerable adult or child appears to be in jeopardy
- When a vulnerable adult or child is at risk of being banned from the library
- When the parent, guardian or caregiver is not present at closing time.

Any staff member may temporarily ban any patron for behavior that is disruptive, that inhibits SWLPLD from ensuring a safe environment or that

interferes with the use of the library. A suspended patron's parent, guardian or caregiver may appeal a suspension in writing to the library director.

Staff will not be responsible for determining whether an apparent caregiver, custodian or parent is a legally authorized caregiver, custodian or custodial parent of a child.

Staff may not provide transportation for children or vulnerable adults.

V. Prohibited Behaviors

Although this list is not all-inclusive, the following types of behaviors are prohibited within any SWLPLD facility or grounds:

- Hitting, shoving, throwing objects or any form of physical harassment
- Shouting, threatening or any form of verbal harassment
- Possession of any weapon pursuant to C.R.S. § 18-12-105.5
- Theft or damage of library property or others' personal property
- Any activity or behavior that is prohibited by Durango School District 9R, La Plata County, the State of Colorado, or the United States of America.

VI. Patrons remaining at closing

If a child or vulnerable adult is unattended at closing time, every reasonable effort will be made by staff to contact the appropriate responsible adult. If no responsible adult can be reached, staff will notify the police and/or appropriate county agency. Two staff members will remain with the patron until the parent, guardian, caregiver or law enforcement arrive. Once the patron is in the protective care of law enforcement, a note will be attached to the library entrance with the following information: "Unattended patron is in the care of law enforcement." The agency taking responsibility for the patron will be provided. However, neither the name of the child nor the name of the caregiver will be listed on the note.