

Child and Dependent Persons Safety Policy

The Moultrie-Colquitt County Library System (MCCLS) is committed to providing users of all ages with a pleasant and safe environment that is conducive to appropriate use of the library's services and facilities. However, the buildings and grounds of the library are public spaces and therefore have special security concerns. Children and dependent persons who are left unattended may be at risk. For their protection and safety, the following policy has been established:

Children

1. **The library is not responsible for the care of unattended children.** The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with library staff.
2. **Children ages 9 and under may not be left unattended in the library.** Children in this category must be directly supervised by a responsible caregiver aged 16 or over at all times, including attendance at library programs. When library staff recognize that a child has been left unattended in the library or on its premises:
 - Library staff will attempt to locate parent, guardian, or caregiver by searching the library and/or grounds.
 - When the responsible party is located, the Child and Dependent Persons Safety Policy will be explained and a copy will be given to him/her. Library staff will complete an incident report, including the names and contact information for all related parties.
 - If the responsible party cannot be located, library staff will contact law enforcement or the appropriate authorities.
 - Library staff will refer any additional incidents to law enforcement or the appropriate authorities.
3. **Children between the ages of 10 and 12 should not be left unattended in the library for extended periods of time.** Attendance at library programs, browsing for recreational reading, and after school use of the library for homework and study are encouraged and considered appropriate. In general, MCCLS considers more than 2-3 hours (depending on the age and conduct of the child) to be excessive and inappropriate. Parents may be notified and asked to pick up and/or provide supervision for their child.
4. **Children between the ages of 13 and 17 may be in the library without a parent or caregiver.** However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.
5. **Inappropriate behavior.** Children who engage in inappropriate behavior will be informed of the Rules of Conduct. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be asked to leave the library. Under these circumstances, the library may require the child to be accompanied by a parent or guardian on future visits.
6. **Closing time.** Children of all ages should arrange for transportation before arriving at the library. Prior to closing, library staff will check with all unattended children to verify that they will be picked up before closing. At this time, children are allowed to use the library telephone to contact parents to arrange transportation. If transportation is not available by 15 minutes after closing:
 - Library staff will contact law enforcement to pick up the child

- Two staff members will wait with the child until law enforcement arrives
- If the person transporting the child arrives before law enforcement personnel, he or she must also await the arrival of law enforcement.
- Library staff will fill out an incident report form with the names and contact information for all related parties.
- Library staff will refer any additional incidents to law enforcement.
- Under no circumstances will library staff provide transportation to unattended minors or leave them alone in the building or on library premises.

Dependent Persons

1. **Definitions.** A *dependent person* is a person who needs a caregiver for safety and/or other reasons. For example, dependent persons may include persons incapacitated due to physical and/or mental disabilities or other conditions and who are dependent on others for their safety and well-being. A *guardian* is an individual at least 16 years of age who acknowledges responsibility of care for a dependent person.
2. **A dependent person must always remain in the company and immediate vicinity of the guardian while on library premises (building and grounds).** When library staff recognize that a dependent person has been left unattended in the library or on its premises:
 - Library staff will attempt to locate the guardian by searching the library and/or grounds.
 - When the guardian is located, the Child and Dependent Persons Safety Policy will be explained and a copy will be given to him/her. Library staff will complete an incident report, including the names and contact information for all related parties.
 - If the guardian cannot be located, library staff will contact law enforcement or the appropriate authorities.
 - Library staff will refer any additional incidents to law enforcement or the appropriate authorities.