

## UNATTENDED CHILD POLICY

The Hamilton-Wenham Public Library welcomes children of all ages and encourages them to explore and enjoy the multiple resources and programs available to them at the Library. To achieve this goal, parents are reminded that the Library is a heavily-used public facility where staff cannot be directly responsible for unattended children and are legally unable to act "in loco parentis." All minors (children under 18) are the legal responsibility of their parent or legal guardian and should have emergency contact information when using the Library independently. All minors are expected to adhere to the Library's Patron Behavior Policy and staff members may verbally remind patrons regarding appropriate behavior. All minors are allowed to use the library phone to call a parent or caregiver.

Children under the age of 8 who are using the library must have a parent or caregiver (at least 13 years old and acting responsibly) in the immediate vicinity of the child. Children under the age of 8 may attend programs independently, but must have a parent or caregiver who remains on the first floor of the Library and immediately joins the child at the close of the program.

Parents of children age 8 -10 are strongly encouraged to carefully monitor their child's ability to use the library independently as learning to balance freedom and responsibility is a maturation process. Parents are encouraged to remain in close proximity in the Library building in order to be available if any need arises.

Children ages 11 – 18 may use the Library and attend programs unattended. However, the parent or legal guardian is still responsible for the behavior and wellbeing of the child and the child is expected to adhere to the Library's Patron Behavior Policy.

***Minors Left at Closing Time:*** If a child under 18 is left unattended and stranded at the library after closing hours, efforts will be made to locate the parent/caregiver. Two staff members will stay with the minor for 15 minutes after closing time before contacting the Hamilton Police Department (978-468-1212) requesting that an Officer assume responsibility for the minor and bring the minor to the Hamilton Public Safety Building. An incident report will be filled out by a staff member within 24 hours of the incident and given to the Library Director so that communication may ensue with the parent/legal guardian. Under no circumstances will Library staff transport or accompany the minor from the library grounds. Verbal reminders to unescorted minors shall be part of normal closing procedure.

*Approved by the Joint Board of Library Trustees for the towns of Hamilton and Wenham*

*May 14, 2015*