

Children's Behavior Policy

Great Barrington Libraries

Behavior Policy for Children[1]

The Great Barrington Libraries strives to provide a safe, educational, and enjoyable place for children to explore the world of books and information. Library personnel take their responsibility to provide safe access very seriously. Parents should remember that the libraries are public buildings available for use by the community. For the protection and well-being of children, the following policy has been established:

Children up to Age 11

- The Children's Room is for children and their caregivers. Unaccompanied adults should use the adult area upstairs. Staff reserves the right to ask them to move to the adult area.
- Children's Room computers: priority is always given to children. Caregivers and unaccompanied adults may not use children's computers after school and during summer.
- All children under the age of 9 must be accompanied and continually supervised by a parent or caregiver while in the library.
- Parents or caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the actions and safety of children visiting the library.
- Parents or caregivers must stay in the library building while their child under the age of 9 is attending a library sponsored program. Children attending library programs are supervised by the library staff only during the scheduled time of the program.
- At the discretion of a responsible adult, a child age 9 or older may be left unattended for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, or attend a program. The child must know how to reach the responsible adult should this need should arise. Children should not be left for excessively long (more than 2 hours) periods of time. Children will be expected to display appropriate behavior[2], conducive to maintaining a safe library for all patrons.
- Parents/caregiver or guardians must realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for their children's actions. Disruptive behavior, such as shouting, running, pushing, or other loud or physical activities, will not be tolerated. Children who continue to be disruptive will be asked to leave the building. In the case of an unaccompanied child over the age of 9, an attempt will be made to contact a family member or caregiver to pick them up. If a family member or caregiver cannot be reached, the Great Barrington Police Department may be contacted at the discretion of library staff.
- The parent or caregiver is liable for all damage done by their children to the library facility or equipment.
- Elevator usage: children under 9 years may not push internal elevator buttons or ride without an adult.
- The library cannot assume responsibility for children while a parent or caregiver is participating in a library program or other activity in the library.
- Shoes and shirts must be worn while in the library. (Toddlers who are walking need to have shoes on.)

- Bicycles should be left outside the building.
- Online catalog computers in the Children's Room and throughout the library building are not intended for use by children under 5 years old. It is the responsibility of a parent or caregiver to ensure appropriate use of the online terminals and other electronic library resources by young children. Pounding on keyboards and other potentially damaging activities are not permitted.
- Children under age 5 who wish to use the computers must be supervised by an adult.
- In case of a library employee having to reprimand a child, the employee will email the director explaining the incident, how they handled it and why.

Children 12-17 years old

- The Teen Zone is primarily for children under age 18. Their caregivers and unaccompanied adults may select materials for loan, but not linger in room.
- Adults, unaccompanied by teens, may not use computers in teen room.
- At the discretion of the library, the Teen Zone may be used for small programs, but will still be available for book selection.
- Use of foul, offensive, or threatening language is prohibited. Drugs, smoking, and elicit behavior are not allowed. Appropriate behavior is required at all times.
- Should it be determined that a child is engaging in disruptive or dangerous behavior, the following steps will be taken:
 - A staff member will advise the child to stop the behavior — once. If disruptive behavior continues, the child will be asked to leave the library. The child may not return for the duration of that day.
 - Should the child require a parent/guardian for transportation, the staff member will allow the child to call for transportation.
 - The Great Barrington Police Department may be called to assist with disruptive children who do not adhere to disciplinary actions.
- We ask that patrons leave the Teen Zone the way they found it: discard garbage, and straighten chairs.
- Group leaders and parents/guardians meeting in the library are responsible for the actions of all children who participate in their activity.
- Please clean up when you leave the Teen Zone, including disposing of any garbage and straightening chairs.

Unattended Children of all ages-closing time

Children and their adult caregivers should be aware of the closing times of the library. If a child has been left at the library without a ride or assistance home at closing time, every attempt will be made to contact a family member or caregiver via work, home and cellular phone. If a parent/guardian does not arrive by the time the library closes, two staff members are authorized to stay with the child until someone arrives to pick him/her up. If a parent/guardian has not arrived within 30 minutes, the Great Barrington Police Department will be called and alerted that a child has been left behind at the library. The police will then try to locate the parent or guardian. Under no circumstance will a staff member give a ride home to a child left at the Library.

If the police have picked up the child, a staff member will post a note on the door advising the parent/guardian of the circumstances and stating where the parent/guardian can locate the child. The incident will be reported to the Director's Office.

Approved by Board of Trustees October 11, 2012

[1] Children ages 5-11 Juveniles; Ages 12-17 Young Adults; Age 18 and over adults

[2] Problem behavior is any behavior that either consciously or unconsciously violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library; prevents library employees from doing their jobs, or jeopardizes the safety of library users or staff.