



POLICY FOR YOUTH VISITING THE LIBRARY

Santa Clara City Library is a youth development organization designed to support children and teens to thrive in learning, health, literacy, exploration, and discovery. Children of all ages are welcome and encouraged to use the library's materials, programs and services. This policy is intended to protect the safety and well-being of children that use the City Library and to create a positive experience.

Responsibilities of Parents or Caregivers

The Santa Clara City Library, including the bookmobile, are public facilities that are open to everyone, regardless of origin, age, background, and views. Library staff strive to ensure that all facilities are operated in a safe manner. However, the responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with their parent(s), legal guardian(s), or other responsible caregiver(s)¹ (hereinafter "parent or responsible caregiver"). Library staff are not responsible for the care and safety of unattended children in the library.

In order to maintain a safe atmosphere where library visitors of all ages can use and enjoy the library, children and teens are expected to follow the Library's Rules of Conduct. Parents or responsible caregivers are to ensure that these expectations are met as needed.

Unattended Children

Children ages 10 or under must always be physically accompanied by a parent or responsible caregiver, anywhere on library premises. Children ages 11 and older may use the library without a parent or responsible caregiver present, but must be able to reach a parent or responsible caregiver immediately, either in person or by phone.

Parents and responsible caregivers should consider the following when deciding whether their child is ready to visit the library on their own:

- Staff are available to assist children at the library, but staff may not act in the place of a parent as guardian for children at the library for any length of time.
- The library contains collection for all ages, as well as unfiltered internet access.
- Situations may arise when, due to unusual or emergency circumstances, it may be necessary for the library to close without prior notice.
- The library does not observe the same schedule everyday.

Designated Children's Spaces

In order to create a space that invites reading, exploration, curiosity, learning, and making community connections for children and their families, the Library provides designated children's

¹ A responsible caregiver must be at least 14 years old.

and teen's areas. These spaces welcome children and their parent or responsible caregivers to access age-appropriate library collections, services, and programs.

At Central Park and Northside Branch Libraries, designated family restrooms are provided within or near the children's and teen's areas. These restrooms are intended and prioritized for the use of children and their parents or responsible caregivers.

Staff Intervention

Library staff respects the privacy of all library visitors, and although the library is not responsible for determining if a child is at risk, staff may intervene and contact the parent/guardian of the child or law enforcement in the following situations:

- Children of any age that have not been picked up at library's closing time will be given the opportunity to contact their parent or responsible caregiver. At least two staff members will remain with the child until the child has been picked up. If fifteen minutes after closing the child is still waiting at the library and staff are unable to contact their parent or responsible caregiver, staff will contact law enforcement to escort the child to a safe location until parents can be reached.
- All children must follow the Library's Rules of Conduct and use the library appropriately. Children who fail to comply may be subject to the same consequence processes as indicated in the policy.

Revised and Approved by the Board of Library Trustees, May 5, 2025