

**Montgomery County Memorial Library System
Policy Manual
Customer Services**

CUS – 2 Minor Child Policy

I. POLICY STATEMENT

Montgomery County Memorial Library System welcomes children of all ages. In order to provide a pleasant and secure environment for children who visit the Library, staff require the cooperation of parents, caregivers and guardians.

II. REGULATIONS

The Library is for everyone's enjoyment. The following regulations for patron conduct are essential to ensure respect for individuals who use this public facility.

Definitions for this document:

A **CHILD** is an individual 12 years of age and younger.

A **YOUNG ADULT** is an individual 13 -17 years old.

A **PARENT, CAREGIVER or GUARDIAN** is an adult 18 years of age or older.

1. Children are the responsibility of parents, caregivers or guardians at all times when on library premises.
2. The Library has neither the staff nor legal authority to supervise children in the Library.
3. The County is not responsible for the choice of library materials for your children's use. The responsibility for the choice of library materials rests with their parents or legal guardians.
4. Children under 13 must have a parent, caregiver or guardian in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. If a child is found inside the Library without a parent, caregiver or guardian they will be considered unattended.
5. During library programs only, children aged 9-12 may attend while a parent or guardian remains in the building. Parent or guardian attendance at the library program is optional.
6. Young adults may be inside the Library building without a parent, caregiver or guardian but may not supervise a child.
7. Children and Young Adults must be picked up by library closing time.

8. At closing time, if a child or young adult has not been picked up, the library may ask the authorities to take the child or young adult into custody for their own protection.

III. PROCEDURES

A . Unattended Children 12 Years of Age and Younger:

Children 12 years of age and younger may not be left unattended in the library. They must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or caregiver at all times. Parents and/or responsible persons are accountable for their children's behavior and safety while in the Library.

1. If it becomes apparent that a child 12 years of age or younger is lost or has been left unattended, a staff member will try to identify and locate the parent or other person responsible for the child by walking through the library with the child. The meeting rooms should also be checked.
2. When the parent/responsible person is located, the staff member will explain the library's policy on minor children, stressing concern for the child's safety. The parent/responsible party will be given a copy of the policy.
3. If the person responsible is not located in the library, every effort should be made to locate the child's parents by telephone. A staff member will stay with the child while this is being done. If a parent is reached, insist that the child be picked up immediately, explaining the library's policy.
4. If the child's parents have not been located within thirty minutes, the Librarian in Charge will call law enforcement who will then assume responsibility for the child. The Librarian in Charge and one other Librarian will stay with the child until the proper authorities arrive.
5. Under no circumstances will an MCMLS staff member remove the child from Library property.
6. If the situation warrants, complete a Montgomery County Incident/Accident Report.

B . Handling Disruptive Children and Young Adults

1. Children 12 Years of Age and Younger

- a. If the child's behavior is disruptive to the point of disturbing other library users or dangerous, the child should be verbally warned that his/her behavior is unacceptable. Appropriate library behavior should be explained.
- b. If the behavior continues, a staff member will inform the responsible person of the library's policy and issue a verbal warning.
- c. If the disruptive behavior still continues, the responsible person will be asked to take the child out of the library.
- d. If the responsible person refuses or cannot control the child's behavior, the family will be asked to leave. If they refuse, the Librarian in Charge will call law enforcement.
- e. Under no circumstances should staff use force with disruptive patrons.
- f. If the situation warrants, complete a Montgomery County Incident/Accident Report

2. Young Adults ages 13-17

- a. If the Young Adult's behavior is disruptive to the point of disturbing other library users or dangerous, the Young Adult should be verbally warned that his/her behavior is unacceptable. Appropriate library behavior should be explained. Tell the patron that this is a verbal warning. For life-threatening situations, repeat offenders, verbal abuse, etc go immediately to **step c** below.
- b. If the disruptive behavior continues, approach the young adult and responsible party with the same warning as detailed in **step a**. If the young adult is unattended, give him/her a second warning. State that this is a warning and if the disruptive behavior persists, the young adult will be asked to leave library premises.
- c. If the disruptive behavior still persists, request that the young adult leave library premises.
- d. If the young adult refuses to leave, contact law enforcement.
- e. Under no circumstances should staff use force with disruptive patrons.
- f. If the situation warrants, complete a Montgomery County Incident/Accident Report

C. Reports of Missing Children or Young Adults

If a parent, caregiver or guardian reports a child or young adult missing, staff will follow this procedure:

1. Obtain the name, age and description of the child or young adult.
2. Recruit staff to request their assistance in locating the child or young adult. Do not announce over the paging system that there is a missing child/young adult in the library as this may put the child/young adult at risk.
3. Check all areas thoroughly, including bathrooms, offices and the elevator. A staff member should be stationed at all exits.
4. Check outside the Library.
5. Call law enforcement if unable to locate the child.
6. If the child/young adult is found, make sure to inform the staff and Law Enforcement, if they have been called.

D. Child Abuse by Parents or Caregivers

“Abuse” is defined as a physical, mental or emotional act designed to injure the child, including repetitive slapping, excessive yelling and arm twisting. (Texas Family Code) Adults who abuse children are very angry. They could easily turn on a person who intervenes and physically attack. Or they could increase their attack on the child and later blame the child for staff intervention. The objective in a library staff intervention has to be distracting the adult to bring the immediate abuse to a stop.

1. The law requires any person who believes that a child, or person 65 years or older, or an adult with disabilities is being abused, neglected, or exploited to report the circumstances to DFPS. A person making a report is immune from civil or criminal liability provided they make the report in good faith, and the name of the person making the report is kept confidential. Any person suspecting abuse and not reporting it can be held liable for a Class B misdemeanor.
2. Call law enforcement.
3. If physical violence is occurring, please refer to CUS-1 Patron Behavior: **Fighting- Physical or Verbal**
4. Complete a Montgomery County Incident/Accident Report
5. To report abuse check for the local CPS office and phone number. Contact the local CPS office or the Texas Department of Family Services Abuse Hotline **1-800-252-5400**.
<http://www.txabusehotline.org/>

E. Unattended Minors at Closing

1. If a minor child or young adult age 17 and under is left at closing, the Librarian in Charge and one other Librarian will stay with the child until the parents or guardians arrive.
2. The child or young adult should call parents to ask about an estimated pick up time. Parents should be informed that the library has already closed and has a policy of notifying authorities within 30 minutes after closure if the minor is not picked up.
3. Staff cannot prevent a young adult from leaving library property on their own volition.
4. If the child's parents have not been located within thirty minutes, the Librarian in Charge will call law enforcement who will be asked to assume responsibility for the child. The Librarian in Charge and one other Librarian will stay with the child until the proper authorities arrive.
5. Staff shall not remove the child from Library property.
6. If the situation warrants, complete a Montgomery County Incident/Accident Report

III. GUIDELINES

1. For examples of unacceptable behavior, see **Appendix 1 Patron Behavior**.
2. The library staff should use their discretion in handling situations.