

9.00 Policies & Procedures—Children’s Services

Mission Statement

February 9, 2012

The children’s department is dedicated to providing access to materials, resources, and professional guidance to meet the intellectual, educational, and recreational needs of children and all users of the department.

Objectives:

- Introduce as many children as possible to the public library environment in order to cultivate lifetime readers and library users.
- Provide children with easy access to current information and quality literature in a variety of formats.
- Provide complete and accurate answers to reference questions to all patrons.
- Provide informative and entertaining programs that encourage the use of the library or enhance cultural awareness.
- Serve as a social gathering space to encourage the exchange of information and resources.

9.1 Unattended Child

The Children's Department welcomes and encourages all children to use our facilities and services. The library is free and open to unaccompanied children who are independent enough to use our resources properly for their intended purpose. However, the responsibility for the care, safety and behavior of children using the library rests with their parents or guardians at all times

Children in 5th grade or younger must be accompanied by a responsible guardian at all times. This includes those left in the care of an older child. Children in 5th grade or younger may not be left in the department without a responsible guardian under any circumstances. A responsible guardian is considered to be an individual who is at least 16 and who can successfully meet all the needs of the child.

Youth who are in 6th grade up to the age of 15 should not be left unattended in the library for extended periods of time. Attendance at library programs, browsing for recreational reading and afterschool use of the library for homework and study are encouraged and considered appropriate. The library considers 3 hours (depending on the age and conduct of the child) to be an appropriate stay in the library. Youth who are in 6th grade up to the age of 15 must be able to reach a parent or responsible guardian immediately either in person or by phone. Parents/ Guardians may be notified and asked to pick up and/or provide supervision for their child.

The Library does not take responsibility for the supervision or safety of unattended children.

If it is determined that a child is lost or unattended a staff member will bring the child to the Children's Services Supervisor or, if unavailable, to the children's services staff. The Children's Services staff member will try to locate the parent or responsible guardian by asking the child where the parent is, by walking around the library with the child, and by paging the parent over the public address system. If the parent is not found in the building, the child is considered "abandoned."

9.2 Abandoned children

An abandoned child is defined as:

- A child in 5th grade or lower who is left in the library without a responsible guardian at any time
- A youth 6th grade and above who remains at the library after closing
- A youth or child whose parents have been contacted but have not picked the child up within 30 minutes or attempted contact within 30 minutes of the library's phone call.

Parents should be aware of the library's hours of operation; bearing in mind circumstances may require an unexpected closing of the building. If staff determine a child to be abandoned, the following steps will be taken:

- The librarian will try to obtain the necessary information in order to contact the parent or guardian.
- Every attempt will be made to contact the parent or guardian, but the library reserves the right to contact police to report an abandoned child. Police will be notified immediately if no contact with a parent or guardian can be established or there has been no communication for over 30 minutes.

- Under no circumstances will a staff member transport a child to another location.

9.3 Disruptive Child

The Children's Department encourages exploration and creativity. However, disruptive behavior is not tolerated in any form by any patron. Disruptive behavior can be defined as:

- Behavior that disturbs or endangers the well-being of library patrons, staff, or the disruptive child herself
- Behavior that results in damaged property
- Behavior that interferes with library services

The disruptive child and his parent or guardian will be given a warning and told if the behavior continues they will be asked to leave. If the disruptive behavior continues, a staff member will inform the parent or guardian and the child and his parent or guardian may be asked to leave the library.

9.4 Ill or Injured Child

Children who are ill may be asked to leave the library if Children's staff determines that it poses a risk to other patrons. Children who are home sick from school should not be in the library. This includes all children of school age.

The Safety Officer and the ADPS will be notified of any incident that involves 911 or emergency personnel. A report will also be given to the Director.

9.5 Collection Development of Children's Department Material

An up-to-date, attractive and useful collection is maintained through continual review and replacement process. Replacement of worn volumes is dependent upon current demand, usefulness, more recent acquisition, and availability of new editions. Materials are judged on their own literary and artistic merits, popular demand, and their contribution to the balance of the total collection and their suitability of content and vocabulary to the age of the readers.

Easy Picture Books

The Easy collection is comprised of picture books of interest to all ages. Because the illustrations are the predominant feature, they are generally designed for adults to read to children. Although most books are designed for the young child, there are a growing number of books that are specifically written and illustrated for the older child. All picture books regardless of intended audience will be included in this area of the collection.

Beginning Readers

Beginning readers are intended for Kindergarten through early 3rd grade. These books are characterized by a controlled vocabulary, large print, heavy use of illustrations and a limited number of pages. Books in this area will be subdivided into E1, E2, and E3. E1 readers are intended for emergent and early readers. E2 readers are intended for intermediate readers and those who are

starting to read on their own. E3 readers are intended for advanced readers and those making the transition to chapter books.

Juvenile Fiction

This area of the collection serves independent readers who are typically 2nd -5th grade. The books feature age appropriate vocabulary and subject matter. The books have a limited number of pages and very few illustrations.

Juvenile Non-fiction

The juvenile non-fiction collection includes materials to serve the informational needs of children of preschool through middle school age. The subject matter, vocabulary and content is age-appropriate. Often this collection is also used by high school and adults who need basic information on a subject.

Withdrawing Materials

Withdrawing of materials is done by the cataloging department. The Children's Department Supervisor will determine which books are to be withdrawn from the collection.

Selection

Materials for the Children's Department are selected to serve the specialized needs of children from birth through middle school. Materials shall be selected using professional review tools and should attempt to create a collection which emphasizes the goals and mission statement of the department.

Challenged Materials

Although materials are carefully selected, there can arise differences of opinion regarding suitable materials. Patrons requesting that materials be withdrawn from or restricted within the collection may complete a "Reconsideration of Library Material Form" that is available in the library. The completed form will be reviewed by the appropriate staff and a decision made on whether to withdraw, change to another part of the collection or take no action.

9.6 Patron Computer and Internet usage – revised 12.11.2014

Not all information on the Internet will be appropriate for all ages. Parents or responsible guardians are accountable for information accessed by their minors via the Internet and ensuring their safety. This includes electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct or indirect electronic communications. As with other library materials, the child's use of the Internet is the responsibility of the parent or responsible guardian.

Internet access will be available on a first come, first served basis with an allotment of up to 1 hour per session. Computer users are required to log in with a current library card and PIN for a 1 hour session. Library card users are permitted a maximum use of 2 hours per day.

The library encourages all patrons to register for a library card. Users who do not have the documents required to register for a full-access library card may register for an e-access only library card with a valid government-issued photo identification (U.S., Canada, Mexico). Juvenile accounts (ages 17 and under) will be linked to a valid library card of a parent, guardian or other designated responsible adult. The library reserves the right to limit internet access at certain peak usage periods such as after school, school breaks and summer months in order to provide free and equitable access to all.

Children's staff are authorized to take swift and appropriate action to enforce the rules of conduct or to prohibit the use of the Internet to comply with the library's "Internet Acceptable Use" policy. The viewing of inappropriate material as determined by Children's staff will result in a termination of Internet usage and possible permanent restriction. Specific websites are restricted by filtering software. Staff may ask computer users to exit certain programs and sites such as Facebook and YouTube or other sites regarding as inappropriate.

The computers in the Children's Department are solely for the use of Children and their parents. Adult usage may be restricted during weekends, school recess, and periods of high usage. Parents using the computers in the Children's Department remain responsible for their children and must remain compliant of all policies. Adults may be issued headphones for their own usage at computers located in the Children's Department, but are highly encouraged to bring their own.

Computer usage is highly discouraged during programming and may be restricted immediately before, during, and immediately after programming.

9.7 Non-book donations

Non-book donations specific to programming needs will be accepted. Donation requests should be presented to the Children's Services Supervisor before approaching a person, vendor, or business. The appropriate Donation request form should be filled out stating the item being requested, the vendor or business the item is being requested from, Contact information, approximate value of item and the program the item is intended for. Donation request forms should be submitted 2 weeks prior to the event or program, allowing more time if possible.

9.8 Courtesy Use of Phone

The telephone at the Children's Service Desk is to be used by patrons in 5th grade and under for emergencies only. Emergency use is discretionary to the staff working the Public Service Desk. An emergency is generally considered to be one of the following:

- Patron has been left by their ride
- Patron has a homework-related need.
- Patron needs more time to use the computer, do research, etc.

9.9 Adult Use of the Juvenile Collection

Adults often need to use Juvenile or Teen collection materials for their children or a legitimate purpose. Adults visiting the Children's Department that are not in need of children's materials or not accompanied by a child may be asked to leave.

9.10 Adult Books for Children

Children may check out adult books for leisure or for scholarly purposes. A child who asks about an adult book while in the Children's Department should be taken by a Children's Services staff to the Adult Reference desk. A child does not have to ask a Children's Services staff for help if he is comfortable finding the adult material on his own.

9.11 Bulletin Board/Displays

The bulletin board and display shelves serve as display areas for the Children's Department and may be used by other groups at the sole discretion of the Children's Services Supervisor. Display plans for outside groups must be approved prior to exhibition with no exceptions. All displays should be literature or library program oriented.

9.12 Programming

Daytime and evening programs are regularly scheduled for the general public. A parent or responsible guardian must accompany and remain with a child aged 9 or younger attending the program.

Programs may be provided for daycare, Head Start groups, or schools either on or off site. Groups may need to be limited depending on staff available and the program requested. At least one adult must stay with the group during programming sessions. All children's groups in the library must be attended by an adult whether the group is attending a scheduled program or engaging in a reading or study session.

9.13 Tours of the Children's Department and Community Outreach – revised 12.11.2014

The library welcomes visitors interested in gaining a broad overview of the many services, resources, and events the library has to offer. Tours are available free of charge, upon submission of the online request form. Please keep in mind:

- Tour requests must be submitted at least one week in advance. Availability of your requested date and time will depend on other tours scheduled for that day.
- All tour requests are subject to staff availability.
- Teachers, please obtain permission from your principal before submitting a tour request to the library.
- Tour group sizes are limited to 75 people for Children's Department tours. Limits include teachers, parents and other chaperones.
- You will receive a phone call from a library staff member to approve and confirm the date, time and size of your tour.
- Submitted requests are for a tour of the Main Library, 4001 N. 23rd St., McAllen. For tours of the Lark and Palm View Branch Libraries, please contact them directly.

9.14 Staff Behavior at the Public Service Desk

The desk should be staffed at all times, barring an emergency or any unforeseen circumstance. If the desk needs to be left unattended, there should be a sign placed on the desk referring patrons to the Adult Reference department. If the department is left unattended for any reason, the Children's Services Supervisor should be notified immediately. If the CSS is unavailable, the ADPS should be notified as well as the Reference staff. Failure to do so will result in immediate disciplinary action. Staff should be actively working on a project while at the service desk, especially during peak hours and while patrons are present in the department.

The staff desk area should not be used for personal space. All personal items should be placed in work stations or assigned locker. Program material can be placed in appropriate shelves or bins in the workroom, storage room, or program room.

Personal computer use should be limited and avoided if possible. Routine searching and web browsing is highly discouraged at any time as is reading selection materials and journals while patrons are in the department.

When a staff member answers the phone from an outside call you should answer the phone in the following manner "Children's Department, This is Maria, May I help you." If the phone call is internal, omit the department name.

The person answering the telephone should be courteous and professional. If the call is for another staff member, the person should transfer the call to the appropriate staff member. If the staff member is not in the department, the caller should be transferred to the appropriate voicemail. If you are unsure about your qualifications to answer a question, the call should be transferred to a staff member who can successfully answer the patron's query. Callers should not be placed on hold without being notified and should be thanked for holding upon return to the call.