



Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Policy Statement:

The St. Petersburg Library System is a shared environment requiring all visitors to follow the *Library Code of Conduct*, posted in each library building and on the Library website, www.splibraries.org.

The Library encourages children and vulnerable adults to use its facilities and services. While the Library is concerned for the safety of children and vulnerable adults in and around library facilities, the St. Petersburg Library System does not act in loco parentis (in place of parents). A caregiver, parent or legal guardian is responsible for monitoring the activities, managing the behavior and addressing the general safety and security needs of children or vulnerable adults during their library visits.

The safety of children and vulnerable adults is a priority for the St. Petersburg Library System. However, the libraries are public buildings, open to all members of the community. Staff, including security officers, are not liable for any risk and associated incidents involving children or vulnerable adults left unattended by responsible parties, including, but not limited to, caregivers, parents or legal guardians.

Procedures:

Unattended Children:

Children ages 12 or older may use the library independently (see the National Safe Kids Campaign for more information). A responsible person age 15 or older must accompany children under age 12. Children should know a phone number to reach a parent or legal guardian. The parent or legal guardian is responsible for the actions of their children, whether or not the parent or legal guardian is present in the library. Children violating the library patron code of conduct may be asked to leave the library for the day. Egregious misconduct may warrant library staff calling St. Pete Police for assistance. If a child is not able to consistently adhere to the library patron code of conduct they must be accompanied by an adult caregiver, parent or legal guardian.

Unattended persons under age 18 must be picked up by the library's closing time. If a child is in the building 30 minutes prior to closing, staff will attempt to determine if arrangements have been made for the child to get home. If they have not, staff will assist the child in attempting to call the caregiver, parent or legal guardian.

guardian. If transportation is not available within 15 minutes after closing, children on library property may be placed in the care of the St. Petersburg Police Department. Two members of library staff, including a supervisor, will remain inside the library with any children left unattended after hours until a caregiver, parent, legal guardian or the police arrive. Library administration may communicate with parents about their child's ability to use the library independently if the child is not picked up by closing time. Under no circumstances will library staff take or transport a child away from the library building.

School-aged children are not permitted in the library during school hours unless accompanied by a caregiver, parent or legal guardian. Some special circumstances may be considered, such as students serving suspension and students pursuing alternative education opportunities. Unsupervised minors may be asked to provide documentation of their school status.

Vulnerable Adults:

A vulnerable adult is a person 18 years of age or older whose ability to perform the normal activities of daily living or to provide for his or her own care or protection is impaired due to a mental, emotional, sensory, long-term physical, or developmental disability or dysfunction, or brain damage, or the infirmities of aging, and due to such impairment is unable to use the library independently or follow the Library Code of Conduct without supervision. A vulnerable adult must be accompanied by a responsible caregiver aged 15 years or older while visiting the library. The caregiver must provide adequate supervision of the vulnerable adult at all times while the vulnerable adult is visiting the library.

If a supervisor (LAI or higher) determines a vulnerable adult is unattended, staff will attempt to contact a responsible caregiver, parent, legal guardian or the St. Pete Police Department. Such person or entity will be notified that the vulnerable adult requires a caregiver while visiting the library. If the vulnerable adult is attended by a caregiver who is unable to adequately supervise him/her, both individuals will be asked to leave the library for the day. If the responsible caregiver violates library policies and is asked to leave, the vulnerable adult must also leave.

If an unattended vulnerable adult is in the building 30 minutes prior to closing and no transportation arrangements have been made, staff will attempt to contact a responsible caregiver, parent, legal guardian or the St. Pete Police Department. If transportation is not available within 15 minutes after closing, vulnerable adults on library property may be placed in the care of the St. Petersburg Police Department. Two members of library staff, including a supervisor, will remain inside the library with any vulnerable adults left unattended after hours until a caregiver, parent, legal guardian or the police arrive. Under no circumstances will library staff take or transport a vulnerable adult away from the library building.