

Policy Name: Parent/Caregiver Responsibility Policy #10.51
Adoption Date: September 21, 2022
Supersedes: NA

## BACKGROUND

Tacoma Public Library (TPL) radically welcomes all members of our community, providing equal and equitable access to all Library resources and services for users of all ages. TPL is committed to the well-being and safety of minors and is happy to help them use the Library. The Library, like other public spaces, may not be safe for an unattended or unsupervised child. Library facilities are not licensed or designed to provide basic childcare needs such as supervision, nutrition, or emergency care. The purpose of this policy is to inform parents, guardians, or assigned chaperones/childcare providers (hereafter, referred to as caregivers) of their responsibilities regarding a minor's use of the Library. RCW 26.28.010 defines minors as "all persons shall be deemed and taken to be of full age for all purposes at the age of eighteen years."

## POLICY INTENT

Caregivers are responsible for a child's behaviors, safety, and welfare while they are in the Library or on Library grounds. This includes being aware of their children's access to library materials and electronic resources. All children must abide by all policies and procedures adopted by the Tacoma Public Library.

TPL staff is available to assist caregivers and their children in the use of the library; however, TPL staff cannot act "in loco parentis" (in place of a parent) for children in the library.

The guidelines below have been established with the understanding that children mature at different rates. Please note that these are guidelines:

***Children of any age who require supervision to be safe and/or not disruptive*** must always be accompanied by a caregiver. Caregivers must be age 12 or older and must be able to provide emergency contact information upon request.

If a child or teen is acting in an unsafe manner, behaving inappropriately, or appears to be in distress, staff will attempt to locate the responsible caregiver. If staff are unable to locate the responsible caregiver, and the child is unable to provide contact information, staff members may use library records to help locate the caregiver. If TPL staff are unable to contact the caregiver, staff will then request assistance from law enforcement.

***Children ages 9 and older*** may use the library unattended but must also be able to provide emergency contact information upon request.

***Children ages 8 and younger*** must be accompanied by a caregiver.

### ***Closing Time***

Youth who do not have transportation 15 minutes before closing time will be asked how to contact their caregiver. Staff will attempt to contact the caregiver by phone and ask that they pick up the child/children by the time the library is scheduled to close. If a caregiver cannot be reached and if the child is not picked up within 15 minutes after closing time, library staff will contact law enforcement to assist.

Under no circumstances will staff provide transportation or accompany a child home.

**Materials**

It is the responsibility of caregivers to monitor their children’s and teens’ use of library resources. TPL encourages caregivers to talk to their children and teens about the kinds of materials they think are suitable for borrowing or accessing. For guidance on the issuance of library cards, please see Policy #10.17.1 and 10.17.7, TPL’s Registration Policies.

The Library will not limit the selection and collection of library resources simply because minors will have access to them. Children and young adults unquestionably possess First Amendment rights, including the right to receive information through the Library in print, sound, images, data, social media, online applications, games, technologies, programming, and other formats TPL opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users

For example, the Library will not limit children to the use of books in the children’s section of the library, as these materials may not meet the needs and interests of all children. Library staff is happy to assist in finding material appropriate for a person’s reading level, for example, but is not responsible for determining whether materials used by children and teens are “age-appropriate.”

**Personal Property**

The library is not responsible if children leave personal property unattended. If staff are unable to identify the owner, items left unattended may be discarded or placed in the location’s lost and found.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT**

**This policy supports the following library strategic priorities:**

This policy demonstrates an investment in youth by ensuring that the safety and engagement of youth remain important factors of Library policy and procedure. This policy refrains from encouraging the misuse of disciplinary action and seeks to ensure that youth feel welcome in all TPL locations. The policy also provides staff with clear guidance on how to handle unattended children and children remaining onsite after closing hours.

	<p><b>Equity and Access</b> We are committed to racial equity and social justice. It guides our work in serving Tacoma’s diverse communities, especially the most vulnerable and underserved.</p>		<p><b>Cultivate and Engage Community</b> We will be the center for connecting people, ideas, and places.</p>
	<p><b>Learning, Creativity, and Innovation</b> We will be the place for learning, discovery, and innovation.</p>		<p><b>Responsible and Resilient</b> We will be an integral partner in a sustainable network that supports a thriving Tacoma.</p>
X	<p><b>Investment in Youth</b> We believe that youth are the future and will prioritize services, programs, and partnerships that nurture and develop young minds.</p>		

**REFERENCES**

Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA)

United States Constitution: First Amendment

**TPL Policies:**

Registration Policies #10.17.1 & #10.17.7

Public Use of the Internet, WIFI and Mobile Hotspots, Policy #10.53

Community & Patron Use Agreement, Policy #10.49

**POLICY HISTORY**

Action	Date	Notes
Board Adoption	September 21, 2022	