

# CHILD SAFETY & VULNERABLE ADULT POLICY



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The North Douglas Library District’s Mildred Whipple Library is a public building and individuals of all ages are welcome and encouraged to visit. Programs and resources are offered to make the library inviting to all ages, to help patrons enjoy their visits, and to develop a love of books, reading, and libraries. The Mildred Whipple Library strives to be a place of belonging for all, and the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults while at the library is of utmost importance. For the protection and well-being of children and vulnerable adults who visit the library, the following policy has been established.

Young children and vulnerable adults should be supervised by age-appropriate, responsible parties at all times. Guardians and caregivers are responsible for monitoring the activities and regulating the behavior of persons in their care during library visits. The North Douglas Library District Board and staff respect the rights and privacy of all library patrons. District staff will intervene only when children or vulnerable adults are left unattended and if issues relating to safety and well-being or disruptive behaviors occur. District staff will follow established procedures for the protection of the involved party or parties and to maintain a library environment in accordance with the District Code of Conduct and established policies.

## **Unattended Children and Vulnerable Adults in the Library**

An **unattended child** is a youth under the age of 12 or a minor of any age whose behavior requires them to be accompanied by a guardian or caregiver. A **vulnerable adult** is a person over the age of 18 years old who is unable or unwilling to care for themselves.

The District does not have staff, training, or State Certification to act as a childcare facility or in lieu of trained caregivers or family for vulnerable adults. District staff are further not available to act as caregivers for unattended children and vulnerable adults and are unable to assume responsibility from the guardians or caregivers for providing for the welfare of persons in their care. District staff are not responsible for children or vulnerable adults interacting with other library visitors or leaving the library premise.

## **Guardian and Caregiver Responsibilities**

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Guardians and caregivers should always remain with persons in their care and are responsible for the care of those persons while visiting the library. This expectation refers to the entire facility, including the Civic Center lobby and grounds. During library programs, guardians and caregivers must remain in the building and be visible to the persons under their care.

Guardians and caregivers are asked to model and encourage positive behavior by persons under their care while visiting the library and to cooperate with District staff in instances that persons in their care are disruptive, interfere or endanger others, or cause damage to property.

Guardians and caregivers with children 12 and older who are mature enough to be left alone at the library are responsible for:

- Setting reasonable time limits and expectations for their children's visits to the library.
- Ensuring their child has a reliable way for District staff to contact the guardian or caregiver.
- Being accessible to pick up their child at any time.
- Being informed of library hours and closures.
- Providing a means of transportation home from the library for their child. No child younger than 16 may be left unattended in the library one half hour (30 minutes) before library closing.

### **Child Safety and Vulnerable Adults During Emergency Closures**

The Mildred Whipple Library will close due to emergencies because of inclement weather, power outages, etc. If the North Douglas School District closes because of inclement weather the Library may also close.

If the Library needs to close unexpectedly during open hours, an adult staff member will call the guardian or caregiver to verify that their child will be picked up before library closing. If a guardian or caregiver cannot be reached after trying for 15 minutes, the Douglas County Sheriff's Office will be contacted to help the child get home safely. District staff, board, or volunteers are not permitted to transport any patron away from library facilities.

### **Staff Procedure for Unattended Children or Vulnerable Adults**

If District staff become aware of an unattended child or vulnerable adult as defined above, or when a child under 16 is left unattended within thirty (30) minutes of a library closure:

1. Staff will attempt to locate the guardian or caregiver on the library premise. If the guardian or caregiver is not on the premise, District staff will attempt to contact the guardian or caregiver.
2. Staff will address with the guardian or caregiver conduct issues or concerns such as lost, unattended, or scared children or vulnerable adults. Staff will also provide a copy of the **Child Safety & Vulnerable Adult Policy**.
3. For safety reasons, if attempts to contact the guardian or caregiver are unsuccessful, District Staff are directed to call the Douglas County Sheriff's Office.

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4. Staff will fill out an incident report to be given to the Library Director and kept on record.
5. District staff may not take children or vulnerable adults out of the building, unless caregivers are located within sight of the facility. District staff, board, or volunteers are not permitted to transport any patron away from library facilities.
6. For safety reasons, the appropriate social service agency or law enforcement may be contacted to take custody of any child or vulnerable adult left in the library for a period exceeding 30 minutes during open hours or after closing time if attempts to contact the guardian or caregiver are unsuccessful.