

Artesia Public Library

Child Safety Policy

Access to Children's Area

The children's area of the library is specifically designed to serve the needs of our youngest patrons. Adults in that area not using the children's materials or not using the area for the purpose intended may be asked by Library staff to use other areas of the library.

Access to Teen Zone

Patrons of all ages are welcome to browse and check out materials from the Teen Zone. However, the space is primarily designed for "teen" and "preteen" patrons in grades 6 – 12. Adults or children not accompanied by a teen are expected to find seating, computers and workspace elsewhere in the library. Adults and children in the Teen Zone, not using young adult materials or not using the area for the purpose intended may be asked to use other areas of the library.

Parent/Caregiver Expectations and Responsibilities

Children under the age of 8 must be accompanied and directly supervised by a person (15) years of age or older. Accompanied is defined as "within sight". The conduct, safety, and supervision of children while visiting the library is the sole responsibility of the child's parents, guardians, and caregivers (hereinafter referred to as caregiver). While our staff are here to support children's use of the library and its resources, neither the library nor library staff are responsible for the supervision of children visiting or using the library.

Children ages 8 to 11 years old who abide by the Library's Conduct and Courtesy Policy may utilize the library without the presence of a caregiver, provided the caregiver remains in the building.

Teens ages 12 to 17 are treated as adult Library users as far as expectations for appropriate conduct (see Conduct and Courtesy Policy) and may utilize the library without a caregiver being present.

Parents/caregivers are responsible for the conduct of their child (under 18) while the minors are on library property regardless of whether they accompany the minor to the library; they are also responsible for any actions including, but not limited to, monetary responsibility for property damage or loss caused by their children under the age of 18.

Because the Library is a public place, children's safety cannot be guaranteed. Children may encounter hazards such as doors, furniture, electrical equipment, theft, allergens, illness transmission, slips and falls.

Children may also be subject to strange behavior from persons potentially under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Children could encounter suspicious and potentially harmful individuals. Staff do not monitor the arrival to or departure of any child from the building. Staff will not attempt to prevent any child that chooses to leave the library of their own accord from doing so.

Staff Role

Library staff members have many duties to fulfill and cannot supervise children in the library or when a child leaves the building.

Librarians have a public and professional obligation to ensure that all members of the community have free, equal, and equitable access to the entire range of the library resources regardless of content, approach, format, or amount of detail. This principle of the library services applies equally to all users, minors as well as adults.

Only parents and guardians have the right and responsibility to restrict access of their children (and only their children) to Library resources.

Parents who do not want their children to have access to certain Library services, materials, or facilities should so advise their children. Library staff cannot assume the role of parents or the functions of parental authority in the private relationship between parents and children and have no responsibility or duty to enforce parental limitations on a child's use of library materials or resources.

Unattended Children

Library Staff and volunteers cannot act *in loco parentis* and cannot provide childcare or assume responsibility for children's safety.

Library staff will not be responsible for determining whether someone is a legally authorized caregiver, custodian, or custodial parent of a child.

If an unattended child appears to be younger than 11 years old or is being disruptive, or if in the judgment of the staff person in charge, that the safety of the child or others is jeopardized, library staff will make every attempt to locate the child's parent or caregiver. If a parent or caregiver cannot be located, the child may be placed in the care of the local law enforcement agency.

Unattended Children at Closing

Fifteen minutes before the library is scheduled to close, library staff will encourage any unattended child who needs transportation to contact his or her caregiver before closing time.

If a caregiver cannot be reached or does not arrive within a reasonable time after closing, library staff will call the Artesia Police Department to pick up the child. Staff will notify library administration the Artesia police have been contacted. Staff will complete an incident report. These same actions will be followed for unscheduled emergency or inclement weather-related closures.

Two staff members will remain with the child until the parent, guardian, caregiver, or police officer arrive. Under no circumstances will a library staff member remain in the facility alone with an unattended child. Staff will not transport any child from the library to another location.

Once a child is in the protective care of the Artesia Police Department, a note will be attached to the library entrance, with the following information: Unattended child is in the care of the Artesia Police Department. The address and phone number of the police department will be provided. Neither the name of the child nor the name of the caregiver will be listed on the note.

Enforcement of the Child Safety Policy

Enforcement of the Child Safety Policy will be conducted in a fair and reasonable manner.

All visitors to the children's area or attending programs that are not complying with the Child Safety Policy, or the behavioral guidelines as outlined in the Conduct and Courtesy Policy may be asked to leave the premises. Consistent violations of these policies may be grounds for suspension of the library privileges.

Approved by the Library Advisory Board September 16, 2025

Reviewed by City Attorney's Office December 2025