

## **Kelso Public Library**

### **Policy No. 601 (Adopted 3/29/2023)**

#### **Parental Responsibility and Unattended Children Policy**

##### **Purpose of the Parental Responsibility and Unattended Children Policy**

601.1 Everyone is welcome in the Kelso Public Library. The staff of the Library strives to create a welcoming, fun and friendly environment for all Library users. The Library offers many programs and services that encourage children and adults to develop a love of books, reading, and learning. The Library is not equipped, nor is it the Library's role to provide long or short-term child care.

##### **Definitions**

601.2 An **Unattended Child** is defined as:

- a) Any child under twelve who is in the Library without a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver (fourteen years or older) present or in the immediate vicinity.
- b) A child of any age who is found frightened or crying in the Library.
- c) A child of any age who is perceived to be endangering themselves or others, or if there is a perceived threat to the unattended child.
- d) A child of any age who exhibits inappropriate behavior in the Library.
- e) A child under twelve who has not been met by a responsible caregiver at closing time.

601.3 A **Vulnerable Child** is an unattended child of any age whose safety or well-being would be at risk if sent outside the Library. Examples of vulnerability include: a child who is too young to be on his/her own, a child in an unsafe area, or a child left alone outside the library after business hours.

##### **Parental Responsibility Policy**

601.4 Parents and guardians are responsible for their children's behavior, safety and welfare while their children are in the library, which includes their children's access to library materials and electronic resources.

601.5 The Kelso Public Library strongly recommends that a parent, guardian or other responsible party be present to supervise children ages twelve and younger. Library staff are available to assist parents, guardians and their children in the use of the library; however, Library staff cannot act "in loco parentis" (in place of a parent) for children in the library.

601.6 If a child or teen is acting in an unsafe manner, behaving inappropriately, or appears to be in distress, staff will attempt to locate or contact the parent, guardian or other party responsible for the child or teen. If the parent, guardian or responsible party cannot be reached the child or teen may be asked to leave the Library or staff may contact law enforcement for assistance at the discretion of library staff, depending on the age and the behavior at issue.

#### 601.7 Library Cards

- a) Children and teens may borrow or use any materials, resources, or services in the library. For example, the Kelso Public 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. In addition, library staff are not responsible for determining whether materials or library resources used by children and teens are "age appropriate."
- b) It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to monitor their children's and teens' use of library resources and to determine whether to place restrictions. The Library encourages parents/guardians to talk to their children and teens about the kinds of materials they think are suitable for borrowing or accessing.
- c) While children and teens may have their own library cards, the parents/guardians of youth under the age of eighteen are financially responsible for library materials and equipment their children or teens checkout, including items that are lost, damaged, or unreturned (See Library Card and Circulation Policy 201.5.a).

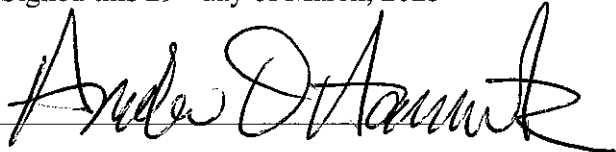
#### 601.8 Closing Time

- a) Children ages twelve and under who do not have transportation at closing time will be asked how to contact a parent or guardian. If a child is unable to provide this information, staff members may use library records to help locate the parent/guardian. Staff will attempt to contact the parent/guardian by phone and ask that person to come and pick up the child within fifteen minutes.
- b) If a parent/guardian cannot be reached, or if a child age twelve and under is not picked up within fifteen minutes after closing time, library staff will contact law enforcement to report the matter and refer the child to their custody. Staff will wait with the child in the library until law enforcement arrive.
- c) Under no circumstances will staff provide transportation or accompany a child home.

## Unattended Children Policy

- 601.9 The safety and welfare of young children left alone in the Library is a serious concern for the Kelso Public Library, its Advisory Board, and staff. If an unattended and/or vulnerable child comes to the attention of Library staff due to behavior, staff will make a good faith attempt to contact the parent or guardian. If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, the child will be referred to the custody of the local law enforcement agency.
- 601.10 Library staff cannot prevent a minor child from leaving the building.
- 601.11 For the safety and comfort of children, a responsible adult or caregiver should accompany children when they are using the Library.
- 601.12 Parents and legal guardians are responsible for their minor children, and their behavior in the Library, whether or not they accompany them.

Signed this 29<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Hamilton", written over a horizontal line.

Andrew Hamilton, City Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erik Moser", written over a horizontal line.

Erik Moser, Library Director