

# Safe Visitor Philosophy/Policy

WCPL staff welcomes visitors to enjoy its services. We strive to make WCPL a safe, welcoming, educational, fun place for people of all ages. (For ease of reading, the word "child" will be used henceforth to refer to all child and teen users of WCPL; the word "caregiver" will be used to refer to the parent, guardian, teacher or other individual responsible for a child or teen.)

## Responsibilities of WCPL Staff

- "WCPL Staff" refers to anyone who works in the building, staff as well as contracted employees.
- WCPL Staff are responsible for knowing all safety and security policies and procedures listed in the official "Safety and Security" manual, and in specific, those regarding "lost child" procedures.
- During programs for minors, staff may approach adults who appear to be unaccompanied by children to inquire about the purpose of their visit. Such inquiries are not meant to make adults feel unwelcome or scrutinized, but to insure that all visitors are safe.
- The staff is here to serve the public, and cannot monitor the location, safety, or behavior of each child.
- When a child is behaving in a disruptive manner, a staff member will advise the child to stop the disruption and explain the behavior expected of him or her.
- If disruptive behavior continues, a staff member will locate the child's caregiver and explain that the caregiver is responsible for the child's behavior.
- If the caregiver is not in the building, staff will attempt to reach the caregiver by phone. In extreme cases, if the caregiver cannot be reached, the police will be called. Such situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If parents, guardians, and/or caregivers cannot be reached, or are unresponsive, the Library will work with other city agencies as needed.
- If the caregiver cannot or will not control the child, they will be asked to leave until the child's behavior improves.
- Unless a child is in danger of hurting him/herself or others, staff members will not discipline or restrain a child.
- If a child is lost, scared, or injured, staff members may touch the child in order to comfort him or her or to secure his or her safety.
- Individual WCPL staff will not be alone with an individual child in any part of the facility, including waiting with children after hours.
- WCPL staff will never transport children in their own cars, including picking children up or taking them home.

## Responsibilities of Parents or Caregivers

- Parents and caregivers are responsible for the safety, behavior and supervision of their children at all times. Parents and caregivers are responsible for their children even if they are not present in the building.
- No child under the age of 12 should be left unattended by a caregiver in WCPL, unless attending an advertised program for which the child is appropriately aged to attend.
- We expect children left unattended for programs at WCPL to be mature enough to follow the rules of both the Library on their own, to take responsibility for their own safety, and to be able to leave the building without the assistance of a library staff member.
- WCPL is a public building, and is not an alternative to long or short term child care. Staff cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all citizens are free to use any public area within/around the building.
- Children who are 12 years of age or older may visit WCPL by themselves without a caregiver, unless otherwise indicated in the program description. Children entering Kindergarten or older

can attend classes, programs and events unaccompanied during advertised program times, after which children must be picked up by a guardian or adult responsible for the care and wellbeing of the child.

- Caregivers should promptly pick up children upon conclusion of a program, class or event.
- We expect caregivers to help children arrive on time for programs, classes, and events.
- If children are dropped off early for a program, class, or event, staff cannot be responsible for reminding children about classes and/or finding children in the building at the start time.
- Caregivers are responsible for being aware of instructions for dropping off and picking up children in regards to specific programs or classes.

## **Responsibilities of Children**

- The staff is here to help you. Please ask us for help!
- Many people who come to WCPL want to read, use the computers, or study. Please:
- Speak in moderate tones.
- Walk, don't run (even outside-as tempting as it may be).
- Be patient and take turns.
- Place books or other items in the book drop at the front desk or on a table when you are finished with them.
- Stay near the person who brought you.

## **Unaccompanied Children**

- We expect caregivers to keep children under the age of 12 within their sight and supervision at all times, unless the child is attending a program or class.
- Caretakers should be at least 15 years old and mature enough to follow WCPL rules and guidelines. We suggest that children and young caregivers carry emergency contact information with them.
- Children 12 years of age or older are allowed at WCPL unattended-at the discretion of a parent or guardian-provided that the child has the maturity to be left unattended. We strongly advise that these children carry contact information with them in case of an emergency. Both child and caregiver should be aware of WCPL's hours of operation.

## **Disabled Visitors**

- WCPL strives to be a fully ADA accessible facility. Any young person between the ages of birth and 18 and/or their caregivers with mental, physical or emotional disabilities which might preclude their use and enjoyment of the building should contact staff to inform them of special needs. We will make every effort to make your visit safe and enjoyable.
- WCPL scope of children/youth services is defined by chronological age, not ability. Offering computer use or participation in programs to those who are 19 and older, even when it is developmentally appropriate, is outside of that scope. Adult patrons are invited to use the full range of services available at Main Library and the McIntosh Branch Library.
- Group visits to WCPL from agencies that provide services to individuals with special needs, such as ECI, may include students who are older than 18, if allowed by the agency. Any patrons, regardless of age, are welcome to select and borrow library materials from WCPL.

## **WCPL Truancy Policy**

According to Alabama law, students 15 years or age or younger should be in school during regularly scheduled school hours (7am-2pm). Therefore, students 15 and under may not be in WCPL during these hours without appropriate documentation. Please be aware that student visitors may be asked for proof of age and documentation of legitimate school absence during these hours.

# Safe Visitor Policy

Rules that adult visitors should know:

- WCPL resources and programs are intended for people of various ages.
- To maintain a safe environment during programs designed for children and youth, adult visitors to WCPL who are unaccompanied by a child may not observe programs.

Rules that parents and caregivers should know:

- Children under age 12 must be with a caretaker at all times. Caretakers should be at least 15 years old and mature enough to follow WCPL rules and guidelines.
- Children entering Kindergarten or older may visit WCPL by themselves to attend classes and programs without a caregiver, unless otherwise indicated in the program description.
- Young people under 19 are not allowed on the facility premises after closing time unless they are participating in a scheduled facility event.

While at WCPL, we ask that you:

- Do not bring food or drinks inside the library. Refreshments served by the library during programs and events must be kept within the areas they are served or enjoyed outside.
- Speak in moderate tones at all times.
- Walk, don't run.
- Gently use books, materials and technology.
- Wear shoes and a shirt at all times, and clothing must be buttoned, zipped and cover undergarments appropriately.
- Use cell phones and devices to message discreetly inside and take phone calls outside or in private rooms.

While at WCPL, we ask that you NOT:

- Fight or physically or verbally harass other visitors or staff.
- Change clothes, shave, bathe or other unintended uses in the restrooms. Children wearing diapers must be changed in bathrooms only. Use of the restrooms is for WCPL patrons only.
- Sell and/or solicit for services, money or other items.
- Distribute or post printed materials/literature that have not been approved by the Library.
- Bring animals into the facility, other than assistance animals.
- Smoke, including e-cigarettes and vaporizers, or use any kind of tobacco products.

**IMPORTANT:** There will be "zero tolerance" for any behavior deemed illegal or that threatens the safety of others. This behavior will result in an immediate suspension from the facility, the duration of which will be determined by the library administration.

Activities that result in immediate suspension include:

- Carrying weapons of any type.
- Soliciting, selling or using drugs.
- Destruction of property or theft of materials
- Engaging in disorderly conduct of any kind, fighting or challenging to fight, or using obscene/offensive words likely to provoke violence.