



Library Policy on Unattended Children

The staff of the Astoria Public Library strives to create a warm, welcoming, and enjoyable environment for children. Because it is a free and open public space, the Library requires the cooperation of caretakers responsible for children to ensure that the Astoria Public Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it. Though staff will always respond with care and concern, they cannot assume responsibility for children's safety and comfort when they are unattended. As a last resort, staff may need to contact authorities to assist with discipline in the library or to ensure the safety of an unattended child.

A child's caretaker is responsible for the behavior of their child while they are in the Library and on Library property, which includes the Library building, the parking lot, and entryways. A caretaker is any person at or above the age of 10 who is responsible for a child under 10 years of age. The Astoria Public Library staff is committed to helping children with activities related to the Library. Therefore, when children are using the Library, it is the responsibility of caretakers, rather than the library staff, to supervise their children and ensure their safety. Caretakers may designate a responsible person to act as their representative for a child in the Library.

Per the Oregon Revised Statutes, children under 10 years of age must be accompanied by a responsible person at all times. Astoria Public Library interprets "10 years of age" as a person who can function mentally at a 10-year-old level; patrons who are over 10 years according to their date of birth but are incapable of mentally functioning at or above an average 10-year-old level are also considered under 10 years of age for the purposes of this policy and must be supervised by a caregiver. This means the caretaker must supervise the child during the entire library visit by remaining within a reasonable distance, keeping the child within their line of sight, and being present at any programs their child is attending.

When Library staff witness, or other patrons report, children who are not adequately supervised or are engaging in behavior which is disturbing others or the operation of the library, the library staff will first attempt to locate the caretaker of the children and discuss the problem. If the caretaker of children under the age of 10 cannot be located after announcements are made and a brief search is conducted, the children will be referred to

the Astoria Police Department for their own safety. The Library does not impose any specific legal penalties on caretakers of unattended children and generally limits interaction to a short informational discussion following the incident; however, Astoria Public Library staff have the authority to ask the children and the caretaker to leave the premises.

Children age 10 and older may use the library on their own. Caretakers are still responsible for the actions and well-being of their child(ren). In accordance with Astoria Public Library Rules of Use, patrons, including children, involved in inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. If a child 10 and older is not able to leave the library on their own, they should not be in the library without a caregiver. All unaccompanied children at the library should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.

Library Board Endorsement: August 5, 2025

Biannual Review due 2027