

Brooks Free Library
739 Main St., Harwich MA 02645
Phone: (508) 430-7562

CHILD/TEEN SAFETY POLICY

Brooks Free Library strives to provide a positive, safe, and welcoming environment for all of our patrons. The Patron Behavior Policy and Internet Use Policy apply to patrons of all ages but since the behavior of unaccompanied children and teens may be disruptive or put them at risk, their welfare is of special concern. The Trustees have approved this Child/Teen Safety Policy to supplement other existing policies for patrons under the age of 18.

For purposes of this policy, an unattended child or teen is one without a parent, guardian or caregiver to monitor their behavior and wellbeing. The term “caregiver” refers to an adult household member or relative, caregiver or guardian charged with the care and supervision of the child. A “child” is defined as birth through 12 years; “teens” are defined as ages 13-17.

Unaccompanied children/teens using the Library are not in our custodial care and the constant supervision typical of school or childcare settings is not provided. Responsibility for the behavior and well-being of children/teens using the Library rests with parents and caregivers, not Library staff. The Library assumes no responsibility for children outside the building.

To assist staff members to contact them in an emergency or when behavioral problems arise, parents and caregivers are encouraged to ensure that children/teens have library cards and that their patron record contains up-to-date contact information for parents and caregivers.

Library staff members are not responsible for the safety of unattended/unsupervised children, although they must intervene if they perceive a threat to any child. Staff members must immediately report a minor of any age that appears at risk or in need of immediate medical or non-medical assistance to the proper authorities. If an unaccompanied child is in distress but the situation does not appear to be urgent, the staff member in charge will first attempt to contact a parent or caregiver before contacting the Police or Fire Departments.

Children birth through age 6

For their own safety, children age 6 and younger must remain within sight of a parent or caregiver at all times. Caregivers must be at least 13 years old and have emergency contact information for parent or adult caregiver. Disruptive children or those not coping adequately with the library experience may intrude upon the activities of other library patrons. Such situations will be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

If a child age 6 or under is found without a parent/caregiver, a staff member will attempt to locate the parent or caregiver by performing a thorough search of the building (including bathrooms) while another staff member stays with the child. If a parent or caregiver cannot be located-staff will immediately call the Police Dept. to pick up the child.

Children ages 7-9

For children ages 7 to 9, a parent or caregiver must be in the library but may be out of sight of the child. Caregivers must be at least 13 years old and have emergency contact information for parent/adult caregiver. Disruptive children or those not coping adequately with the library experience may intrude upon the activities of other library patrons. Such situations will be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

If a child age 7 to 9 is found to be unaccompanied, a staff member will attempt to locate the parent or caregiver by performing a thorough search of the building (including bathrooms) while another staff member stays with the child. If those persons cannot be located-staff will immediately call the Police Dept. to pick up the child.

Children ages 10-12

Children ages 10-12 may use the library without a parent or caregiver present if they are capable of doing so appropriately. Parents and caregivers are responsible for the actions of their children even when they are not present in the building with the child. Disruptive children or those not coping adequately with the library experience may intrude upon the activities of other patrons. Such situations will be resolved on a case-by-case basis. All children should have emergency contact information for parents and caregivers readily available.

If a 10-12 year old child becomes disruptive, the senior staff member will attempt to locate a parent or caregiver within the building or via phone call to pick the child up. If unsuccessful in reaching a parent or caregiver during the course of one hour, or if the building is closing, staff will contact the Police Dept. to pick up the child.

Serious misbehavior that is harmful to themselves or others or that damages library property will result in an immediate call for police assistance to remove the child from the building, without waiting to attempt to contact a parent or caregiver.

Teens ages 13-17

Teens aged 13-17 are treated as adult library users as far as expectations for appropriate conduct. Parents/caregivers are still legally responsible for the actions of their teen. All young people should have emergency contact information readily available.

Rides at closing time/unexpected emergencies

Parents or caregivers should make definite arrangements to pick up unaccompanied children prior to closing time. Due to liability concerns, staff members are prohibited from providing rides to patrons. 15 minutes before closing unattended children/teens will be encouraged to use the telephone to ensure a parent or caregiver is on the way.

If the library is closing and a child age 12 or younger has not arranged a ride, staff members will attempt to contact a parent or caregiver. If no contact has been made by 15 minutes after

closing the staff will contact the police to pick up the child. Two staff members will remain with the child until transportation or the police arrive.

Young people age 13 or older may be left outside the building if they are waiting for a ride, unless weather conditions are dangerous.

Early school closings due to bad weather

When the schools close early due to bad weather, or if such a closing seems likely, parents and caregivers are asked to instruct their child **NOT** to take the bus to the Library, as the Library may also need to close early. The Library will contact the schools and bus company to request they notify children not to take the bus to the Library. Parents and caregivers are advised to check the library web site, Facebook and Twitter accounts for the latest information on closings and to provide their email address to the Youth Services Department for inclusion on an “Early Closing” email notification list.

Behavior Guidelines for Minors

The parent or caregiver is responsible for ensuring the appropriate behavior of their children in the Library, whether they are present with them or not. Serious or repeated misbehavior will result in loss of the right to use the Library unless accompanied by a parent or caregiver, followed by a temporary ban and then a permanent loss of library privileges. If at any time a staff member feels that a patron’s behavior threatens the safety of the child or others, the staff member in charge will call the police immediately.

Disruptive behavior that is unacceptable in the Library includes, but is not limited to:

- Running, chasing, horseplay
- Inappropriate language
- Misuse of library property
- Screaming, shouting, or other noise
- Eating or drinking in the non-designated areas
- Behavior that hinders normal library use
- Physical aggression
- Bullying or bothering other library users
- Disrespectful behavior towards staff or other library users
- Not following library rules

Use of Library Technology

The Brooks Free Library offers free public technology and access to the Internet with the following provisions:

- The Library has no control over and is not responsible for content available through the Internet. Online information may be outdated, inaccurate or controversial in nature.

- Materials viewed at the Library must be appropriate for a public setting. Individual users are responsible for the selection of sites explored. Parents or caregivers must provide guidance to their own minor children.
- The Library's Internet access is not filtered. Any restriction or monitoring of what a child views on the Internet is the sole responsibility of the parent or caregiver.
- Children under age 8 must be supervised by a parent, guardian or care provider and use the workstations located in the Youth Services Homework Center
- Children age 12 and under (grades 7 and below) must have signed parental permission (attached) to access the Internet and must use the Homework Center workstations.
- Teens age 13 and over (grade 8 and above) do not need signed parental permission to access the Internet. They may use the computers in the Homework Center or in the second floor Reference Department.
- Children/teens using Library technology must comply with sign-up procedures and time limits.
- Library computers cannot be used for illegal or unethical purposes such as attempting to read other users' files or to gain unauthorized access to accounts or systems of others.
- Parents/guardians assume full liability for their child's actions.
- Serious or repeated failure to comply with policies, procedures and staff direction will result in loss of privileges to use Library technology.

Approved by Board of Trustees 4.12.17

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Youth Internet Permission Form and Contact Information

Brooks Free Library policy allows children in grades 5 and above to be at the library without an adult present. These children are not in our custodial care and may leave the library at any time without consulting a staff member. Please review our Child/Teen Safety Policy with your child and discuss what your family's rules will be about leaving to visit Brooks Park, the nearby convenience stores, or other venues. The Library closes at 7 pm on weekdays – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays – and at 4 pm on Fridays and Saturdays. Please make arrangements for your child to be picked up prior to closing.

The Brooks Free Library offers public access to the Internet. The Youth Services computers DO NOT have filtering software, as such software often interferes with legitimate searches while at the same time not being an effective barrier against possibly upsetting material. Please discuss with your student what material or information you are comfortable with your child accessing.

All material viewed must be appropriate for a public setting that includes young children, and may not be used for illegal or unethical activity, such as reading other users files or attempting to gain access to another person's online accounts. Violation of these rules can result in suspension of the user's computer privileges.

Printing something written by the student for a school assignment is free. For all other printing the first three pages are free and subsequent printed pages are 15 cents a page.

I give my child _____ permission to use the internet at the Brooks Free Library.

* * * * *

Parent/Guardian signature

child's birthdate

To join our email list so that we can contact you in the event that the library will be closing early for inclement weather, or other emergencies that may impact our after-school opening hours, please provide your email below.

Email (please print)

A surprising number of students do not know the home, work and cell phone numbers of parents, family members or caregivers. If you would like us to keep this information on file as a reference for your child, please provide these phone number(s) below.