

Child and Teen Safety Policy

Mission

The Kern County Library is dedicated to providing a safe and welcoming environment for families and children. To make the Library an enjoyable place and to encourage a love of books, reading, and learning, the Library offers designated children's and teen areas, programs, and services.

Purpose

The Library encourages children and their parents/guardians to use its resources, cultivate interactions with other children, and be inspired by the possibilities of learning, all in a safe space specifically designed for that exploration. The Library promotes the idea that children should use their voices, minds, and their bodies to express themselves in active reading, movement, and play.

Access to Children's and Teen Areas

Children's areas are designated for children 12 and under. Teen areas are designated for ages 13 to 17.

Adults may visit Children's and Teen areas only when accompanied by children using those areas or when using those materials for research or checkout. Adults unaccompanied by children or teens may be asked by staff to use the other areas of the Library.

At the Beale Memorial Library, adults with children in their charge are the only adults allowed to use the restrooms located in the Children's area.

Children and Teen Behavior Expectations

Traditionally, libraries have been considered quiet spaces, but this is no longer the case. Libraries are currently focused on creating safe and engaging spaces for parents to play with their children.

While the Library encourages kids to be themselves at the Library, some behaviors may be redirected if the child's enthusiasm infringes upon other visitor's safety or enjoyment of the Library.

Parent Expectations and Responsibilities

Because the Library is a public place, children's safety cannot be guaranteed. Children may encounter hazards such as stairs, elevators, doors, furniture, electrical equipment, or other Library visitors. In addition to physical hazards, children may also encounter Library materials that are not appropriate for their age or maturity level.

While on Library premises, the conduct, safety, and supervision of children are the responsibility of parents/guardians. The Library does not act *in loco parentis* or in the place of a parent. The Library encourages parents to consider the safety and well-being of their children and the needs of other library visitors of all ages.

Staff Role

Library staff are committed to the well-being and safety of children. However, library facilities are neither designed nor licensed to provide basic childcare. Any public place may be dangerous for a child left unattended or stranded after closing hours.

The Library encourages parents to help their children make an effective use of the Library and assist them with selecting books and materials, using the computers, or attending programs.

Staff members are committed to:

1. Helping children and teens find materials for school and recreational reading.
2. Providing an environment that encourages exploration and creativity.
3. Offering programs for children and teens that inform and enrich.

Unattended Children

Staff Response:

1. Staff will try to locate the child's parent/guardian in the Library.
2. If staff are unable to locate the parent/guardian in the Library, they will attempt to contact the parent/guardian to pick up their child.
3. If the parent/guardian cannot be located or does not come to pick up their child within 30 minutes during regular hours or within 15 minutes of closing, staff will call local law enforcement.
4. Staff are not permitted to transport any child from the Library to another location.