

## **PARENTAL/GUARDIAN SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Mercer County Library System welcomes children of all ages. We strive to be a doorway through which a life-long interest in learning and reading takes place. The public library is, however, just that, a public building. As such, anyone can come into it, law-abiding or otherwise.

Library staff have many duties to perform in order to serve the patrons of the library system and cannot monitor the behavior or whereabouts of each patron, including children. Staff does not take over parental responsibilities for children who come into the library. A parent or caregiver must provide continuous supervision for children to ensure their safety. A child could be tempted to go off with a stranger, become ill, or become lost. Any of these emergencies could take place in a public building. Because of these and other emergencies that could take place, the following policy has been adopted:

**Children Six Years of Age and Under:** Children six years of age and younger may not be left unattended in the library. They must be in direct supervision of a parent or other adult when in the library, which means that the adult must remain with the child during the entire library visit. This includes the circumstances of a child who may be playing a computer game or playing in the Children's Area. Exceptions to this policy occur when programming requires children to attend on their own; however parents are required to remain in the building when children are attending a program on their own. At these times, children should be brought to the activity prior to the program and be met outside the door of the Activity Room at its conclusion. If parents are expected to be busy in the library, for example, using a computer, photocopier or attending a meeting, plan to leave your child home or bring an adult caregiver with you to the library. Do not expect one child to supervise another.

**Children Ages 7-13:** Children seven to thirteen years of age should not be left without the presence of a parent or guardian somewhere in the library building. Children under the age of 14 who are left unattended at the close of business will be considered stranded. Staff will be instructed to wait approximately 20 minutes with the child and then contact the local Police Department.

Parents are responsible for the conduct of minor children, under 18 years of age, in the library or on library grounds, regardless of whether they are in the company of their child or not.