

## **POLICY ON UNATTENDED/DISRUPTIVE CHILDREN**

Howard County Library is a public facility that offers services to a wide range of citizens, and children are especially welcome. HCL has the responsibility to provide an environment that is safe and comfortable for every patron who is appropriately using its services and facilities. Children and young people are expected to adhere to the same standards of patron conduct expected of adults. Parents, guardians, or assigned chaperones are responsible for the behavior of their children while in the library.

Children under the age of six (6) should never be left alone in any area of the library; they **MUST** be accompanied by an adult or other chaperone. If the responsible adult cannot be found, staff will call the appropriate child welfare office (Howard County Sheriff's Department or Big Spring Police Department) and report an abandoned child. School age children may use the library unattended, subject to all policies and procedures of the Library.

Older children who are disruptive will be asked to leave the Library. If the child cannot safely leave the library to return home on his/her own, staff will permit the child to call a parent. If no parent can be contacted, library staff will either allow the child to remain at the Library under close supervision until a parent can be contacted or the Library will contact the Howard County Sheriff's Department or Big Spring Police Department, depending upon the severity of the situation.

Children who have not been picked up at closing time will be given the chance to call a parent. Children who have not been picked up within fifteen (15) minutes of closing will be left in the care of the Howard County Sheriff's Department or Big Spring Police Department. Under no circumstances will staff transport children in a vehicle or accompany them home.