

Alamosa Public Library
300 Hunt Ave.
Alamosa, CO 81101

Safe Child Policy

Parent/Guardian-Library Partnership

Thank you for bringing your child to visit the library. Library visits have a direct connection with children growing into readers. We can help you find books and materials appropriate for your children's age, interests, and reading levels, answer your questions about how children grow into readers, and provide you and your family with a variety of educational and enriching activities.

Our role in this partnership is to select diverse, quality materials that will challenge, interest, and inform children. We will be glad to make recommendations for your child based on your personal criteria. Please remember, however, that we are a public library; we collect materials suitable and of interest to all segments of the public.

Your role in this partnership is to see that materials borrowed by your child are appropriate for that individual child. The library staff does not limit choices or censor materials. It is also your responsibility to make your child aware of the obligation to return materials in a timely manner and in good condition and to pay for any fines or other charges that occur.

Our Safe Child Rules & Expectations

Any public place may be dangerous for a child who is left unattended even for brief periods of time. Staff members cannot know or be responsible if children are leaving the building with responsible caregivers or with strangers. When a child is left at the library without a parent or caregiver, the child's boredom, fatigue or fear may lead to behavior that disrupts the services the library staff provides for them and for others. The Library encourages parents and caregivers to consider the safety and well being of their children, as in any other public place, and the needs of other library users of all ages.

- We expect parents/caregivers to be responsible for their children's behavior in the library, whether or not the parents/responsible persons are present.
- We expect parents to understand and explain the library rules to their children. The rules and policies have been developed to safeguard the collection and ensure fairness for all library users. Complete silence is no longer a rule in our library; conversational voices are usually fine and even mild "fussy" behavior in the youngest. We do ask for children to be taught consideration of others while in the library.

- Younger children who become very upset and cannot be calmed should be taken outdoors "to catch their breath." Children who are unhappy during their time in the library are more likely to grow up not liking libraries, books, or reading. The library needs to be an enjoyable place for them and for other patrons as well.
- We expect all children under the age of 8 to be accompanied by an adult at all times while visiting the library. The library in no way assumes responsibility for any child, of any age, left unattended in the building.
- We expect all children and teens, as well as adults, to use appropriate language and behavior in the library. Those who do not will be asked to leave.
- We expect parents to set reasonable time limits for their children's library visits. Parents/caregivers must remain in the library during programs if their child is under 8 years of age and parents are encouraged to attend programs with their children. Children 8 and older may attend library programs without a parent.
- We expect parents to be responsible for the types of materials checked out by their children and their selection choices. The library staff does not limit choices or censor materials.
- We expect parents to maintain control of their children while visiting the library. Please remember that the library staff's professional services do not include baby-sitting, disciplining, or supervising.
- We expect parents who attend children's programming with their children to lead by example and demonstrate good listening habits.
- We expect parents/caregivers of children between the ages of 8 and 12 to have a responsible plan for picking up their children by closing time. Under no circumstances will a staff member drive a child home. If a child is not claimed within 15 minutes following the scheduled closing of the library, the Alamosa Police Department will be notified of the situation.

Obligations of the Library

Unlike schools, the Library does not act *in loco parentis*. The adult guardian is primarily responsible for the safety of children in their care. That said, the Library does take the safety of children seriously. To that end, the Library will:

- Perform background checks of all employees and volunteers, teen volunteers excepted.
- Provide appropriate supervision to teen volunteers.
- Supervise the interactions of external presenters with youth.
- Train staff in appropriate conduct and sexual abuse prevention.

Safe Child Code of Conduct

Library staff are committed to the protection of youth. We model appropriate conduct at all times.

- Library staff and volunteers will not be alone with a child or teen at any time.
- Library staff and volunteers will demonstrate appropriate physical boundaries with children and teens. Physical expressions of affection should not be prolonged or inappropriate. High-fives, fist bumps and brief hugs are generally appropriate, but should be initiated by the child or teen.
- Library staff and volunteers will communicate appropriately with youth - no harassment or sexually provocative communication will be permitted. Communication between staff and youth outside of the Library (email, social media, text or phone calls) should occur with the knowledge and consent of their parents, and the knowledge of the Library Manager. **This communication should never be one-on-one.**
- Library staff and volunteers are **not** mandated reporters. However, any disclosures from youth about harm to self or others, including self-harm, suicidal thoughts, homicidal or abusive thoughts, child abuse, intimate partner violence, bullying, harassment, serious substance problems should be reported to the Library Manager.
- If a child or teen discloses information about their gender identity or sexual orientation that they have not made public, staff and volunteers will not share the disclosure with other people without the permission of the youth. Library staff and volunteers will lead by example with support, tolerance and acceptance.
- Library staff and volunteers take responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries with youth - and for ensuring their colleagues maintain those boundaries as well.

Help Your Child Become a Lifelong Reader

As a parent, the most important thing you can do to help your child learn to read and develop as a reader is to read aloud to them. You don't need expensive products that promise instant reading success and deliver less than perfect results. Children of all ages benefit from parents sitting down with them and reading aloud from a book, magazine, or even a comic page of the newspaper.

Be a role model for your child. Children will emulate your actions more than your words. Let them see you reading for pleasure. Show them the importance of being a lifelong learner and that the library is a wonderful place to continue that learning experience. Make going to the library a regular excursion for you and your child.

Approved by Library Board of Trustees
July 25, 2022