



Jersey City Free Public Library

Policies for Children and Students

Revised March 28, 2007

The Jersey City Free Public Library encourages the use of its facilities, materials, services and programs by children, parents and caregivers who work with children. The Library adheres to guidelines established by the American Library Association "Library Bill of Rights."

The following policies have been written and defined in order to provide a better understanding of services, to encourage parent/guardian participation, to create a safer educational environment, and to protect ALL children who use the Library's facilities.

- Part 1. Unattended Children*
- Part 2. Home Schooling in the Library*
- Part 3. Computer Use*
- Part 4. Borrowing Materials*

Additional policies on: Circulation Regulations (including Library Cards, Loan Periods, Fines, Fees and Charges), Computer Usage, Internet Safety, Rules of Conduct and Video are posted on the JCFPL website... www.jclibrary.org



Part 1. Unattended Children

The Jersey City Free Public Library is free and open to unaccompanied children who meet the age requirement and are independent enough to use the Library. The Library staff cares about the safety of the children and are concerned when young children are left alone in the building. The mindset of “Libraries being a safe haven” is no longer a reality; as in all public places, “stranger danger” is a real possibility. Although, Library staff members are vigilant, they cannot prevent children from interacting or leaving the library with anyone.

All children age **8 or younger** should not be left unattended at any time. If the parent/responsible caregiver in charge of a child wishes to go to another area of the library - for whatever reason – the child must accompany the parent/ caregiver. Caregivers must be at least 13 years of age and should understand the responsibilities associated with caring for a young child. Parents and caregivers are legally responsible for their children's safety and behavior in the Library. Children misbehaving, fighting, or being disrespectful to Library staff or other children will be asked to leave.

- Parents and caregivers should not view the library as an alternative to daycare. It is not the Library's function to offer childcare. Staff members are required to speak to parents/caregivers who abuse this privilege. If the parent/caregiver continues to disregard the policy then *Police or DYFS* may be notified.
- The Library works in conjunction with local schools to discourage truancy. **Children of school age will not be allowed to enter the library alone while school is in session.** Parents/caregivers who wish to accompany their child to the library during a regularly scheduled school day may do so, but must stay with the child at all times.
- Closing times for all Library buildings are posted for everyone to see. Staff members are required to ask everyone to leave at closing time. **Parents/caregivers should be aware of library hours and make arrangements for their children after the library closes.)** Staff members are not permitted to give an unattended child a ride home. In the event a child is left outside the building, and the parent/ caregiver cannot be reached, the Jersey City Police Department will be called to escort the child home or keep the child until the parents/ caregivers can be reached.

Part 2. Homeschooling in the Library

In New Jersey, the Compulsory Education Law (NJSA 18A: 38-25) has permitted children to receive home schooling (“equivalent instruction elsewhere than at school”). The JCFPL is committed to providing equal access to materials and facilities from early childhood into grade school, high school and beyond. The Library supports families that participate in home schooling and is dedicated to serving this sector of the community by providing an environment conducive to learning.

- Parents and caregivers participating in the home schooling process are urged and expected to make themselves aware of New Jersey’s laws regarding compulsory education. It is also advised that the requirements provided under the statute be utilized at all times while in or on JCFPL property.
- Parents, guardians and caregivers are responsible for the safety, behavior and supervision of their children at all times in the JCFPL and on JCFPL property. Although a child has a legal right to be home schooled, he/she and the parents, guardians and/or caregivers must adhere to the JCFPL Policies for Children and Students concerning Unattended Children.
- Parents of home school children must understand that staff members cannot readily distinguish between a “home schooled student” and a “regular student” who is truant. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that parents accompany and stay with their child while in the Library.
- Students of age 16 and up *may* not be allowed to enter the library when classes are in session. They are encouraged to attend their classes unless they give a good reason. Staff may use their judgment on a case-by-case situation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following agencies provide additional information and resources regarding homeschooling:

1. NJ Department of Education - www.state.nj.us/njded/genfo/overview/faq_homeschool.htm
2. NJ Homeschool Association - www.geocities.com/jerseyhome/
3. NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards - www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/index.html

For all other inquiries, Library staff members are always willing to assist parents in locating materials, references and resources for their children.

Part 3. Computer use in the Library

The JCFPL provides computers for public use in all Library branches and departments. In accordance with state law, public access computers used by children at JCFPL are filtered to restrict access to Internet sites deemed inappropriate. Special accounts have been created for those computers used by children. However, even with filters, parents should be aware that the Internet is a vast and possibly dangerous place and it is their responsibility to monitor and be aware of what their children are viewing on the Internet. It is not the responsibility of Library staff to keep track of children's Internet usage.

- All children must present a valid library card in their name in order to use the computers. A child holding a card with a blocked or barred account will not be able to use a computer until the account is cleared.
- Children may use their parent's card to use a computer, but the parent must be present and only one child can sign on per card.
- Computer sessions will last for 30 minutes. Upon patron's request, time may be extended when other patrons are not waiting.
- Patrons can refer to the "Rules of Computer Usage" for a complete list of guidelines regarding computer usage.

Part 4. Borrowing materials:

- The American Library Association's guidelines on equal access state: "A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views. The 'right to use a library' includes free access to, and unrestricted use of, all the services, materials, and facilities the library has to offer. Every restriction on access to, and use of, library resources, based solely on the chronological age, educational level, literacy skills, or legal emancipation of users violates Article V of the Library Bill of Rights."
- All children must have a valid library card in order to borrow materials from the library. Parents may use their card to borrow materials for their children, but it is suggested that all children obtain their own cards. There is no minimum age for a child to obtain a JC Public Library card.
- Parents should be aware of what their children are reading and borrowing. Although materials of a mature nature may be labeled, and Library staff is available to guide children with their selections, it is not the responsibility of staff to prevent children from borrowing books, videos or other materials that may be inappropriate for them. Parents are encouraged to visit the library with their children and take an active role in the selection process. Parents and children should also be familiar with the information found in the Summary of Circulation Regulations including loan periods, fines and fees. These are posted in all library branches and can be found at www.jclibrary.org