



Uintah County Library Community Care Policy DRAFT

UCL-PAT-005

Policy Number UCL-PAT-005	Category Patrons	Status New	Review Cycle Every 2 years
Effective Date August 19, 2026		Legal Authority Utah Code Ann. § 80-2-602	Related Policies UCL-PAT-002; UCL-GEN-003

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Uintah County Library (UCL) is a welcoming public space for all community members, without exception. UCL is committed to providing equitable, non-judgmental service to every patron regardless of age, background, or circumstance. The library serves as a safe, stable environment for learning and community connection, and a place that connects individuals and families to resources. Staff are trained to respond to patron well-being with care and professionalism, and are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect under Utah law. This policy establishes the standards and responsibilities that govern how UCL staff interact with and support children, vulnerable adults, and all community members who use the library.

2. CORE COMMITMENT

UCL welcomes children of all ages, without exception. No child is turned away based on age, whether they are accompanied, or their home circumstances.

3. WHAT THE LIBRARY IS – AND IS NOT

3.1. What UCL IS for children

- 3.1.1. A safe, stable, welcoming public space.
- 3.1.2. A place to read, learn, explore, and rest.
- 3.1.3. A community of caring adults who notice and respond to children's well-being.
- 3.1.4. A mandatory reporter of abuse and neglect.
- 3.1.5. A place that connects families to community resources.

3.2. What UCL is NOT

- 3.2.1. A licensed or supervised childcare facility.
- 3.2.2. A substitute for parental care or family support.

- 3.2.3. A place where individual children can be guaranteed constant one-on-one staff supervision.
- 3.2.4. A substitute for law enforcement, social services, or emergency medical care.
- 3.2.5. Responsible for a child's behavior outside the library.

4. WELCOMING CHILDREN WHO ARRIVE ALONE

4.1. All Children

- 4.1.1. Staff will greet children warmly when they arrive.
- 4.1.2. Staff will let them know where resources are and that staff are available if they need help.
- 4.1.3. Staff will not interrogate them about their age, their parents, or the reason for being there.

4.2. Very Young Children (roughly under age 6)

- 4.2.1. Staff are more actively attentive to very young children who appear to be alone in the building.
- 4.2.2. Staff may utilize a brief, warm check-in as appropriate. This may include making eye contact, crouching to their level, saying hello, asking for their name, and making sure they are okay.
- 4.2.3. Notify the Library Director or the most senior staff member on duty of their presence.

4.3. School-age children (roughly ages 6-12)

- 4.3.1. Staff will treat them with the same respect as any patron.
- 4.3.2. Staff are available if needed, attentive without hovering, and ready to assist.

4.4. Teenagers

- 4.4.1. These patrons are considered independent library users, and staff will treat them with the same dignity and non-judgmental service as adult patrons.

5. DISTINGUISHING NORMAL USE FROM PROFESSIONAL NEED

- 5.1. Library staff will be trained to distinguish between a child who is simply using the library alone and a child who may need a professional response as defined by Utah Code Ann. § 80-2-602.

5.2. Staff may infer normal library use in situations when:

- 5.2.1.** A child arrives after school without a parent.
- 5.2.2.** A child is reading, playing, doing homework, or using the computer.
- 5.2.3.** A child cannot name a parent or caregiver who is coming or says their parent is at work.
- 5.2.4.** A child seems tired, hungry, or disheveled.
- 5.2.5.** A child has been regularly coming to the library alone.
- 5.2.6.** A child is young but calm, engaged, and comfortable.
- 5.2.7.** A child's parent cannot be reached by phone.

5.3. Staff may infer that further attention is warranted when:

- 5.3.1.** A child has visible injuries that appear unexplained.
- 5.3.2.** A child discloses abuse, neglect, or a frightening home situation.
- 5.3.3.** A child appears to be in acute medical distress.
- 5.3.4.** A child is extremely young (toddler/preschool age) and appears to have been left entirely alone with no adult present.
- 5.3.5.** A child appears to be severely malnourished, not just hungry.
- 5.3.6.** A child is clearly terrified, upset, or in an acute emotional crisis.
- 5.3.7.** A child's behavior or statements suggest immediate danger.

6. STAFF INTERACTIONS WITH UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

6.1. What staff DO

- 6.1.1.** Remain alert throughout the child's visit for any signs from Section 5.3.
- 6.1.2.** Provide assistance when a child asks for help.

6.2. What staff do NOT do

- 6.2.1.** Ask children to leave because they are young or unaccompanied.
- 6.2.2.** Require a child to produce a parent or caregiver before entering or using the library.

- 6.2.3. Call a child's parent solely because the child is young and alone.
- 6.2.4. Contact law enforcement because a child is at the library without a parent, unless warranted as per items in section 5.3.
- 6.2.5. Follow children around the building in a way that makes them feel surveilled or unwelcome.
- 6.2.6. Make a child feel that their family situation, home circumstances, or appearance is a problem that needs to be explained or justified.
- 6.2.7. Transport any child in a personal or library vehicle under any circumstances.
- 6.2.8. Make promises to children about what will happen or make assurances they cannot keep.

6.3. When two staff members must be present

- 6.3.1. When a staff member needs to have an extended one-on-one interaction with a child, particularly a very young child, a distressed child, or in situations that require a more formal conversation, a second staff member will be present or nearby.

7. STAFF RESPONSE TO PROFESSIONAL NEED

7.1. The staff response steps

When a staff member observes signs from Section 5.3, or through professional instincts determines that something is wrong beyond the ordinary circumstances, staff will:

- 7.1.1. Notify the Library Director or the most senior staff member on duty.
- 7.1.2. Listen if the child talks without interrogating or investigating.
- 7.1.3. Document observations objectively.
- 7.1.4. If a medical emergency is present, call 9-1-1 immediately.
- 7.1.5. If there is a reasonable suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected, report to the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) as described in Section 7.2.

7.2. Mandatory Reporting

UCL staff who work with the public are mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect under Utah Code Ann. § 80-2-602. This means that when a staff member, in the course of their work, has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse, neglect, or another qualifying harm, they are legally required to report it.

- 7.2.1. The threshold is reasonable suspicion. Certainty, proof, or witnessing the harm firsthand are not required before making a report.
- 7.2.2. This obligation is personal and cannot be delegated. The Library Director cannot determine on a staff member's behalf that a report is unnecessary.
- 7.2.3. If staff have reasonable suspicion, they will notify the Library Director and report to DCFS. If the Library Director is unavailable, staff will report to DCFS without delay.

8. CLOSING TIME

- 8.1. If a child is old enough and able to get home safely, staff will take no action.
- 8.2. When a child who appears too young to walk home safely is still in the library at or near closing, and no adult has come for them, and no caregiver can be reached, staff will contact the Vernal Police Department and fully document the event.

9. CUSTODY SITUATIONS

- 9.1. UCL does not enforce private custody agreements.
- 9.2. UCL will not restrict a child's library access based on custody claims unless law enforcement has specifically directed otherwise.
- 9.3. If two adults have a conflict over a child on library property, staff will contact the Library Director or their designated staff immediately and, if there is a safety concern, law enforcement.
- 9.4. Staff will not physically intervene in a custody dispute.

10. VULNERABLE ADULTS

- 10.1. The principles of this policy apply, with appropriate adaptations, to vulnerable adults (adults who, due to age, disability, cognitive impairment, or other factors, may be unable to care for themselves or respond to an emergency independently).
 - 10.1.1. Staff will treat vulnerable adults with dignity and respect and be available for assistance.
 - 10.1.2. Staff will apply the same framework from Section 4 to distinguish between normal library use and professional need.

- 10.1.3. If a vulnerable adult appears to be in distress, confused, or in a situation suggesting neglect or exploitation, staff will contact the Library Director and, if warranted, Adult Protective Services or law enforcement.

11. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- 11.1. UCL maintains an up-to-date list of community resources for families and children (food assistance, social services, mental health, youth programs, etc.) kept at the circulation desk.
- 11.2. Staff are not case managers but may offer resource information in a comfortable, non-stigmatizing way.
- 11.3. Staff who become aware of relevant programs or partnership opportunities should bring them to the Library Director's attention.

12. STAFF TRAINING AND SUPPORT

- 12.1. All patron-facing UCL staff shall receive training on this policy upon hire and whenever it is substantially amended. Training covers:
 - 12.1.1. The values and commitments in Sections 1 and 2 of this policy.
 - 12.1.2. How to welcome children who arrive alone (Section 4).
 - 12.1.3. Distinguishing between normal library use and professional need (Section 5).
 - 12.1.4. Utah mandatory reporting obligations, including what constitutes reasonable suspicion and how to make a DCFS report (Section 7.2).
 - 12.1.5. Closing-time protocol (Section 8).
 - 12.1.6. Age-appropriate communication with children of different developmental stages.
 - 12.1.7. The Library Director is responsible for documenting training completion and reviewing training materials whenever this policy is updated.

This policy supersedes all previous versions and will be reviewed every two (2) years or following any material change in Utah law governing mandatory reporting or child welfare.

Approved by the Uintah County Library Board of Directors.

DATE ADOPTED: August 19, 2026.

DATE EFFECTIVE: August 19, 2026.