

**Joseph T. Simpson Public Library
Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy
Adopted June 8, 2021**

Purpose and Intent

It is the purpose and intent of Joseph T. Simpson Public Library to provide a safe, secure environment for all members of our community.

The Joseph T. Simpson Public Library does not permit or condone actual or threatened acts of physical or emotional abuse, sexual abuse, sexual molestation or sexual misconduct to occur in the library or at any activity sponsored by the Library or related to any individual's service to the Library. The Library has a Zero Tolerance Policy regarding any acts of prohibited conduct.

Physical abuse is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a patron.

Sexual abuse, molestation or misconduct is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a patron and an adult or between two patrons. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other patron.

Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a patron that results in an observable and material impairment in the patron's growth, development, or psychological functioning.

All employees and volunteers are subject to this policy and, prior to commencement of employment or volunteer service, must review this policy and sign where indicated below, acknowledging review and receipt of this policy. Any mistreatment or abuse by an employee or volunteer will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer service and cooperation with law enforcement.

Bullying is not permitted in the Joseph T. Simpson Public Library or on library property. This includes bullying of any type, including but not limited to:

- 1) Physical: hitting, tripping, holding door closed, gestures
- 2) Verbal: name calling, belittling, humiliating
- 3) Non-verbal communication: written or graphic perceived as hurtful, etc.
- 4) Social: exclusion, singling out for ridicule, coercion/peer pressure
- 5) Cyberbullying through use of Internet or electronic devices of any kind
- 6) Behavior that is reasonably perceived as being hurtful, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear or emotional distress.

These guidelines shall apply to all buildings, interior and exterior, and all grounds and to all persons entering in or on the premises. Any patron not abiding by these guidelines may be required to leave the library premises and/or have their library privileges revoked. Library employees may contact local police if deemed advisable. Any patron whose privileges have been revoked may appeal in writing to the Joseph T. Simpson Public Library Board of Trustees within 30 days of service denial.

Physical Contact

Our organization's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting patrons, employees and volunteers. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with patrons and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers towards patrons in the organization's programs will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The organization's guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are outlined in the attached Guidelines for Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention.

Verbal Interactions

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to patrons in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Employees and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with patrons. Employees and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with patrons.

Our organization's guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are outlined in the attached Guidelines for Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention.

One-on-One Interactions

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a patron. Our organization aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the organization administration.

In those situations where one-on-one interactions are approved, employees and volunteers should observe the following additional guidelines to manage the risk of abuse or false allegations of abuse:

- When meeting one-on-one with a patron, always do so in a public place where you are in full view of others.
- Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high-fives, and handshakes.
- If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by.

- Inform other employees and volunteers that you are alone with a patron and ask them to randomly drop in.
- Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

Social Media Communication

Electronic communication and social media platforms provide many benefits but they also present the potential for inappropriate behavior, increased access to vulnerable patrons, and privacy violations. Employees, volunteers, and patrons participating in this organization's programs, events, and activities shall adhere to the following:

- 1) Be a positive role model by exhibiting professionalism in all interactions; portray an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy, tact, and maturity.
- 2) Do not engage in behavior or comments that are, or could be construed by any observer to be, harsh, abusive, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.
- 3) Do not engage in personal attacks, sexually oriented conversations, or discussions about sexual activity.
- 4) Only program-related messaging may be communicated electronically between employees and volunteers of the organization and patrons, parents, and guardians. Such communication should generally occur during standard business hours.
- 5) Employees and volunteers are prohibited from sending private messages to patrons who are minors and/or replying to private messages from a patron who is a minor. If a patron attempts to privately communicate with an employee or volunteer electronically, their supervisor must be notified immediately.
- 6) Never reveal sensitive or confidential information, including identifiable details or photos of a patron without written consent from their parent or legal guardian.
- 7) Employees and volunteers may not post or share inappropriate photos or comment on photos of patrons.
- 8) Do not make pornography in any form available to patrons participating in the organization's programs, events, and activities or assist patrons in any way in gaining access to pornography.
- 9) Employees and volunteers may not create web pages on behalf of the organization unless they have prior approval to do so and may not misrepresent their work with the organization or the organization itself.
- 10) Employees and volunteers engaging in social media and online communication become a public figure associated with the organization and are responsible to help protect the organization and its patrons. Always act in a professional and constructive manner and use sound judgement before posting or sharing content.
- 11) Rather than personally defend the organization's reputation, employees and volunteers should notify their supervisor or an administrator of a negative comment or online representation or if any member of the media contacts them about any matter related to the organization.
- 12) Employees and volunteers must adhere to uniform standards of electronic communication and social media use as outlined in any applicable organizational

policies and procedures.

- 13) These social media communication procedures shall be available on the organization's website for public view.
- 14) Patrons and Parents/guardians may request in writing that a patron not be contacted through any form of electronic communication or social media by an employee or volunteer of the organization.

Gift Giving

Molesters routinely groom patrons by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the patron. They might instruct the patron to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the patron to keep secrets from parents/guardians. For this reason, employees and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of patrons, not to individual patrons.

Administration must be made aware of and approve in advance of gifts, prizes, or rewards provided through program participation.

Background Checks

Items a), b), and c) are required at time of employment for employees. Items a) and b) are required for volunteers. Item c) is also required for volunteers if they have not lived in Pennsylvania consecutively for the past ten years.

- a) A report of criminal history record information from the Pennsylvania State Police or a statement from the Pennsylvania State Police that the State Police central repository contains no such information relating to that person. The criminal history record information shall be limited to that which is disseminated pursuant to 18 Pa.C.S. § 9121(b)(2).
- b) A certification from the Department of Human Services as to whether the applicant is named in the statewide database as the alleged perpetrator in a pending child abuse investigation or as the perpetrator of a founded report or an indicated report.
- c) A Federal (FBI) criminal history record information check. The applicant shall submit a full set of fingerprints in a manner prescribed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services or Department of Education. The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and the Department of Education serves as an intermediary to obtain the FBI criminal history record information check.

Background checks will be repeated after a period of three years.

Protection Policy

Reasonable efforts will be made to have two adults present, or nearby, when interacting with children. Reasonable effort will be made to place children in rooms with windows or open doors when two adults cannot be present.

Training Requirements

All employees are required to complete Mandated Reporter Training every five years and provide a certificate of completion to their supervisor. The Library's Sexual Abuse and Molestation Prevention Policy is reviewed annually with all staff and acknowledgement forms signed indicating the policy was received and read.

Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every employee and volunteer actively participates in the protection of patrons. In the event that employees or volunteers observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other employees or volunteers, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations.

Remember, at our organization, the policies apply to everyone.

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with patrons will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

Employee and Volunteer Response

If employees or volunteers observe or become aware of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another employee or volunteer, the employee or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

- Interrupt the behavior.
- Report the behavior to a supervisor, director, or other authority.
- If you are not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.
- If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management.
- Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.

Supervisor and Administrator Response

In the event that a supervisor or an administrator witnesses or receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from an employee or volunteer, the supervisor is instructed to do the following:

- Report to the next level of administration and determine the appropriate administrator to respond to the concern.
- Determine the appropriate response based on the report.
- Speak with the employees or volunteer who has been reported.
- Review the file of the employees or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.
- Document the report on the appropriate form.
- If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the state authorities and file a report.

- If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.
- Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously.

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- Increase monitoring or supervision of the employees, volunteer, or program.
- If policy violations with patrons are confirmed, the employees or volunteer must be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution.
- Review the need for increased supervision.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
- Review the need for additional training.
- If more information is needed, interview and/or survey other employees and volunteers or patrons.

Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult

Employee and Volunteer Response

As required by mandated reporting laws, employees and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a patron—whether on or off organization property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others—to state authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice.

In addition to reporting to state authorities, employees and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of patrons perpetrated by employees or volunteers directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

- Executive Director
- Assistant Director
- Youth Services Coordinator
- Reference Librarian

Additional Guidelines for Employees/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse

- If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell to you.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.

- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it IS your job to report the incident to your supervisor in a timely manner.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority.

Supervisors and Administrators Response to Abuse

In addition to the above response procedures, supervisors and administrators should ensure the following:

- First, determine if the patron is still in danger and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.
- Gather as much information about the allegation as you can. For example, who made the report, who was allegedly abused, who was the alleged abuser, what was the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when did the alleged abuse occur, who witnessed the alleged abuse, etc.
- Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.
- Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person with whom you speak at the reporting agency.
- If the alleged abuse involves a employees member or volunteer, notify your crisis management team and follow your crisis management plan.
- Suspend the accused employee(s) or volunteer(s) until the investigation is completed.

Responding to Patron-to-Patron Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors

Most serious incidents of patron -to- patron abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. Our organization recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and are prohibited:

- Hazing
- Bullying
- Derogatory name-calling
- Games of Truth or Dare
- Singling out one child for different treatment
- Ridicule or humiliation

In order to respond to and track incidents within the organization, an incident report must be completed for all sexual activity between patrons and sexualized behaviors of patrons.

Employees and Volunteer Response:

Patron -to- Patron sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

If employees witness patron -to- patron sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

- If you observe sexual activity between patrons, you should immediately separate them.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the patrons.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded.
- Follow your supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents/guardians of the patron involved.
- In some cases, if the problem is recurring discipline may be required including not allowing one or both patrons to return to the program.

Supervisors and Administrators Response:

In the event that a supervisor or administrator receives a report of a patron's sexualized behavior or patron -to- patron sexual activity, the supervisor should do the following:

- Meet with the employees who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the patrons involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision. Review the steps taken by the employees on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed. Meet with parents/guardians of the patrons involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the proper authorities.
- Develop a written correction action or follow-up plan in response to the incident.

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- Review the need for additional supervision
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- Review the need for additional training
- Alert others in the organization

Reporting Procedure

If staff believes that a sexual assault has just occurred, they should call the police immediately.

All staff members who learn of sexual abuse being committed on a minor must immediately report it to Childline and to the Executive Director.

The Executive Director should notify the Executive Committee of allegations involving an employee or volunteer. The Executive Director should notify the insurance carrier and seek advice in immediate handling of the matter. Legal advice and counsel regarding the handling of the matter should be obtained immediately.

The Executive Director should communicate to appropriate staff the existence of the incident, steps being taken in response, and who should speak to the press, general public, and other agencies, etc. The official spokesperson for the Library in any of these matters will be the Executive Director.

Any employee or volunteer who is suspected of, or reported as, engaging in sexual activity, misconduct or relationships with a service recipient will be immediately suspended, pending the outcome of an investigation into the allegations of abuse.

Investigation and Follow-up

All staff members, whether paid or volunteer, witnessing an incident should complete incident forms at once, for immediate review by the Executive Director. Time is of the essence; urgency and immediacy are implicit.

The form should include

- Name and title of reporter
- Name and address of individuals involved
- Description of incident/activity/misconduct
- How misconduct was discovered
- Where and when misconduct took place
- Names of witnesses
- Names of collaborating persons
- Description of physical injury and medical response

To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with the Library's legal obligation to report suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities, the Library will endeavor to keep the identities of any alleged victim(s) and any alleged violator(s) confidential. The Library will not deny, minimize, or blame any individual involved in allegations.

All staff must document all efforts in the handling of any incident.

There are a number of 'red flags' that suggest someone is being sexually abused. They take the form of physical or behavioral evidence. Physical evidence of sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexually transmitted diseases;
- Difficulty walking or ambulating normally;
- Stained, bloody or torn undergarments;
- Genital pain or itching; and
- Physical injuries involving the external genitalia.

Behavioral signals suggestive of sexual abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Fear or reluctance about being left in the care of a particular person;
- Recoiling from being touched;
- Bundling oneself in excessive clothing;
- Discomfort or apprehension when sex is referred to or discussed; and
- Nightmares or fear of night and/or darkness.

All allegations will be taken seriously and Library staff will take appropriate action in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, insurance policy requirements, and based upon advice of legal counsel.

Results of Investigation

Results of investigation must:

Prove or disprove allegation of misconduct.

Lead to immediate termination, immediate filing of charges, and assistance in prosecution when allegations are substantiated.

Lead to establishment and implementation of prevention procedures to eliminate a reoccurrence of the event.

Retaliation Prohibited

We prohibit any retaliation against anyone, including any employee, volunteer, board member, or other individual, who in good faith reports sexual abuse, alleges that it is being committed or participates in the investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse are prohibited. Anyone who improperly retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of sexual abuse, or intentionally provides false information to that effect, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

This policy must be read by every employee and volunteer. An acknowledgement form signed by the employee or volunteer will be kept on file.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ABUSE AND MOLESTATION POLICY

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received and read the Joseph T. Simpson Public Library’s policy on the prevention of sexual abuse and molestation and I have received a copy of the prevention guidelines. I understand that I am bound to follow the policy and understand the consequences in the event that I fail to do so.

Date

Signature

Printed Name of Employee/Volunteer
