



Children Safety Policy and Procedure

Approved by the Board of Trustees, August 18, 2020

The Joint Free Public Library of Morristown & Morris Township staff hopes that children using our Library will find it a warm and inviting place to be. The happiness and safety of young children left alone in the Library is a serious concern. These procedures are established in order to provide staff with information concerning the safety of children while on the premises.

Background Checks

All new employees of the Library are subject to a background check that includes multi-state criminal records, sex offender registry, and identity/residence verification. All records, forms and reports will be maintained in the employee's confidential personnel file.

Applicants must consent to a background check to be considered for their position. Any applicant who has already been hired or promoted and is subsequently found to have provided false or misleading information related to the background check may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All offers of employment and continued employment, whether paid or volunteer, are contingent upon a satisfactory background check. Employment shall not be effective until the applicant's background check has been satisfactorily completed.

In addition, current employees must consent to a criminal record background check every five years. Current employees who refuse to consent to a criminal record background check as required by this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

All new volunteers must also consent to a background check that is satisfactory to the Library before beginning their volunteer work. Any volunteer who is subsequently found to have provided false or misleading information related to the background check may be subject to disqualification. Any returning volunteer must consent to a criminal record background check every five years to continue working for the Library. Any returning volunteer who refuses to consent to a criminal background check will be disqualified from continuing volunteer work.

Protection Policy

At all times, two adult staff¹ must be present, or nearby, with children or individuals with special needs in the Children's Room and Teen area. Reasonable efforts will be made to place children and individuals with special needs for programming in the open areas of the Children's Room and/or rooms with windows or open doors. For example, one staff person may conduct a story time in the Children's area or a program in the Library Gallery in plain sight of staff at the Children's Room desk. No volunteers should be alone with children for a program or in the Children's Room. To the extent possible, volunteers under the age of eighteen should be restricted

¹ "Staff" refers to any Library employee or other Library representative.

from direct involvement with children or individuals with special needs. Volunteers under the age of eighteen work in the Library's Children's Room but are asked to engage in tasks that do not require contact with children: sort and shelve returned collection items, organize untidy or wrongly shelved items, prepare crafts for programming, maintain tidiness in the Children's Room and Teen Space and other duties that may arise.

When needed, staff are also scheduled at the nearby Reader's Advisors desk to allow for two adults in the Children's Department area.

Staff and volunteers should always be on the lookout for children that may wander off or are alone. The Library has an Unattended Children Policy (see appendix or Library website under "our policies") to aid in these efforts. If a child appears to be missing, (1) the parent should be located (if in the building), (2) the police should be called, and (3) the building should go into "lock down" mode:

1. All exits should be blocked by staff to prevent exit by any patrons;
2. Children's Room staff will search the Children's Room and Library for the missing child and/or follow directions of the police upon arrival; and
3. Once the child has been found, or upon instructions by the police, staff may allow people to leave the building.

Reporting Procedure

If a staff member or volunteer believes that there has been any suspicious behavior regarding the safety of a child, they should call the police immediately.

All staff members and volunteers who learn of any abuse being committed must first call the police and then immediately report it to the Library Director. If the victim is an adult, the abuse will be reported to the Director to the Morris County Adult Protective Services [973-326-7282; after hours 973-285-2900]. If a child is the victim, the Director will report it to the parent or guardian and the State Department of Children & Family Services [1-877 NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873)].

The Director shall notify the Board of Trustees of the allegations. In consultation with the Board of Trustees, the Director may notify the Library's 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 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 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. An employee, volunteer or intern working in the Library who has been named as a suspect in a notification to child welfare and/or law enforcement authorities regarding a missing, abused or neglected child situation shall be entitled to due process rights.

Investigation and Follow-up

All staff members after witnessing an incident should complete the Library's Incident Form for immediate review by the Library Director. Time is of the essence; urgency and immediacy are imperative.

Make sure the following is included on the completed form:

- Name and title of reporter
- Name and addresses 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 in the fullest extent of the law.

All staff must document all efforts in the handling of any incident. There are a number of 'red flags' that suggest someone may be the victim of abuse. They take the form of physical or behavioral evidence. Signs of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Physical injuries;
- 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 State of New Jersey, insurance policy requirements, and based upon advice of legal counsel.

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.

Education and Training

Regular staff and volunteer training will occur regarding child protection. The training will outline these procedures to prevent abuse or molestation, procedures to ensure a child is not alone with an employee or volunteer, the handling of complaints, necessary disciplinary action, and applicable federal, state and local requirements. All attendees will be required to sign off that they attended and completed the training.

Public Communication

In order to have full communication of these procedures with parents, guardians and care givers, these policies and procedures will be posted in the Children's Room and on the Library website.

Unattended Children and Patrons with Special Needs Policy

The Joint Free Public Library of Morristown & Morris Township staff hopes that children and patrons with special needs who require the assistance of a caregiver (regardless of age) using our Library will find it a warm and inviting place to be. The happiness and safety of young children and some patrons with special needs left alone in the library is a serious concern. Left on their own these patrons often become frightened or anxious. If left unattended for any length of time when no library program is being offered, they may become bored, restless and disruptive. Therefore, the following policy has been established.

Library staff members cannot assume responsibility for the care, safety or well-being of children or patrons with special needs who require the assistance of a caregiver. Therefore parents or caregivers may not leave children under age eight or patrons with special needs who require the assistance of a caregiver unattended in any part of the Library at any time, and they are responsible for the behavior of their charges while in the Library.

Children may use a Library phone at any time to call home for a ride.

Parents and caregivers are required to be at the Library no later than five minutes before closing to pick up their charges. If no caregiver is present, the Library staff will attempt to reach the parents or guardian. At closing the Morristown Police Department will be called.

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