

DOWNINGTOWN LIBRARY COMPANY ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

Downingtown Library Company (hereafter referred to as the Library) does not permit or allow abuse of any kind to occur at the Library or during any activity the Library is related to or that it sponsors. To make this zero-tolerance policy clear to all employees and volunteers, the Library has delineated in this Abuse Prevention Policy procedures that employees and volunteers must follow. Unless otherwise specified, all policies herein pertain to the time an employee or volunteer is directly working on behalf of the Library. Policies outlined in this Abuse Prevention Policy are as follows:

- I. Code of Conduct during Interactions with Patrons**
- II. Policies for Physical Contact, Verbal Interactions, One-to-One Interactions, Off-Site Contact, and Electronic Communication with Patrons; Gift Giving to Patrons**
- III. Policy for Responding to and Reporting Observed Inappropriate Behavior**
- IV. Retaliation Prohibition**
- V. Reported, Arrested, or Convicted Employee and Volunteer Notification Obligations**
- VI. Acknowledgment of Abuse Prevention Policy**

For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

An employee is defined as any individual employed by the Library on a full- or part-time basis. It does not include temporary or independently contracted employees.

A volunteer is defined as any individual over the age of 14 who serves in any capacity on behalf of the Library on a reoccurring and consistent basis without monetary remuneration, including members of the Board of Trustees, Friends of the Library, and members of the volunteer pool.

A patron is defined as any individual of any age who uses Library services and/or Library programs.

I. Code of Conduct during Interactions with Patrons

The following policies are intended to assist employees and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with patrons. For clarification of any guideline, or to inquire about behaviors not addressed here, contact your supervisor or the Library Director

The Library provides our patrons with the highest quality services, within our means. We are committed to creating an environment for patrons that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior or allegations of abuse

with patrons will be taken seriously. The Library will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

The following Code of Conduct during Interactions with Patrons outlines specific expectations of employees and volunteers as they strive to accomplish the Library's mission together:

- Patrons will be treated with respect at all times.
- Patrons will be treated fairly, regardless of age, gender, gender identification, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation.
- Employees and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined below in II A.
- Employees and volunteers will avoid demonstrations of affection with patrons that cannot be observed by others.
- Employees and volunteers will adhere to standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by our Library.
- Employees and volunteers will not inappropriately stare at, or comment on, patrons' bodies. Adult employees and adult volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with patrons under the age of 18.
- While working, employees and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Employees and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with patrons.
- Employees and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with a patron in a private setting. Rooms with glass-paneled doors are not considered a private setting.
- Individuals reserving Library rooms shall abide by Library policies. Relevant policies shall be displayed in each of the rooms.
- Employees and volunteers will not abuse patrons in any way including (but not limited to) the following:

Physical abuse: Examples include, but are not limited to, hitting, shaking, slapping, spanking, unnecessarily restraining or confining an individual, or in any way endangering an individual.

Verbal abuse: Examples include, but are not limited to, shouting at, degrading or threatening an individual, or cursing at someone.

Sexual abuse: Examples include, but are not limited to, inappropriately touching another, exposing oneself, conversations meant to cause sexual arousal or response, as well as any type of sexual contact or behavior.

Mental abuse: Examples include, but are not limited to, shaming, humiliation, or cruelty towards another, or actions causing a child to be fearful, agitated, depressed, or anxious in a severe way.

This Abuse Prevention Policy applies to all employees, volunteers, and patrons. While patrons are at the Library, the Library will not tolerate their mistreatment or abuse, whether by employees, volunteers, or by other patrons.

Also, at the Library or during a Library event, our organization will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps to address such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

Physical bullying: When one person engages in physical force against another person such as by hitting, kicking, pinching, punching, pushing, or restraining another.

Verbal bullying: When someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another person hurtful names.

Nonverbal or relational bullying: When one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.

Pursuant to **PA 23 PCS Section 6311 through 6319**, all employees and volunteers must follow Pennsylvania mandatory reporting requirements. Employees and volunteers who are mandatory reporters according to the PA Child Protective Services Law shall be trained to be aware of and understand their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. These employees and volunteers will:

- Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
- Know and follow Library policies and procedures that protect patrons from abuse.
- Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state-mandated reporter laws.
- Follow up to ensure that appropriate action has been taken.

To be eligible for employment or to volunteer, an individual shall not have engaged in or be convicted of abuse, indecency, or injury to patrons or children. As well, employees and volunteers shall not have engaged in any activity that would be grounds for denying employment or participation in a program, activity, or service according to the Child Protective Services Law.

II. Policies for Physical Contact, Verbal Interactions, One-to-One Interactions, Off-Site Contact, Electronic Communication with Patrons; Gift Giving to Patrons

A. Physical Contact with Patrons

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

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
• Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or "temple" hugs • Gentle pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • Simultaneous high-fives and hand/palm slapping to indicate approval, praise, or success • Verbal praise • Gentle pats on the head when culturally appropriate • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young in escorting situations)	• Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in an isolated area • Lap sitting • Wrestling • Piggyback rides • Tickling • Any type of massage given by or to a patron without written permission • Any unwanted affection • Inappropriate compliments relating to physique or body development

B. Policy for Verbal Interaction

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to patrons in a way that is coercive, demeaning, derogatory, humiliating, intimidating, shaming, or threatening. Employees and volunteers must not initiate conversations meant to cause sexual arousal or response with patrons. The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions:

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
• Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise	• Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters, or in any way involving a patron in the personal problems or issues of employees or volunteers • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Language that threatens or humiliates a patron • Derogatory remarks about a patron or their family

C. One-on-One Interactions

Most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with another adult or a child. The Library aims to eliminate or reduce these situations and prohibits private one-on-one interactions unless approved in advance by the Library and subject to the Library Room Use Policy.

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

Additional Guidelines for One-on-One Interactions with Patrons

- 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 gentle 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 another individual or child 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.

D. Off-Site Contact

Many cases of organizational abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. This contact outside of regularly scheduled activities may put employees, volunteers, and our Library at increased risk.

The Library strongly recommends that employees and volunteers do not have outside contact with children known solely through the organization. If offsite contact occurs while working on behalf of the Library (such as during a field trip), our organization has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

Appropriate Outside Contact	Inappropriate Outside Contact
• Taking groups of patrons on an outing • Attending sporting activities with groups of patrons • Attending functions at a child's home, with parents/guardians present	• Taking a child on an outing without a parent's/guardian's written permission • Visiting a child known solely through the Library in the child's home, without a parent/guardian present • Entertaining a child known solely through the Library in the home of an employee or volunteer • A lone child spending the night with an employee or volunteer

In addition, the Library will ensure that the following steps are followed:

1. The Director or a supervisor shall identify for employees and volunteers which types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate.
2. Employees and volunteers shall ensure that they have a parent's/guardian's signed permission and release of liability statement for children participating in Library field trips.

E. Electronic Communication

All employees and volunteers, while working on behalf of the Library, shall ensure that their communication with and about patrons is transparent and respectful.

The following are examples of appropriate and inappropriate electronic communication with and about patrons:

Appropriate Electronic Communication with/about Patrons	Inappropriate Electronic Communication with/about Patrons
• Communicating about Library services and activities through Library group pages on Facebook or other Library-approved public forums • Keeping social media profiles “Private” to reduce what patrons can access • Posting appropriate (i.e., respectful, dignified, authentic) quotes from and pictures of Library activity participants on social media sites with their permission or with children’s parental or guardian permission, when applicable • Using patron’s identifying information (first and last names) only with permission	• Coercive, demeaning, derogatory, humiliating, intimidating, shaming, threatening, comments or images • Sexually oriented conversations • Posting Library patrons’ names, quotes, and pictures on social media without permission

In addition, employees and volunteers shall provide information about this policy to children’s parents/guardians so that they know what is appropriate and inappropriate from Library employees and volunteers.

Cell Phone or other Electronic Device Use

While working for the Library, with the exception of using cellphones to take photographs or recordings at program events, employees and volunteers are discouraged from using electronic communications devices except during approved breaks and emergency situations.

Employees’ and volunteers’ text messaging patrons below the age of 18 while assigned to work with them is strictly prohibited.

Use of personal electronic communication devices to contact patrons (via voice, text, or pictures/video) for inappropriate reasons shall be grounds for discipline up to and including termination of employment or expulsion from our Library.

F. Gift Giving

Child predators routinely groom an intended victim by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to a child. They might instruct the child to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the child to keep secrets from parents/guardians. To manage the risk of abuse or molestation by predators or false allegations of abuse, employees and volunteers shall give gifts only to groups of patrons and only under the following circumstance:

The Director must be made aware of and approve the gift, prior to it being given.

III. Responding to and Reporting Observed Inappropriate Behavior

A. Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Because the Library is committed to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every employee and volunteer actively participate in the protection of patrons. If employees or volunteers observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of another employee or volunteer, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations.

Intentionally false or malicious accusations of abuse or molestation are prohibited.

The following are examples of reportable suspicious or inappropriate behaviors by employees and volunteers interacting with patrons:

Examples of Reportable Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors by Employees and Volunteers Interacting with Patrons
• Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above • Seeking private time or one-on-one time with a child • Buying gifts for individual children • Making suggestive comments to a child

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

1. Employee and Volunteer Response

If an employee or volunteer witnesses suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations by another employee, volunteer, or patron, the employee or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

Guidelines for Employees' and Volunteers' Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and Policy Violations

- Interrupt the behavior, if safe to do so. [If interrupting the behavior is not possible or safe, report the behavior immediately to a supervisor, the Library Director, or other authority.]
- After interrupting the behavior, report the behavior to a supervisor, the Library 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 an Officer of the Board of Trustees.
- Document the report, but do not conduct an investigation.
- Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

2. Director/Administrator and/or Trustee Response

When a Director/Administrator or Trustee receives a report of suspicious inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from an employee, volunteer, or patron, that individual shall do the following:

Guidelines for Directors'/Administrators' and Trustees' Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and Policy Violations

- Determine the appropriate individual to respond to the concern.
- Determine the appropriate response based on the report.
- Speak with the employee or volunteer who has been reported.
- Review the file of the employee or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were previously 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.
- Advise the person who reported the behavior that their reporting is being taken seriously.

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

- Increased monitoring or supervision of the employee, volunteer, or patron.
- If policy violations are confirmed, the employee, volunteer, or patron shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution. Disciplinary action will follow the Employee Handbook/ Personnel Policy, and the Volunteer Policy. Discipline of patrons shall be per the Behavior Policy.
- If more information is needed, conduct interviews with and/or surveys of other employees, volunteers, or patrons.

3. Organizational Response

Guidelines for Organizational Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors by Employees or Volunteers Interacting with Patrons

- Review the need for increased supervision. Take appropriate action.
- Review the need for revised policies or procedures. Take appropriate action.
- Review the need for additional training. Take appropriate action.

B. Responding to Suspected Abuse

PA law related to responsibilities for reporting suspected child abuse is found at: PA 23 PCS Section 6311 through 6319.

1. Employee and Volunteer Response to Abuse

As required by mandated reporting laws, employees and volunteers must report to state authorities any suspected abuse, whether on or off Library property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others. 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.

If the victim is an adult, the abuse should be immediately reported by the person witnessing the abuse to the state **Adult Protective Services Hotline at 1-800-490-8505**.

Employees and volunteers who come into contact with children (i.e., mandated reporters) are required to report immediately when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child under the care, supervision, guidance, or training of their agency, institution, or organization is an abused child. To report suspected child abuse, call **Childline at 1-800-932-0313**, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, or submit an initial report of abuse electronically using the Child Welfare Information Solution portal available on the **PA-pfa.org** website: <https://www.pfad.pa.gov/>

After calling Childline to report suspected child abuse, mandated reporters must follow up with an electronic or a written report on the **CY-47 form**, available on the <https://www.pfad.pa.gov/> website, within 48 hours of making the oral report. All mandated reporters must submit their name and contact information when making their report.

Any person may make an oral or written report of suspected child abuse, which may be submitted electronically, or cause a report of suspected child abuse to be made to the department, county agency, or law enforcement if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.

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 the leadership of the Library 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:

- Immediate supervisor
- Director/Administrator
- Trustees

Additional guidelines for employee and volunteer response to incidents or allegations of abuse follow:

**Additional Guidelines for Employee and Volunteer
Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse**

- Interrupt the behavior, if safe to do so. [If interrupting the behavior is not possible or safe, report the behavior immediately to a supervisor, the Library Director, or other authority.]
- After interrupting the behavior, report the behavior to a supervisor, the Library Director, or other authority.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that they were correct to make the report.
- 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. For example, document the name(s) of the person(s) allegedly abused, the name(s) of the alleged abuser(s), the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when the alleged abuse occurred. Do not state your opinions about the alleged abuser or abuse.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it IS your job to report the incident to your immediate supervisor, the Library Director, or a Trustee 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.

2. Directors/Administrators and/or Trustees Response to Abuse

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

Additional Guidelines for Directors/Administrators and/or Trustees Response to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse

- First, determine if the patron or child is still in danger and, if it can be done safely, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm. Immediately report such behavior to the police.
- Gather as much information about the allegation as you can. For example, document the name of the person(s) who made the report, the name(s) of the person(s) allegedly abused, the name(s) of the alleged abuser(s), the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when the alleged abuse occurred.
- Accurately report everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts. Do not state your opinions about the alleged abuser or abuse.
- Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure that you obtain 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 Library employee or volunteer, notify the Library Director and follow the Crisis Management Plan.

IV. Retaliation Prohibition Policy

The Library prohibits retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, Trustee or any other individual, who in good faith reports abuse or molestation, alleges that it is being committed, or participates in the investigation.

Anyone who retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of abuse or molestation, or intentionally provides false information to that effect, will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

V. Reported, Arrested, or Convicted Employee and Volunteer Notification Obligations

If an employee or volunteer is arrested for or convicted of an offense that is listed in this Library's Abuse Prevention Policy or named as a perpetrator in a Founded or Indicated Report*, they must provide written notification to the Library's office no later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction, or notification that they have been listed as a perpetrator in the statewide database.

*A Founded or Indicated Report is determination based on evidence that there is reasonable cause to believe that conduct in violation of child abuse statutes or rules has occurred and such conduct is attributable to the person alleged to have engaged in that conduct.

If the Library has a reasonable belief that an employee or volunteer has been arrested or convicted of an offense that is listed in this Library's Abuse Prevention Policy or was named as a perpetrator in a Founded or Indicated Report, the Library will require an update of clearances before considering the individual's further involvement with the Library.

Willful failure to disclose this information is a misdemeanor in the third degree.

Acknowledgment of Abuse Prevention Policy

I, _____, acknowledge by my signature below that I have received and read the preceding Abuse Prevention Policy. I understand that I am bound to follow the policy and understand the consequences in the event that I fail to do so.

Signature of Employee or Volunteer

Date

Employee/Volunteer shall sign and date at each annual review.

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Employee/Volunteer

Date

Director Initials

Included in Employee Handbook

Adopted, May 18, 2022