



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

I. PURPOSE

- a) To establish a policy in order to protect our young people (ages 17 and under) from undue risk of verbal, physical, or sexual abuse or misconduct.
- b) To protect staff and volunteers who work with children and youth from false accusations.

This policy must be followed to allow our work with young people to be the best that is possible.

II. POLICY

General Requirements for Staff and Volunteers

All employed adults, youth and volunteers who work with minors must be evaluated and approved before beginning work. The evaluation and approval is as follows:

- Completion of confidential form listing any criminal activity, and granting Permission for a background check of criminal and employment records.
- Formal or informal interview with the Library Manager, Youth Services Librarian, or any other designated staff member.
- Name and contact information of at least one reference, unrelated to the applicant, who has observed the applicant's interaction with the relevant age group.

The exact extent of background checks is at the discretion of the Youth Services Librarian and/or Library Manager, but all employees and volunteers will be checked against the state sex offender registration list (<http://www.nmsexoffender.dps.state.nm.us>) on a twice yearly basis.

Adults of youth who have been convicted of or are currently under suspicion of either sexual or physical abuse of a minor, or who have a history of inappropriate conduct involving a minor, are not allowed to interact with minors in any library-sponsored event.

General Rules

- The “two person rule” will apply in any situations involving minors, whether volunteers or patrons. No adult is to be alone in a room with a minor, unless both parties are clearly visible at all times via a window, open door, etc.
- Discretion is necessary in regard to physical contact with young people. We want our patrons to feel comfortable with staff and volunteers, and feelings of affection, particularly from younger children, are to be expected. However, it is important to remember that a friendly hug or touch may be perceived otherwise. When not overdone, hugs, handshakes, high fives, and pats on the arm or shoulder are not considered actionable. Staff and volunteers should be aware of cultural differences regarding physical contact.
- Staff and volunteers should never attempt to physically remove a minor from the library building or property. If a minor is behaving in an improper manner and refuses to leave on his or her own, staff should attempt to contact a parent or guardian. If this is unsuccessful, law enforcement officials should be contacted, and the matter turned over to them.
- The library will not permit or sanction corporal punishment of any kind by its staff or volunteers. This includes spanking, swatting, slapping, grabbing, or shaking. Workers are not to yell or scream, or threaten a child verbally or through gestures.
- Reporting procedures are to be in accordance with NM law. Anyone observing suspected harm to a minor is required to report it immediately to the nearest librarian, supervisor or the Library Manager. See New Mexico Statutes Section 32A-4-3, “Duty to report child abuse and child neglect; responsibility to investigate child abuse or neglect; penalty.” (1997), and New Mexico Statutes Section 30-6-4, “Obstruction or reporting or investigation of child abuse or neglect.” (1989)