

ADAMS COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM
140 Baltimore Street
Gettysburg, PA 17325

SAFE KIDS POLICY

Applies to all staff and volunteers

Basic Policy

Children are a precious gift, and the Adams County Library System is committed to keeping them safe. The Adams County Library System *Safe Kids Policy* is a key tool in fulfilling this important responsibility.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Library Employees and Volunteers are designated as Mandated Reporters if they have significant contact with children. Given the intimate nature of library interactions and the practical inability for the library to delineate staff members who have significant contact with children versus insignificant contact with children, all staff members and volunteers of the Adams County Library System are considered to be Mandated Reporters.

Therefore, all staff members and volunteers must receive Clearances from appropriate agencies within the timeframe outlined here below for work in the Adams County Library System.

Screening Policy

Screening applies to all paid staff and volunteers, and includes the following timeline:

- Application
- Personal interview
- Reference check
- Job offer made and accepted
- Completion of a Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance prior to start date.
- Completion of Pennsylvania Criminal Background Check prior to start date.
- Completion of a Federal Criminal History Record Information prior to start date. (Must be completed by volunteers only if they have not been a resident of Pennsylvania for 10 years prior to completing a Volunteer Application.)
- Completion of the Mandated Reporter Training. Must be completed prior to start date.
- Clearances and Mandated Reporter Training must be updated every five years. Failure to do so will result in the individual being placed on Administrative Leave until clearances and training have been completed.
- Staff Clearance costs will be reimbursed by the Library to the employee upon the positive return of their clearances.
- Volunteers will be offered an Adams County Expense Reimbursement Request Form and will be reimbursed upon request and upon receipt of a positive return of their clearances. Financial inability to pay for clearances should not be a deterrent to volunteering for the Adams County Library.

Standards for clearances

- Employee or volunteer is convicted of child sexual or physical abuse: These individuals shall not work in a volunteer or paid capacity and their employment or volunteer status will be terminated.
- Employee or volunteer is charged with child abuse: The employee or volunteer will be placed on administrative leave until the matter is clearly resolved.
- Disqualifying convictions: As listed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (23 Pa.C.S. Chapter 63)

Response to child abuse, actual or suspected

- Secure child's safety. Any questionable behavior or relationships involving a child shall be confronted and stopped immediately. The first priority is to ensure the safety of the child / children involved.
- Contact the Pennsylvania Childline. In the event of actual or suspected child abuse, the staff member or volunteer shall report the abuse to Childline. The staff member should follow the procedures outlined in the State of Pennsylvania Mandated Reporter Training.
- Notify the Executive Director. The person who discerns it shall also report the suspected abuse to the Executive Director and Assistant Director and the individual's supervisor **after** contacting Childline.
- When the suspected child abuse involves an employee or volunteer. Upon notification that an investigation involves suspected child abuse perpetrated by a staff member or volunteer, the Adams County Library System administration must immediately place the staff member or volunteer on Administrative Leave.

Policy Administration

- Overall responsibility. The Executive Director and Board of Trustees bear the overall responsibility for a vigorous child abuse prevention policy and related implementation program. Accordingly, the Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that (1) the Safe Kids program is implemented and sustained, (2) the policy and program are effective, (3) the program is adequately funded, staffed, and housed/equipped/supplied, and (4) staff and volunteers are adequately informed, screened, trained, etc.
- Responsibility for policy implementation. The Executive Director is responsible for implementation of the *Safe Kids Policy*, evaluating and ensuring its effectiveness, requesting adequate funding, staffing, and facilities/equipment/supplies, overseeing the screening and selection of the people involved, and providing education to all adults involved in children's activities.

- Authority to approve/disapprove applications. The Executive Director has the ultimate authority, based upon the above-mentioned criteria, to approve or disapprove the suitability of employment applicants and volunteers.

General guidelines for staff interaction with children procedures

This section outlines preventive measures to be followed in child and youth activities.

- **Multiple staff preferred**
 - Two adult supervisors are preferred when feasible during any library activity involving children or youth. Adult supervisors must be 18 years old or older.
 - Do not be alone in a room with a single child (one-on-one) unless the door is open and/or there is a window in the room.
 - Do not drive a child or youth under the age of 18 in your vehicle. If a ride is necessitated, the local police should be called.
- **Expressions of affection**

Adults must use caution when allowing expressions of affection toward children and youth. The following practices are recommended:

 - Respect a child's/youth's refusal of affection.
 - Be aware of where you place your hands or anything that could be misinterpreted by a child or an observer.
 - Refrain from body-to-body embraces, any touching on private areas (those areas covered by a bathing suit), and any type of kiss.

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