

# MUHLENBERG COMMUNITY LIBRARY ABUSE PREVENTION ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

Muhlenberg Community Library (hereafter referred to as the Library) does not permit or allow abuse of any kind to occur in the workplace or any activity sponsored by or related to it. To make this "zero tolerance" policy clear to all employees and volunteers we have adopted procedures that employees and volunteers must follow in this Abuse Prevention Policy.

## I. Code of Conduct

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

Our organization provides the public with the highest quality services within our means. Additionally, we are committed to creating an environment for our employees and volunteers that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and that promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated. Confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from our organization. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously. Our organization will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

Those volunteers or employees whose background clearances contain adverse information such as felony convictions that could impact the safety and wellbeing of other volunteers, employees, or the public shall be disallowed from participating or representing our organization in any capacity.

This Code of Conduct outlines specific expectations of employees and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Employees and volunteers must provide their personal background clearances to allow us to comply with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law.
2. Employees and volunteers and children and the public will be treated with respect at all times.
3. Employees and volunteers and children and the public will be treated fairly, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, age, or religion.
4. Employees and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection as outlined by our organization.
5. Employees and volunteers will avoid affection with children when they cannot be observed by others.
6. Employees and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal and nonverbal interactions as outlined by our organization.
7. Employees and volunteers will not use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs while acting on behalf of the library.
8. Employees and volunteers will not have secrets with children and will only give gifts with prior permission from their parent or guardian.
9. Employees and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with employees and volunteers or the public.
10. Employees and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with a child in a private setting.
11. Employees and volunteers will use common areas when working with fellow employees and volunteers or children, except under extenuating circumstances.

Employees and volunteers will not treat other employees and volunteers or children or the public in any abusive way, including, but not limited to, the following:

- *Physical abuse*: Examples include, but are not limited to, hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessarily restraining or confining an individual, or causing endangerment to an individual.
- *Verbal abuse*: Examples include, but are not limited to, degrading or threatening an individual.
- *Sexual abuse*: Examples include, but are not limited to, inappropriately touching another, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations, 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. As well, with respect to underage employees or volunteers, causing them to be fearful, agitated, depressed or anxious in a severe way.

Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of employees and volunteers or children by other employees and volunteers. Also, our organization will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying. To the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- *Physical bullying* - when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- *Verbal bullying* - when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as saying disparaging things to them or about them.
- *Nonverbal or relational bullying* - when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person, or bullies or intimidates another person.
- *Cyberbullying* - the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
  - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
  - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
  - Pretending to be someone else to make another person look bad.
  - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
  - Hazing - an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
  - Sexualized bullying -bullying that involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying and then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all employees and volunteers.

All employees and volunteers must follow state-specific mandatory reporting requirements, when applicable. Employees and volunteers who are mandatory reporters according to the PA Child Protective Services Law should 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 organization policies and procedures that protect employees, volunteers and the general public against 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.

Employees and volunteers will report concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, and members of the public, to our organization's Director and/or Board President.

Our organization cooperates fully with the authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. All employees and volunteers shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination or expulsion.

Employees and volunteers may not have engaged in, or have been accused or convicted of abuse, indecency or intentionally injuring children. As well, employees and volunteers cannot have engaged in any activity that would be grounds for denying employment or participation in a program, activity, or service according to the PA Child Protective Services Law.

## II. Policies

### A. Physical Contact with Others

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

The organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions are:

#### Appropriate Physical Interactions

- Pats on the shoulder or back
- Handshakes
- High-fives and hand slapping
- Verbal praise
- Touching hands, shoulders, and arms
- Arms around shoulders
- Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)

#### Inappropriate Physical Interactions

- Showing affection in an isolated area
- Lap sitting
- Piggyback Rides
- Tickling
- Any form of affection that is unwanted by the public or member
- Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas, with the exception of what may be necessary behavior during training or emergency activities.

### B. Interaction

Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to other employees and volunteers or children or the public 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 other employees and volunteers or children or the public. Employees and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with other employees and volunteers or children or the public. Our organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

#### Appropriate Verbal Interactions

- Positive reinforcement
- Appropriate jokes
- Encouragement
- Praise

#### Inappropriate Verbal Interactions

- Degrading language based on gender or sexual orientation.
- Hostile or unwelcome jokes or comments of a sexual nature.
- Threats and intimidation.
- Requests for a sexual favor.

## C. One-on-One Interaction

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

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.

### Additional Guidelines for One-On-One Interactions

- When meeting one-on-one with an employee or child or volunteer, endeavor to 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 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.

### Private Instruction

One-on-one situations, such as mentoring or private trainings sessions, introduce additional risks for false allegations. Employees and volunteers should be aware of our policies regarding mentoring & private instruction:

- Organized mentoring, or private training sessions with our organization's employees and volunteers or children may not occur outside of the organization, unless there is knowledge of the scheduled activity by the parent or guardian and the Director and/or Board President.
- A record of any mentoring or private training sessions outside of the organization should include times, employees and volunteers involved, and location of sessions.

## D. Outside 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 and volunteers and our organization at increased risk.

Our organization strongly recommends that employees and volunteers do not have outside contact with underage employees or volunteers on a one-on-one basis, other than scheduled or planned group training exercises or emergency responses.

If offsite contact does occur, our organization has determined that the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

Appropriate Outside Contact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking groups of employees or volunteers on a training exercise or session.</li><li>• Attending functions at an underage employee's or volunteer's home with the parents or guardians present.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking an underage employee or volunteer on an outing without the parents'/guardians' knowledge.</li><li>• Visiting an underage employee or volunteer in their home without the parent's or guardian's knowledge.</li></ul>

## E. Electronic Communication

Employees and volunteers must not engage in inappropriate electronic communication. The following are examples of inappropriate electronic communication:

- Commenting in a harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning or humiliating manner.
- Posting inappropriate comments on pictures.

### Cell Phone or Other Electronic Device Use

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

## F. Gift Giving

Molesters routinely groom children by giving gifts without parental knowledge, 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. For this reason, employees and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of children, and only under the following circumstances:

- The Organization must be made aware of and approve the gift.
- Parents/guardians must be notified.

### III. Responding

#### A. Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

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

##### Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors

- Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above
- Seeking inappropriate private time or one-on-one time with a junior employee or volunteer
- Buying inappropriate gifts for individual junior employees or volunteers
- Making inappropriate suggestive comments to any employee or volunteer

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with employees and volunteers, including junior employees or volunteers will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

##### Member's Response

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

1. Interrupt the behavior.
2. Report the behavior to the Director and/or Board President.
3. If you are not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.
4. Document the report, but do not conduct an investigation.
5. Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

##### Director and/or Board President

If the Director and/or Board President receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from an employee or volunteer, that individual is instructed to do the following:

1. Determine the appropriate administrator to respond to the concern.
2. Determine the appropriate response based on the report.
3. Speak with the employee or volunteer who has been reported.
4. Review the file of the employee or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.
5. Document the report.
6. 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.
7. If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.
8. Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously, if applicable.

- Increase monitoring or supervision of the employee or volunteer or program.
- If policy violations are confirmed, the employee or volunteer must be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution. If more information is needed, interview and/or survey others.

### **Organizational Response**

Guidelines for Organizational Response include the following:

1. Review the need for increased supervision.
2. Review the need for revised policies or procedures.
3. Review the need for additional training.
4. Review the need for additional counseling, if applicable.

## **B. Responding to Suspected Abuse**

### **Response to Abuse**

Employees and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of junior employees or volunteers, or children—whether on or off organization property - to state authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously to governmental authorities. 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 junior employees or volunteers (i.e., mandated reporters) are required to report immediately when they have reasonable cause to suspect that a junior employee or volunteer 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 initial report of abuse electronically using the Child Welfare Information Solution portal available on the PA-pfa.org website.

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 - also available on the pa-fas.org 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, perpetrated by another employee or volunteer, directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims.

Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

Board President,  
Director, or  
Trustee.



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

#### Additional Guidelines for Responding to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse

1. If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.
2. If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell you.
3. Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
4. Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
5. Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
6. It is not your job to investigate the incident, but it **IS** your job to report the incident in a timely manner to the Director and/or Board President.
7. Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to another individual in the above group.

#### Director and/or Board President Response to Abuse

In addition to the above response procedures, the Director and Board President should ensure the following:

#### Guidelines for the Director and Board President in Responding to an Incident or Allegations of Abuse

1. First, determine if the employee or volunteer or child is still in danger, and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.
2. 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, etc.
3. Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember, your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.
4. 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.
5. Notify your crisis management team and follow your crisis management plan.
6. Suspend the accused employee or volunteer until the investigation is complete.

### C. Retaliation

The Library prohibits any retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports abuse or molestation abuse, alleges that it is being committed or participates in the investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of abuse or molestation are prohibited.

Anyone who improperly 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.

### Employee or Volunteer Personal Obligations and Notification

If you are arrested for or convicted of an offense that is described in the PA Child Protective Services Law or named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, you must provide written notification of the same to the Director and/or Board President no later than 72 hours after the arrest, conviction, or notification that you have been listed as a perpetrator in the statewide database.

If the Library has a reasonable belief that you were arrested or convicted of an offense that is listed in their Abuse Prevention Policy or was named as a perpetrator in a founded or indicated report, the Library can require you to update your clearances before being permitted to continue to volunteer or be employed at the Library.

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

### Acknowledgment of Abuse Prevention Policy

I, \_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge that I have received and read the abuse administrative prevention policy immediately preceding my signature below. I understand that I am bound to follow the policy and understand the consequences in the event I fail to do so.

1. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse-----  
Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

2. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse  
Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse  
Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

**4** Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse  
Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

5. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of  
Abuse Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

**6** Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse  
Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

7. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

8. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

9. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

10. Type of annual abuse prevention training (circle applicable) (1) Abuse Admin Policy (2). Symptoms of Abuse Module (3). Selective/Presidium Video

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 11/14/2022  
Reviewed by the Board of Trustees 06/12/2023

