

Jasper County Public Library Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy

Providing a safe and welcoming library environment for all users is a priority for Jasper County Public Library, and we welcome patrons of all ages to use our facilities and services and to attend library events. This policy outlines certain unique legal and practical considerations that apply to children and vulnerable adults. For purposes of this policy:

- “Child” means any person under the age of 18; and
- “Vulnerable adult” means any person at least 18 years old who is:
 - Incapable of: (1) managing or directing the management of their property or (2) providing or directing the provision of self-care;
 - Due to mental illness, intellectual disability, dementia, habitual drunkenness, excessive drug use, or other physical or mental incapacity

This policy refers to both children and vulnerable adults as “Safeguarded Individuals.” It also refers to parents, guardians, and other caregivers who are responsible for a given Safeguarded Individual as “Guardians.”

Library staff members are available to assist Safeguarded Individuals with library use but are not themselves Guardians. Library staff cannot and do not assume responsibility for any Safeguarded Individual’s care, supervision, or experience while staff are on working time (other than those reporting responsibilities expressly imposed on all individuals under Indiana law - *see* Mandatory Reporting below). Responsibility for the safety, well-being, and behavior of a Safeguarded Individual, as well as what they read, view, or experience while visiting the Library or using Library resources always rests with the individual’s Guardian(s).

Guidelines for Safeguarded Individuals and Their Caregivers and Guardians

Each of the following should remain in the company of a Guardian while on Library premises and not in planned/scheduled company of library staff (i.e. - library programming); (a) children under the age of 10; (b) children of any age who are unable to care for themselves or otherwise comply with applicable conduct rules; and (c) vulnerable adults. However, Guardians need not remain with a child who is participating in planned/scheduled library programming intended for the child’s age.

All Safeguarded Individuals must be able to refrain from threatening, harassing, or discriminatory language or behaviors, and must not disrupt Library staff’s performance of duties or others’ enjoyment of the library.

Safeguarded Individuals should have on their person at all times contact information for their Guardian(s) or other emergency contacts.

Staff Interactions with Safeguarded Individuals

Library staff are not responsible for monitoring or preventing Safeguarded Individuals from leaving library grounds or otherwise keeping them in or out of any particular area.

Library staff will make reasonable efforts to alert or contact a Guardian when and if a Safeguarded Individual: (a) engages in behavior that disturbs others or violates applicable policies; (b) appears to be in any situation posing a risk to their health or safety; or (c) is unattended by a Guardian at closing time or within 5 minutes of closing time. If a Guardian cannot be promptly located in such situations (or cannot

promptly resolve the situation, including by taking custody of the Safeguarded Individual within 15 minutes after closing time), staff will contact local law enforcement. Absent exceptional situations when a coworker cannot remain due to a genuine emergency, staff must not remain alone with a Safeguarded Individual while awaiting arrival of a Guardian or law enforcement.

Staff will not physically contact, cause contact, or allow anyone else to contact a Safeguarded Individual in a manner that reasonably would be considered or questioned as inappropriate. This includes any form of “disciplinary” or “punitive” contact as well as touching, rubbing, or otherwise making physical contact with private/personal areas. Depending on the circumstances, it may also include otherwise innocuous or appropriate contact that is maintained too long or engaged in too frequently.

Individual staff members will not be alone with a Safeguarded Individual behind any closed door or where obstructed from ready view by others (i.e., at least two staff must be present with Safeguarded Individuals). In particular, staff will not assist Safeguarded Individuals with personal care (such as restroom usage) or maintaining personal hygiene.

Mandatory Reporting

Indiana Law – Child Abuse or Neglect

Independent of and in addition to Library policy, **all persons in Indiana (whether employed by the Library or not) are legally required to report immediately any suspected abuse or neglect of a child.** The State’s reporting hotline for suspected child abuse or neglect is 1-800-800-5556, and it is available 24 hours per day, every day. The local Department of Child Services office will assist any individual who wishes to make a report in person, including those without access to a phone. The local DCS office for Jasper County is at 105 Drexel Parkway, Suite 2, Rensselaer, IN 47978.

Emergency reports of suspected child abuse or neglect should be made directly by dialing 911.

Indiana Law – Endangered Adults

Additionally, **all persons in Indiana (whether employed by the Library or not) are legally required to report immediately any “Endangered Adult.” An Endangered Adult is any vulnerable adult (as defined above) who is harmed or threatened with harm as a result of: (a) neglect; (b) a battery offense included in Ind. Code 35-42-2; or (c) exploitation of the individual’s personal services or property.** The State’s reporting hotline for endangered adults is 1-800-992-6978, and it is available 24 hours per day, every day. Phone reports are recommended, particularly for urgent situations, but reports may also be filed online at <https://aps-govcloud.my.site.com/APSONlineReport/s/>

Emergency reports regarding endangered adults should be made directly by dialing 911.

Library Policy – Reporting Violations of This Policy

Finally, **all Library employees** are required to report immediately any suspected or potential violation of this policy to the Headquarters/Branch Manager and Director or Business Office. Reporting actual or potential violations of this policy to the Library is a separate obligation from the legal reporting mandates described above, meaning that a report to the Library (while required as a condition of employment) *does not* satisfy the separate legal reporting obligations described above. Violations of this policy – including a violation of applicable reporting obligations – will result in discipline up to and including termination of employment (and, where appropriate, referral to law enforcement or other appropriate government entities).