

Youth Protection Policy

(Adopted November 2025)

Youth in the Library

The Library welcomes youth of all ages but recognizes that the Library is a public facility. Parents, guardians, and caregivers remain responsible for the supervision, behavior, and safety of minors at all times. The Library's *Children in the Library Policy* governs supervision expectations by age.

Library staff are not responsible for monitoring unattended youth, and staff may contact law enforcement if a child is left unsupervised or endangered.

Purpose

The Plainfield-Guilford Township Public Library (hereinafter the "Library") is committed to maintaining, as much as possible, a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for all youth who visit the Library or participate in Library programs. This policy establishes clear standards and procedures to:

1. Protect children and teens from abuse, neglect, or inappropriate conduct;
2. Promote professional boundaries and accountability among Library employees and volunteers; and
3. Ensure compliance with Indiana's child protection and mandatory reporting laws.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy:

1. **Youth:**
 - a. Any individual under 18 years of age.
2. **Staff:**
 - a. Employees of the Library.
3. **Volunteers:**
 - a. Individuals providing unpaid service to the Library.
4. **Abuse or Neglect:**
 - a. As defined under *Indiana Code 31-9-2-14* and related provisions.
5. **Caregiver:**
 - a. A parent, legal guardian, or person age 12 or older entrusted with responsibility for a child as defined in the Library's *Children in the Library Policy*.

Screening and Selection

All staff and volunteers are subject to the Library's **Criminal History Check Policy**:

1. A criminal history check is required for all prospective employees and volunteers age 18 or older before work or service begins.
2. Background checks must be renewed every three (3) years.
3. Applicants with convictions for offenses involving children, violence, or indecency will be disqualified from positions involving youth.
4. The Library Director reviews findings on a case-by-case basis in accordance with law and organizational policy.

Youth Protection Training

All Library staff and volunteers with youth contact will receive initial and annual training on this policy and on Indiana's *mandatory reporting requirements* for child abuse and neglect. Training may include recognizing signs of abuse, appropriate staff-youth interaction, and procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.

Supervision and Facility Standards

To safeguard youth, the following rules apply:

Visibility and Access

1. One-on-one interactions must occur in visible, open areas.
2. When feasible, programs intended for youth will be scheduled to take place in the Children's department or Teen Central.
 - a. Both spaces are open to public view, have large windows, and are visible via camera.
3. All library programs, especially those intended for youth, must have a library staff member in attendance at all times.
4. Meeting rooms or program rooms are not to be locked during programming activities.

Appropriate Conduct

1. Permissible physical contact includes handshakes, high-fives, or pats on the shoulder.
2. Hugging is permissible as long as it is youth-initiated.
 - a. When feasible, hugs should be brief, using minimal body contact or from the side
3. Staff should never pick up children, allow them to sit on laps, or engage in prolonged contact.
 - a. If a child is in immediate danger, library staff are permitted to take appropriate, necessary action to remove the child from harm.

Transportation and Off-Site Activity

1. Staff and volunteers may not transport or accompany unrelated youth off Library property for any reason.

Interaction with Youth

Library staff and volunteers must:

1. Maintain professional and appropriate relationships with youth at all times.
2. Avoid personal or social contact with minors outside Library-sanctioned activities unless an existing relationship predates Library involvement.
3. Refrain from using profane, suggestive, or abusive language in the presence of youth.
4. Not assist youth with restroom use; such assistance must be provided by a parent or caregiver.
5. Use only official Library communication channels for appropriate interactions with youth.

Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Abuse or Neglect

The Library is a **mandatory reporting agency** under *Indiana Code 31-33-5-1*.

All employees and volunteers are personally responsible for immediately reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, consistent with the Library's established procedures below.

Reporting Procedure *(as adopted September 2018)*

1. Immediate Oral Report:

The staff member or volunteer who observes or suspects child abuse or neglect must immediately call the **Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS)** at **1-800-800-5556** or the **Plainfield Police Department** at **317-839-8700** to make a report.

Staff should ensure they record the report number provided by the organization contacted.

2. Filling Out an Incident Report:

Immediately after the oral report, the staff member must fill out an Incident Report. The report should include as much detail as possible including, but not limited to:

- Date, time, and nature of the incident;
- Youth's name and/or description;
- Narrative description of what was observed or reported;
- Names of agencies contacted and individuals spoken to;
- Additional witnesses, staff, or emergency personnel involved;

3. Secondary Report by Director:

The **Library Director** (or designee) may make a secondary oral report in cases of severe abuse or neglect or in cases involving sexual abuse or human trafficking to whichever agency was **not** contacted in Step 1 to ensure both DCS and local law enforcement have been notified.

Documentation:

All documentation related to the report will be maintained confidentially in accordance with state law.

Allegations of Suspected Abuse or Neglect by a Library Employee or Volunteer

If a library employee or volunteer is accused of abuse or neglect, the following procedure will take place:

1. The accused individual shall be **immediately suspended** from duties pending an investigation. Library staff shall be placed on paid Administrative leave for the duration of the investigation.
2. The Library Director shall notify:
 - a. DCS and/or law enforcement;
 - b. The Library Board of Trustees;
 - c. The Library's liability insurance provider, and;
 - d. The Library's legal counsel;
3. Staff and volunteers are required to fully cooperate with all investigations.
4. If the conduct is substantiated, the individual may face termination or removal from service.

Enforcement and Courtesy

All Library staff are responsible for enforcing this and related conduct policies, including the *Courtesy Policy*. Patrons or employees who violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, removal from Library property, or referral to law enforcement.

Policy Posting and Review

This policy will be made available to all staff and posted on the Library's website. The Library Director will ensure all employees and volunteers review this policy annually. The policy will be reviewed at least every three (3) years or as required by changes in law or best practice.