SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Child Protection Policy

JPAB Policy # 500
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PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The Santa Cruz Public Libraries (hereinafter the "Library") is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children who visit or participate in library programs. This Child Protection Policy ("Policy") applies to all Library premises and Library staff, volunteers, and program providers. The Library prohibits physical, mental, or sexual abuse on its premises. This Policy aims to protect children from misconduct while safeguarding staff, volunteers, and program providers from false accusations. This Policy establishes guidelines for preventing and responding to instances of child abuse and sexual abuse. Staff, volunteers, and program providers must review and sign this Policy acknowledging their review, understanding, and receipt of this Policy.

DEFINITIONS

- Child/Children: person(s) under the age of 18 years of age.
- Staff: employees of the Library and any board members who are employees of a City/County that is part of the Library Joint Powers Agreement.
- Volunteers: any person who provides unpaid services to the Library, including any advisory board members, and who has direct contact with children at the Premises as part of providing those goods or services.
- Program provider(s): any person not employed directly by the Library but provides paid goods or services for children at the Library pursuant to an agreement with the Library.
- Child Abuse: any act that results in physical or emotional harm (other than accidental), neglect, exploitation, or endangerment of a child. This can include child sexual abuse.
- Child Sexual Abuse: any inappropriate or illegal sexual contact or behavior with a child, including but not limited to molestation or exploitation.
- Premises: any buildings, premises, and any offsite locations (including the Live Oak Library Annex and Bookmobile) where Library-sponsored programs or events may take place.
- Mandated Reporter: any person with affirmative obligations under the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act. Library staff, volunteers, and program providers are not necessarily Mandated Reporters, but may be under certain circumstances. Please consult your supervisor if you have any questions of whether this applies to you.

PREVENTION MEASURES

- All staff, volunteers, and program providers must undergo background checks.
- Reasonable efforts will be made to make sure that, for Library programs involving children, two adults are present or nearby, including for programs administered by program providers.
- Reasonable efforts will be made to have staff or volunteers monitor, by being present or nearby, program provider work with children.
- No staff, volunteer, or program provider should be alone with a child in a secluded area.
- Photography or videography of children on the premises is only permitted with parental consent and for Library-sanctioned purposes.

- To the extent possible, the doors to rooms where programs and activities involving children should remain open. Doors should never be locked.
- Reasonable efforts will be made to work with children within Library facilities that are visible to others such as open public spaces, rooms with windows, or rooms with open doors.
- Staff, volunteers, and program providers who work with children should refrain from physical contact with a child unless necessary.
- Personal phones, personal tablets, or other personal devices that can access the internet and/or display photos/videos should not be shared directly with children without prior permission from designated staff.
- Staff, volunteers, and program providers should always use respectful language with children.
- In no instance may employees, volunteers, or program providers provide transportation to a child in their personal, company, or Library-owned vehicle to/from the Premises, unless they are the guardian of that child.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

In any situation of urgency or immediate danger, staff, volunteers, and program providers must immediately call 9-1-1. After calling 9-1-1, and for any other incident of suspected child abuse, use the procedure for reporting and responding below.

PROCEDURE:

1. If a staff, volunteer, or program provider believes there is any reasonable suspicion that an act of child abuse has occurred, that person shall immediately report the incident to their supervisor who will, together with the witnessing employee, volunteer, or program provider, inform the Branch Manager or other onsite Person in Charge.
2. Together, the witnessing staff, volunteer, or program provider and the Person in Charge must act immediately by contacting the Director of Libraries, Assistant Director, or the Manager in Charge to notify them of the incident and provide critical information for the Incident Report, as outlined in the Library's internal Emergency Plan section titled *Problem Situation and Emergency Plan Manual.*
3. The Director of Libraries, Assistant Director, or Manager in Charge shall immediately contact local law enforcement to file a police report.
4. All staff, volunteers, and program provider shall cooperate with any state or local law enforcement authorities who are responsible for investigating and prosecuting cases of child abuse.

INTERNAL PROTOCOL:

- The Director of Libraries, Assistant Director, or Manager in Charge shall then notify the Risk Manager of the incident and as required, launch a further investigation.
- For alleged child abuse involving staff, that staff shall be removed from any contact with children in connection with their work duties, placed on leave pending due process rights in the applicable Memorandum of Understanding.
- For alleged child abuse involving a volunteer, their volunteer work shall be immediately suspended pending the investigation of the allegations and their volunteering will be terminated if not determined to be innocent.

- For alleged child abuse involving a program provider, the specific program provider worker involved shall be barred from any contact with children in connection with their duties at the Premises, and if a new program provider worker cannot replace them, then the Library can terminate the contract pursuant to the terms of the overarching agreement.
- All records, identities of any alleged victim(s) and any alleged violator(s) are considered confidential and are held by the Library Administration Office.
- The Director of Libraries shall notify the Library Joint Power Authority Board of the incident after the investigation has concluded.

TRAINING
Staff and volunteers are required to participate in assigned training on recognizing the signs of possible child abuse, as provided by the Library.

RETALIATION PROHIBITED
Retaliation against anyone who in good faith reports, alleges, or participates in the investigation of child abuse is prohibited. False or malicious accusations of child abuse are also prohibited. Any retaliation or intentional false reporting will result in dismissal of volunteers and disciplinary action for staff pursuant to their employment agreements.

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Child Protection Policy.

I, _____ [Printed Name], acknowledge that I have received and read the Child Protection Policy. I understand that I am required to adhere to the Policy, as well any assigned training and associated expectations.

_____ _____
Date Signature