

POLICY ON GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTIONS WITH MINORS

GUIDELINES FOR LIBRARY STAFF INTERACTING WITH MINORS

Library Staff must conduct themselves as the responsible, professional adult in all interactions with minors on the library site; this includes observing appropriate physical, spoken and emotional boundaries in all youth interactions.

1. Avoid being alone with a single minor where staff cannot be observed by other staff or adults; groups meeting in the Story Hour Room will leave the interior blinds twirled open.
2. Advise a parent or caregiver if you accompany their child to another collection, format or area of the library in the provision of reference and reader's advisory.
3. Do not offer, or agree, to "watch" a child or children on behalf of their parent(s) or caregiver(s) under any circumstances.
4. Establish clear boundaries with minors, using appropriate language, demeanor and sharing.
5. Understand and respect the boundaries set by minors regarding physical touch or sharing of personal information.
6. Avoid physical contact with minors, unless you must restrain or otherwise have contact for safety related reasons only.
 - Acceptable forms of physical contact include high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, etc.
 - Unacceptable forms of physical contact include tickling, rough housing, massage, touching hair, etc.
 - Hugging is only allowable in the presence of the caregiver or another staff person, or when appropriate for consoling or comforting a very young child
7. In sensitive situations and in the case of injury, always involve the Building Supervisor or another staff member [i.e. two staff members must be present].
8. Any interactions with minors on social media, phone or email should be library-related on municipal platforms.
9. Bullying should be dealt with under the CODE OF CONDUCT policy.
10. Per Town policy, parental or guardian consent and a signed PHOTO RELEASE is required for any photograph of a minor.
11. Physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual abuse of minors is unlawful and is prohibited by Commonwealth law and town policy.
12. If you believe someone has perpetrated abuse or neglect, immediately and confidentially report such violation to the MA Department of Children and Families [Child-At-Risk Hotline: 800-792-5200] or the Westford Police Department [Tel: 978-399-2345], and follow mandated reporter guidelines and follow through with internal reporting, as well.

Voted and Approved by Board of Library Trustees 5.1.23.