

## **Child Neglect, Abuse, Sexual Abuse, and Molestation Policy**

### **Library Policy:**

Ferguson Library has a zero-tolerance policy towards neglect, abuse and molestation which takes place, or is learned of at any Library or any Library-sponsored activities. In order to make this zero-tolerance policy clear to all, we have adopted mandatory procedures that employees, and board members must follow when they learn of or witness abuse, neglect or molestation of children.

Ferguson library staff may encounter situations during the course of their daily work where they suspect that a child is being abused, molested or neglected or where staff witnesses such behavior. Library staff are not considered mandated reporters as defined in Connecticut Statutes Chapter 319A, Section 17a-101. However, the Library requires staff to report suspected child abuse, molestation or neglect to a member of the Administration (Director of Public Services and or Director of Human Resources) as long as they have an objectively reasonable cause for such suspicions. Reports should be made immediately by telephone or in person.

In addition, it is the policy of the Library that the neglect, abuse or molestation of any child by an employee, volunteer or board member is strictly prohibited. Any violation of this policy will result in the Library taking immediate and appropriate actions against such person.

### **Description:**

Child abuse is a serious crime in Connecticut and around the country. Child abuse laws criminalize physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of minors and also require certain third parties with knowledge of the abuse to report it to the authorities. Although Library staff is not required by Connecticut law to report, it is the policy of the Library that its staff is required to report suspected cases of child abuse.

Child abuse occurs where a child has had physical injury inflicted upon him or her other than by accidental means, has injuries at variance with history given of them, or is in a condition resulting in maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment. (Connecticut General Statutes §46b-120)

Child neglect occurs where a child has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, emotionally, or morally, or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being. (Connecticut General Statutes §46b-120)

Child sexual abuse and molestation occurs where a child is subject to any conduct or activity intended to, or leading to, sexual gratification of the abuser, or activity with the purpose of shaming, humiliating, shocking or exerting control over the victim.

**A child may be found to have been abused, neglected or molested who:**

- has suffered physical injury or injuries other than by accidental means,
- is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment or neglect such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment, and/or has injuries at variance with the history given of them.

**Evidence of physical abuse includes:**

- excessive physical punishment
- bruises, scratches, lacerations
- burns, and/or scalds
- reddening or blistering of the tissue through application of heat by fire, chemical substances, cigarettes, matches, electricity, scalding water, friction, etc.
- injuries to bone, muscle, cartilage, ligaments: fractures, dislocations, sprains, strains, displacements, hematomas, etc.
- head injuries
- cuts, welts, discoloration of the eyes, broken eyeglasses
- internal injuries
- death
- misuse of medical treatments or therapies
- malnutrition related to acts or omissions by an established caregiver resulting in a child's malnourished state that can be supported by professional medical opinion
- deprivation of necessities due to acts or omissions by an established caregiver resulting in physical harm to child (necessities include food, clothing, shelter, education, medical care, appropriate supervision).
- cruel punishment.

**Sexual Abuse/Exploitation** is any incident involving a child(ren)'s non-accidental exposure to sexual behavior.

**Evidence of sexual abuse includes, but is not limited to the following:**

- rape
- penetration: digital, penile, or foreign objects
- oral / genital contact
- indecent exposure for the purpose of sexual gratification of the offender, or for purposes of shaming, humiliating, shocking or exerting control over the victim
- incest
- fondling, including kissing, for the purpose of sexual gratification of the offender, or for purposes of shaming, humiliating, shocking or exerting control over the victim
- sexual exploitation, including possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography. online enticement of a child for sexual acts, child prostitution, child-sex tourism, unsolicited obscene material sent to a child, or misleading domain name likely to attract a child to an inappropriate website
- coercing or forcing a child to participate in, or be negligently exposed to, pornography and/or sexual behavior
- disease or condition that arises from sexual transmission
- other verbal, written or physical behavior not overtly sexual but likely designed to “groom” a child for future sexual abuse.
- behavioral signs such as the reluctance to be left alone with a particular person or fear of touch.

**Staff Responsibilities and Procedures:**

Library staff must immediately report by phone or in person to a member of the Administration (Director of Public and or Director of Human Resources) any suspected abuse, neglect or molestation of a child by another staff person, a volunteer or member of the public. Making the report, the staff member will immediately submit a Security Incident Report to Administration, including as much of the following as possible:

- The name, phone number and address of the child and his/her parents or other persons responsible for his/her care.
- The age and gender of the child.
- The nature and extent of the child’s injuries, maltreatment or neglect.
- The approximate date and time the injuries, maltreatment or neglect occurred.
- The circumstances in which the injuries, maltreatment or neglect came to be known to the employee (including date, time, and location).
- The individuals alleged to have been involved in the incident.
- Any other relevant, factual information.

A member of the Administration shall review the Incident Report, promptly conduct an investigation of suspected abuse, neglect or molestation, and prepare a report of their findings.

Reports should be made by the Administration to the Connecticut Department of Child and Family Services 1-800-842-2288. The agency is open 24 hours 7 days per week and the Stamford Police Department 203-977-4444.

The employee's name is always kept confidential and only released if a Judge orders that the name be released for court proceedings.