

Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy

Introduction: The Patterson Library is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all patrons, particularly minor children and vulnerable adults. As part of our commitment to safety, this Abuse Prevention Policy is designed to prevent sexual grooming by staff and volunteers, thereby safeguarding the well-being and dignity of all individuals who utilize our services.

Scope: This policy applies to all staff members, volunteers, and individuals associated with the Patterson Library who interact with minor children and vulnerable adults as part of their duties or responsibilities.

Policy Statement:

1. **Zero Tolerance for Sexual Grooming:** The Patterson Library has zero tolerance for any form of sexual grooming by staff members or volunteers. Sexual grooming is defined as any behavior or conduct, whether intentional or unintentional, that seeks to establish an emotional connection with a minor child or vulnerable adult for the purpose of sexual exploitation or abuse.
2. **Clear Boundaries:** All staff members and volunteers must maintain clear and appropriate boundaries in their interactions with minor children and vulnerable adults. Any behavior that blurs the lines of professional boundaries or creates ambiguity in the relationship between staff/volunteers and patrons is strictly prohibited.
3. **Prohibited Behaviors:** The following behaviors are strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or dismissal of volunteer status:
 - Engaging in any form of physical, emotional, or psychological manipulation aimed at building trust or exerting control over a minor child or vulnerable adult.
 - Using gifts, favors, or special privileges to manipulate or exploit the trust of a minor child or vulnerable adult.
 - Initiating or maintaining secret or private communication channels with a minor child or vulnerable adult without the knowledge or consent of their parent or guardian.
 - Engaging in inappropriate or sexually suggestive conversations, jokes, or gestures with a minor child or vulnerable adult.
 - Spending excessive amounts of time alone with a minor child or vulnerable adult outside of library-sanctioned activities or programs.
4. **Training and Awareness:** The Patterson Library will annually review this policy with staff members and volunteers to educate them about the signs and consequences of sexual grooming. Training will also include guidance on maintaining appropriate

boundaries and responding to situations where grooming behavior is suspected or observed.

5. **Reporting Procedures:** All staff members and volunteers have a duty to report any concerns or suspicions of sexual grooming to the Library Director or designated authorities immediately. Reports will be treated with confidentiality and sensitivity, and appropriate action will be taken to address the situation in accordance with established policies and procedures.
6. **Background Checks:** All prospective staff members and volunteers who will have direct contact with minor children or vulnerable adults must undergo background checks, or sign an affidavit confirming that the individual has not been accused or convicted of any crimes.

Library staff and volunteers are NYS voluntary reporters (not mandated reporters) and have the right to contact the State Central Registry (SCR) or any other agency concerning the abuse or maltreatment of children or vulnerable adults.

Minor Services

State Central Registry (SCR) 800-342-3720. <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/cps/>

Adult Services

Chautauqua County (APS) 716-753-4447. <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/adult-svcs/aps/>

Conclusion: The Patterson Library is committed to fostering a culture of safety, trust, and respect for all individuals, especially those who may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. By adhering to the principles outlined in this Abuse Prevention Policy, we strive to create an environment where everyone feels valued, protected, and empowered to thrive.

This policy is subject to periodic review and updates to ensure compliance with evolving best practices and legal requirements related to abuse prevention and child protection.