**Indianapolis Public Library**

**408 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY**

The Library seeks to provide a safe and secure environment for young people who visit the Library or are involved in Library programs and activities. The Library’s goal is to protect youth from incidents of misconduct or inappropriate behavior or inequitable responses while also protecting staff and volunteers from false accusations.

408.1 Definitions

For purposes of this policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

* “Youth” are individuals who are less than 18 years old.
* “Staff” are employees of the Library who have contact with Youth in connection with their work duties.
* “Volunteers” are volunteers of the Library who have contact with Youth in connection with their volunteer activities.
* “Equity” is ensuring that all Youth have fair and equal access to the library’s resources and opportunities.

408.2 Selection of Staff and Volunteers

All Staff and Volunteers are screened prior to being hired following the Library’s customary screening requirements, procedures and policies. In particular,

* A criminal background check will be conducted for each Staff or Volunteer applicant.
* Compliance with the requirements of the Fair Credit Reporting Act is required for purposes of the criminal background check.
* What constitutes an offense that will disqualify a Staff or Volunteer applicant from working for the Library because of youth protection issues will be determined on a case-by-case basis in light of all the surrounding circumstances.
* Generally, convictions for an offense involving children and/or involving violence, dishonesty, illegal substances and indecency will preclude the applicant from being permitted to work as Staff or a Volunteer for the Library.

408.3 Youth Protection Training

All Staff and Volunteers (as well as vendors and contractors that have contact with Youth at the Library to the extent feasible) will be trained regarding youth protection issues, will receive racial equity training and other youth protection training. The initial orientation or training for Staff and Volunteers shall at a minimum involve a review of the Library’s Youth Protection Policy and Indiana’s mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting requirements. The Library will provide additional training to Staff and volunteers on an annual basis.

408.4 Programs and Facilities

The following policies will be followed:

* Two Adults – to the extent possible and when feasible, at least two unrelated adult Staff or Volunteers will be in attendance during programs and activities involving Youth. If this is not possible or feasible, Staff or Volunteers will not be alone with Youth without the area being open so that the Staff or Volunteer is observable by others.
* When Alone – An individual Staff or Volunteer should not be alone with an individual Youth without the area being open so that the Staff or Volunteer is observable by others.
* Open Door – to the extent possible and when feasible, doors to rooms where programs and activities involving Youth are conducted should be open during the program or activity unless there is a window in the door or a window to the room.
* No Locked Doors – Doors to Rooms where programs and activities involving Youth are conducted should never be locked during the program or activity.

408.5 Youth on Library Premises

The Library encourages and welcomes Youth of all ages to use its facilities and services and to participate in its programs and activities. However, responsibility for the safety and behavior of Youth while at the Library rests solely with the parent, guardian or authorized caregiver and not with Library Staff or Volunteers. The following policies apply with respect to Youth on Library premises:

* Library Staff and Volunteers are not responsible for monitoring or supervising the safety and behavior of Youth on Library premises.
* The parent or guardian of Youth on Library premises is solely responsible for ensuring the Youth is appropriately supervised and for the safety and behavior of the Youth.
* If a Youth’s behavior becomes disruptive to the operations of the Library, to other patrons or to Library staff, appropriate action in accordance with the Library’s policies and practices will be taken.

408.6 Interaction with Youth

The following policies apply with respect to interaction with Youth by Staff and Volunteers:

* Staff and Volunteers shall not accept or assume the responsibility for monitoring or supervising the safety and behavior of Youth on Library premises.
* Staff and Volunteers shall not contact or communicate with Youth outside of the operations, programs and activities of the Library unless they have a prior, independent relationship with the Youth.
* Staff and Volunteers shall not in the presence or hearing of a Youth use profanities, vulgarities or emotionally abusive language.
* Staff and Volunteers shall not engage in conduct that involves physical contact with a Youth (including without limitation touching, striking or hitting the Youth) except in the case of a necessity related to the health and welfare of the Youth, Library patrons, or Library staff or volunteers.
* Staff and Volunteers shall never assist any Youth with restroom usage. Any Youth too young or otherwise unable to provide for themselves regarding restroom usage should have a parent, guardian or authorized caregiver present to assist the Youth.

408.7 Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Indiana law (IC 31-33-5-1) requires that any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect must immediately report such directly to the Indiana Department of Child Services (“DCS”) or to a local law enforcement agency. This mandatory reporting requirement includes reporting child abuse, including any sex offense against a child, committed by any Library Staff or Volunteers while on Library premises. The following reporting procedures apply if a Library Employee or Volunteer has reason to believe than an act of child abuse or neglect has occurred on Library premises by any person, including any Library employee or volunteer:

* The Library employee or volunteer shall themselves immediately report the occurrence directly to DCS or local law enforcement.
* The Library employee or volunteer shall immediately report the occurrence to the Library’s Director, Human Resources.
* The Library’s Director, Human Resources, shall immediately report the occurrence to DCS or local law enforcement.
* If the alleged child abuse or neglect involves allegations against a Library employee or volunteer, the Library employee or volunteer shall be immediately suspended from employment and/or volunteer activities pending the investigation of the allegations.
* The Library’s Director, Human Resources, shall immediately notify the Library’s liability insurance provider.
* All Library employees and volunteers shall cooperate with any investigation of the incident by state or local authorities.
* If the alleged child abuse or neglect involves allegations against a Library employee or volunteer, the Library’s Director, Human Resources, will investigate the circumstances of the alleged child abuse or neglect.

Any Library employee or volunteer who is not determined to be innocent of the alleged child abuse or neglect shall be subject to permanent removal from any contact with Youth in connection with their work duties or volunteer activities as well as additional ameliorative and disciplinary action up to and including termination as an employee or volunteer as appropriate.