



Employee Guide

Updated January 29, 2024

Inspiring lifelong learning, providing advanced knowledge, and strengthening communities by providing quality library services to the residents of Clarke and Jasper Counties

1 INTRODUCTION TO EMPLOYEE GUIDE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Employee Guide outlines employment policies for the East Mississippi Regional Library System, hereinafter also referred to as the Library, the Library System, and “EMRL.”

It is impossible to anticipate every situation that may occur or every policy question that may arise. The library reserves the right in its sole and absolute discretion to revise, supplement, interpret, or rescind any portion of the Employee Guide as deemed appropriate.

Employees should familiarize themselves with the contents of the Employee Guide and forward any questions regarding content to the Library’s Director.

Each employee is expected to comply with the Library Employee Guide.

Mississippi public libraries are authorized to operate by statute as established by the Mississippi Legislature in the *Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated* Title 39, Chapter 3. A link to the *Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated* is available on the website of the Mississippi Secretary of State’s Office at:

http://www.sos.state.ms.us/ed_pubs/mscode/.

1.2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I acknowledge that I have access to a copy of the East Mississippi Regional Library Policy Manual and Job Descriptions. I understand that it is my responsibility to read, understand, and comply with all policies adopted by the Library's Administrative Board of Trustees and with all revisions adopted by the Administrative Board of Trustees.

I acknowledge that the Employee Guide and Job Description do not constitute a contract of employment.

A copy of this form will be maintained in the employee's personnel file.

Employee Signature/Date

Director Signature/Date

2 MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS OF THE EAST MISSISSIPPI REGIONAL LIBRARY SYSTEM

2.1 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of The East Mississippi Regional Library System is to inspire lifelong learning, advance knowledge, and strengthen our communities by providing quality library services to the residents of Clarke and Jasper Counties.

2.2 VISION STATEMENT

The East Mississippi Regional Library System believes that information should be free and easily accessible to all who seek it, and that libraries are crucial to providing this access. EMRL is committed to providing our community with the capability to explore, create, and learn in a safe and inviting environment, guided by a knowledgeable, professional, and courteous staff.

3 LIBRARY DIRECTOR

The Director is an appointee and employee of the Administrative Board of Trustees. Duties and compensation for the Director are established by the Administrative Board of Trustees and the Director may be removed by the Board for cause. The Director shall administer and establish procedures according to policies established by the Administrative Board of Trustees. The Director's duties include: (a) employment of staff with the approval of the Administrative Board of Trustees; (b) prescription of staff duties; (c) removal of staff for cause; (d) preparation of the library budget; (e) financial and statistical management; (f) periodic reporting to the Administrative Board of Trustees; and (g) other acts necessary for the orderly and efficient administration of the Library System. See *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 39-3-17*.

4 PERSONNEL POLICIES

4.1 EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

It is the library's policy to provide equal opportunity in employment for all individuals regardless of race, color, creed, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, or political affiliation.

4.2 IMMIGRATION REFORM AND CONTROL ACT (IRCA)

The library only hires persons who are legally authorized to work in the United States. IRCA requires employers to verify the employment eligibility of all new employees.

Employees must complete an I-9 form within three (3) days of starting to work. This form is used to verify identity and authorization to work.

4.3 MISSISSIPPI EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT

Pursuant to *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 71-11-3 (b)(i)*, the library participates in E-Verify, the federal government's voluntary employment verification program. The library is registered for and utilizes the Department of Homeland Security's E-Verify System by submitting social security numbers of new hires to verify their immigration status and employment eligibility. The E-Verify program is used to verify new hires only after an I-9 form has been completed. The program does not pre-screen applicants or re-verify the employment eligibility of current employees.

4.4 PROHIBITIONS AGAINST HARASSMENT

The library is committed to a professional workplace, free from adverse working conditions and all forms of harassment. Harassment is defined as unwelcome conduct based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability and/or age, and is strictly prohibited.

Harassment includes unwelcome conduct by supervisors or coworkers that is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive. Enduring the offensive conduct is never a condition of continued employment.

The library also strictly prohibits harassment of individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit concerning a discrimination claim. Retaliation is prohibited against employees who oppose employment practices that they reasonably believe is illegal discrimination.

The library's prohibition against harassment includes, but is not limited to, remarks, slurs, epithets, gestures, physical contact, threats, display, or circulation of written or electronic materials, pictures, or objects derogatory to any person based on the characteristics listed above. The library strictly forbids this type of behavior. Such will not be tolerated at any level of the organization.

All employees are encouraged to report unwelcome, harassing conduct by any Library employee. Even if the conduct is not directed at the employee, anyone affected by the offensive conduct is encouraged to report the behavior. The library expressly prohibits any unwelcome harassing conduct and will take appropriate steps to prevent and promptly correct such conduct.

The library specifically acknowledges that sexual harassment is a form of discriminatory harassment and is strictly prohibited. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Immediate and appropriate action will be taken to address violations of this policy.

The library uses filters to block material that is legally proscribed: child pornography, obscenity, and sexually oriented materials as defined by *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 97-5-29*. Employees may, however, sometimes encounter such material despite the best efforts of the library. In such cases, library employees should refer the matter to the director for further instruction.

Free speech v. conduct: The Library recognizes and encourages public rights to free speech, including the right to receive information in a public library. Employees may encounter materials purchased by the library or summoned on screen by library patrons that make the employees uncomfortable and upset. Handling and encountering such materials without judgment is part of the work requirement in public libraries. Harassing conduct, on the other hand, is not tolerated. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment. The test is whether this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

4.5 COMPLAINT PROCEDURES/INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

Employees are encouraged to communicate directly with one another to assure prompt discontinuation of any behavior found to be offensive. The library supports the rights of each employee to communicate directly with other employees in requesting that offensive conduct be discontinued. However, informal redress of complaints is not required, and the complaining employee may proceed to file a formal complaint in any situation in which informal redress is not feasible or desirable. Complaints should only be filed with the employee's immediate supervisor (except in certain cases, as described below).

No employee or applicant is required to endure unprofessional conduct from another employee, or workplace harassment. An employee who is unable to resolve the problem or who does not wish to discuss the issue with the offending party should report unwelcome conduct immediately to his/her immediate supervisor or the Library Director. If the immediate supervisor is the alleged source of the conduct, the employee should skip that level of management and report the conduct to the next level supervisor or to the Library Director. The complaint will be immediately investigated, and appropriate corrective action will be taken.

If an employee claims the Director is the source of the conduct, the employee should report the conduct to his/her immediate supervisor or to the Chairman of the Library System Administrative Board of Trustees. The Chairman will take immediate steps to investigate the complaint, independent from the Director, and prompt appropriate corrective action will be taken.

During the investigation, the complainant will be required to submit a written statement describing in detail the alleged conduct and the identity of any individuals that may have relevant information concerning the complaint. A prompt investigation, however, is not contingent on the employee submitting the written statement. In determining whether the conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment, the library will evaluate the behavior from the objective standpoint of a "reasonable person." The library will consider the context in which the alleged conduct took place and examine the behavior using the perspective of a reasonable person's reaction to a similar environment under similar or like circumstances. Corrective action will reflect the severity of the conduct. In all circumstances, the Complainant will be informed of the results of any investigation and the action taken.

4.6 AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The library will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, job training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. A qualified employee or applicant with a disability is an individual who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the job in question.

An individual with a disability is a person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

The library will make a reasonable accommodation for the known disability of a qualified applicant or employee if it does not impose an undue hardship on the legitimate administration of the library.

Applicants will not be asked about the existence, nature, or severity of a disability. Applicants will be asked about their ability to perform specific job functions. All requests for accommodations and steps to evaluate such requests will be documented by the Library Director.

The library strictly prohibits retaliation against any employee or applicant exercising rights granted by the ADA. Also, any coercion, intimidation, threats, harassment, or interference in the exercise of any employee or applicant's rights granted under the ADA, or of the encouragement of someone else's exercise of rights granted by the ADA, is strictly prohibited.

4.7 AGE DISCRIMINATION EMPLOYMENT ACT (ADEA)

The library does not discriminate on the basis of age and protects applicants and employees forty (40) years of age and older from discrimination on the basis of age in hiring, promotion, discharge, compensation, or terms, conditions or privileges of employment. The ADEA is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).

4.8 RELIGION - ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The library does not discriminate based on religion when hiring, terminating, or setting conditions of employment. The library treats employees and job applicants equally, without regard to religious beliefs and practices, except to the extent a religious accommodation is warranted. For example, the library will allow employees to wear clothing and ornaments that hold religious meaning for an individual.

The library will reasonably accommodate an employee sincerely held religious practices unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the legitimate administration of the library. A reasonable religious accommodation is any adjustment to the work environment that will allow the employee to practice his/her religion. An undue hardship is defined as requiring more than ordinary administrative costs, diminishing efficiency in other jobs, infringing on other employees' job rights or benefits, impairing workplace safety, or causing co-workers to carry an undue share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work. Legally, the Library may not provide an accommodation if such conflicts with another law or regulation. Religious expression in the workplace is permitted unless such imposes or would impose an undue hardship on the library.

Religious harassment of any employee is prohibited and should be immediately reported to the immediate supervisor or the Library Director. If the immediate supervisor is the alleged source of the harassment, the employee should skip that level of management and report the conduct to the next level supervisor or the Library Director. The complaint will be immediately investigated, and appropriate corrective action will be taken. If the Director is the alleged source of the harassment, then the employee will report the alleged harassment to the Chairman of the Library System Administrative Board of Trustees [or to his/her immediate supervisor who will then be responsible for reporting the behavior to the Chairman]. The Chairman will take immediate steps to investigate the complaint, independent from the Director and prompt appropriate corrective action will be taken. Consistent with other policies prohibiting retaliation, no employee will be retaliated against for making a claim of religious discrimination, requesting a religious accommodation, or reporting religious harassment. Retaliation against an employee for participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or litigation under Title 7 is also prohibited.

4.9 PROHIBITIONS AGAINST RETALIATION

The library will not dismiss, demote, harass, or otherwise "retaliate" against an individual for filing a charge of discrimination, participating in a discrimination proceeding, or otherwise opposing discrimination. The same laws that prohibit discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, and disability, as well as wage differences between men and women performing substantially equal work, also prohibit retaliation against individuals who oppose unlawful discrimination or participate in an employment discrimination proceeding.

In addition to the protections against retaliation that are included in all the laws enforced by EEOC, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) also protects individuals from coercion, intimidation, threat, harassment, or interference in their exercise of their own rights or their encouragement of someone else's exercise of rights granted by the ADA.

4.10 WHISTLEBLOWER ACT PROTECTION

A Library employee who reports or provides information to a state investigative body about what he/she believes, in good faith, is an improper act by the Library, is entitled to Whistleblower Protection as described in *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-9-171 et seq.* Employees are protected from reprisal or retaliatory action such as unwarranted letters of reprimand, demotion, reduction in pay, denial of promotion, suspension, or dismissal and denial of employment if such actions were the result of the employee's whistleblowing activities.

4.11 DRUG FREE WORKPLACE ACT

The library is committed to providing a drug free workplace. The library encourages employees and volunteers to voluntarily seek help with drug and alcohol problems. It is a violation of the library's drug-free workplace policy to use or possess alcohol or unlawful controlled substances while on the job or on the employer's premises. It is a violation to report to work under the influence of, or to have ability impaired by alcohol.

4.12 VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Violent behavior of any kind or threats of violence either implied or direct are prohibited at the East Mississippi Regional Library. An employee who exhibits violent behavior may be subject to criminal prosecution and shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The library will investigate all complaints filed and will also investigate any possible violation of this policy of which we are made aware.

5 FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT

In certain circumstances, when Library operations cannot be fulfilled during regular working hours by staff, employees may be required to work more than normal working hours.

When possible, advance notification of these assignments will be provided. All overtime worked must first be authorized by the Director. The library will comply with all requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), not to be confused with the leave provisions contained in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA.)

The Director, with the approval of the Library Administrative Board of Trustees, may designate certain executive, administrative and professional positions as exempt from the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Library Director applies the following standards in determining whether employees are designated as exempt or non-exempt from the requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act:

- Executive employees are employees whose primary duty is management of the Library or a recognized department of the library and who customarily and regularly direct the work of two or more other employees. These employees also can make suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring, firing, advancement, or change of status of other employees.
- Administrative employees are employees whose primary duty is the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general operations of the library and whose primary duty includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.
- Professional employees are employees whose primary duty is the performance of work requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course or specialized intellectual instruction; or requiring invention, imagination, originality, or talent in a recognized field of artistic or creative endeavor.

6 PAYROLL

6.1 DEDUCTIONS

Social Security, Medicare, State Retirement, as well as Federal and State withholding taxes are deducted from each employee's paycheck. Additional deductions may include, but are not limited to, deferred compensation, as well as relevant and appropriate health and/or life insurance costs. Deductions are made in accordance with all regulations and are recorded on the employee's paystub and in the library's payroll records.

6.2 PAYDAYS

The employees of the library system are paid once per month, no later than the last working day of the month.

6.3 DIRECT DEPOSIT (amended and approved October 5, 2020)

All employees of EMRL are required to have their payroll deposited electronically into their personal account with any qualified financial institution that allows electronic transfer of funds beginning October 1, 2020. The election of a financial institution for direct deposit of electronic payroll funds may be changed from time to time by an employee, so long as the procedure is not abused by the employee, and such change of depositories does not occur more than 3 times during the libraries fiscal year beginning October 1 and ending September 30. All full-time non-exempt classified employees will be paid over a 12-month period with adjustments made as needed to prevent the employee from being paid more than earned in each payroll period. Part time employees will be paid based on hours worked each month.

6.4 CRIMINAL RECORDS/CHILD ABUSE REGISTRY CHECK

(Approved October 5, 2020)

1. All new hire part-time and full-time employees must have a state child abuse registry check and criminal records background check.
2. EMRL will pay the background check fee.
3. Information obtained via these checks is for employment use only and cannot be disseminated.
4. Applicants are ineligible for employment if checks disclose a guilty plea, conviction, or nolo contendere plea to a felony conviction for:
 - Possession or sale of drugs.
 - Murder, Manslaughter, or Armed Robbery
 - Rape, Sexual Battery, or other sex offense
 - Child Abuse, Arson, Grand Larceny or Burglary
 - Gratification of Lust or Aggravated Assault
5. If the Library system has hired an applicant contingent upon a background check and derogatory information is obtained, the hiring of said applicant is null and void.
6. The East MS Regional Library Board may, at its discretion, waive any convictions and hire an applicant with a criminal record based on:
 - a. Age at commission of the crime
 - b. Circumstances surrounding the crime.
 - c. Length of time and criminal history since the crime
 - d. Work history and current employment and character
 - e. Other evidence demonstrating the ability of the person to perform the job without posing a threat to the health or safety of its patrons and other employees.

16.5 PETTY CASH POLICY AND PROCEDURE (approved October 5, 2020)

East MS Regional Library is committed to protecting its assets and using proper financial practices to help prevent fraud and detect errors. Petty cash transactions provide convenience for small transactions for which issuing a check is unreasonable or unacceptable. The following policies and procedures will be observed by all East MS Regional Library staff:

1. To facilitate refund and/or minor purchases, the Business Manager may establish a petty cash fund for each branch of the East MS Regional Library system. Minor purchases would include such items as office/program supplies, postage, small crafts, making change for patrons, and other small work-related expenses. No petty cash purchases should be larger than \$15.00 total in any one month. Such petty cash amount shall be limited to \$40.00 per library.
2. Itemized invoices must support all expenditures from this fund. This documentation shall remain with the petty cash until the fund is replenished. The sum of this documentation and the remaining cash shall, always, be equal to the original amount of the petty cash fund. The librarians at each branch shall be responsible for paperwork to replenish the account, for following procedures, and all losses incurred. At no time shall any loan, personal or otherwise, be made from the petty cash fund.
3. Replenishment takes place by presenting an itemized listing of all disbursements and amounts with documentation to the Business Manager. Replenishment occurs when the cash is nearly exhausted. After verification by the Business Manager and approval by the Director, a check will be written for the amount of the itemized listing and made payable to the person responsible. At this time, the Business Manager will enter the accounting data for the petty cash fund disbursements into the accounting records.
4. On or before September 15 of each year, an itemized listing of all disbursements with documentation and all cash will be submitted to the Business Manager for year-end closure of the Petty Cash Fund.
5. **PETTY CASH IS TO BE USED ONLY WHEN THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE NEED THAT WOULD NOT ALLOW TIME FOR STANDARD PURCHASING PROCEDURES.**

7.1 HEALTH INSURANCE

The library participates in the State and School Employees' Health Insurance Plan. Library employees who work twenty (20) or more hours per week are eligible to participate. Information is provided to all new employees about the available plans. Cost to the employee varies based on plan selection.

7.2 LIFE INSURANCE

Life insurance and Accidental Death and Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance is available to Library employees who work twenty (20) or more hours per week. An employee's group term life insurance amount is equal to two times his/her annual salary, then rounded up to the next highest thousand. The minimum amount of life insurance is \$30,000 and the maximum amount is \$100,000. The library pays for half of the premium and the employee is responsible for paying the other half.

7.3 CONSOLIDATED OMNIBUS BUDGET RECONCILIATION ACT (COBRA)

Information concerning the federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) is available to all employees. It provides the right to the temporary continuation of health coverage at the library's group rates for employees, spouses, and dependent children who participate in the library's health insurance plan. Under COBRA, the employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of coverage at the plan's group rates. Upon separation of employment, the necessary forms are provided to the employee with COBRA election forms describing said rights.

8 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

The library is committed to providing the opportunity for professional growth through a variety of skills development opportunities in both traditional and emerging library services to meet the needs of Library patrons and the local communities. Subject to available resources, the library encourages all staff to make maximum use of training and development opportunities to enhance job-related skills.

Upon completion of any skill development activity, employees are required to write a short report about the training sessions they attended, the information that they learned, and how they plan to use that information to advance the mission of the library and submit the report to the library director.

Staff is also encouraged to belong to professional organizations. Subject to available resources, the library will cover membership dues staff in appropriate professional organizations, including the Mississippi Library Association and the American Library Association. Staff is encouraged to attend job-related meetings, workshops, and library events appropriate to their job duties such as the USM Children's Book Festival, the Mississippi Library Association Annual Conference, or Mississippi Library Commission training events. Attendance must have prior approval from the director. Staff is in work status while attending such meetings and may be reimbursed for reasonable registration and travel expenses. Travel expenses are based on state rates for reimbursement.

9 SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Each employee of the East Mississippi Regional Library System shall be supervised by the library system director, who is in turn supervised by the regional board of trustees.

All EMRL employees are responsible for the supervision of substitute librarians, volunteers, janitorial staff, and any other temporary contractor, and should immediately report improper activity by any of these individuals to their supervisor, or to the library director.

10 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND REVIEW PROCESS

10.1 PROBATIONARY PERIODS

An employee's first six (6) months of employment are on a trial basis and are considered a continuation of the employment selection process. The six (6) month probationary period provides the library an opportunity to observe and evaluate the capacity of the employee, which includes the employee's ability to satisfactorily perform the essential functions of his or her job; and to observe and evaluate the employee's work habits and conduct, including attendance and the employee's relationship with coworkers and superiors. During this period, the employee is also subject to background and drug tests which will be administered according to library policy and relevant laws.

During this probationary period, the library may terminate employment immediately, with or without cause and with or without notice. Likewise, the employee may also terminate his or her employment with the library at any time, with or without notice and with or without cause. This six (6) month probationary period is not a term of employment and is not intended, nor does it, impact the at will nature of the relationship between the library and the employee.

10.2 JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Each Library position has a written job description that focuses on the essential functions of the job. The job description includes (1) position title, (2) key job responsibilities (3) core competencies, (4) special working conditions, and (5) minimum qualifications.

EMRL Job description texts can be found in the appendix of this manual.

10.3 APPRAISAL AND REVIEW

All employees must meet established performance standards. A performance appraisal and review process take place at the end of the six (6) month probationary period, and at least once a year thereafter. The purpose of the appraisal is to improve the quality and quantity of services, develop employee skills, motivate better performance, and increase communication between management and staff members. Informal evaluation of staff takes place throughout the year and will be referenced in the formal Performance Appraisal and Review. The Performance Appraisal and Review Process may be used to identify employees for future training opportunities, as well as retention or separation based on performance and/or conduct.

At the beginning of his/her employment, the employee is given the job description for his/her position and specific performance standards for those duties and is informed of any changes in duties and performance standards during the appraisal period. Performance appraisals are administered in a fair and consistent manner with the employee's job performance for the entire appraisal period considered and reviewed.

Employees are informed during the Performance Appraisal and Review session of areas of deficient work performance and needed improvement. Employees are required to cooperate with the Performance Appraisal and Review Process. During the appraisal/review session the director will document the appraisal and both parties will sign an acknowledgment that the employee's duties and performance were discussed.

11 ETHICS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

11.1 AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION (ALA) CODE OF ETHICS

Library staff must not remove or make inaccessible any library books or other materials that they or members of the public may consider offensive. If a patron complains about an item, including children's items, the matter must be referred to the Library Director. The library endorses the Code of Ethics of the American Library Association.

11.2 DISCIPLINARY OFFENSES: REMOVAL OF LIBRARY MATERIALS / DISCLOSURE OF PATRON RECORDS

It is against Library policy and is a serious offense for library employees to remove library materials based on offensive or objectionable content, either due to patron complaint or staff sensitivity. Challenges to library materials must be handled by the Library Director and the Administrative Board of Trustees according to the library's collection development policy. All such decisions must be made in accordance with Article 3, Section 13 of the Constitution of the State of Mississippi and with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Section 39-3-365 et seq. of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, annotated* forbids divulging patron records to anyone, including law enforcement, unless the library has the express written permission of the respective Library user, or a court order has been issued specifying the release of the records. Patron records are defined as records that contain information relating to the identity of the library user, relative to the user's use of books or other materials at the library. Aggregate statistics shown from registration and circulation records, with all personal identification removed, may be released, or used by the library for research, planning and reporting purposes. The law does not prohibit disclosure for the purpose of collecting overdue books, documents, films, or other items that belong to the library.

If law enforcement requests patron records, employees must direct the requests to the Library Director.

Instructions for the Library Director: The Library may only disclose patron records when proper legal process is followed. Even in a serious criminal case, such as child molestation, the law enforcement officers must, by law, get a court order before the library can legally disclose the records.

The officer may have a subpoena or a search warrant. A subpoena is not a court order unless it has been signed by a judge. Subpoenas do not require immediate execution (the typical timeframe is five (5) days), and the Director is advised to consult an attorney before responding.

A search warrant is a court order and is immediately executable. The Director is advised to have an attorney available for consultation, by telephone if necessary. If an attorney is unavailable, the recommended procedure for the Director is:

1. Verify that the officer is a legitimate law enforcement officer. If you do not know the officer, ask for identification. Assign a staff member to call the law enforcement agency (e.g. FBI field office) to verify. If possible, ask a staff member to take notes on the full encounter.
2. Examine the search warrant to assess validity. Make sure the warrant is signed by a judge, applies to the library's jurisdiction, and has the correct place and date.
3. Determine which records are specified by the search warrant.
4. Retrieve and give the specified records to the law enforcement officer. Do not provide additional records, even if the officer verbally requests them.
5. Write an incident report with full details of the encounter. It is permissible to take photos or videos. Remember incident reports are public records.

Exigent Circumstances: If law enforcement is in hot pursuit and life or limb is in danger, step back. The library is not a sanctuary for criminal behavior and only library patron records are protected by the law. In the event that law enforcement is concerned that patron records are too fragile to wait for a court order (e.g. electronic records that could be purged or paper Internet sign-up records that are routinely shredded), offer to preserve the records for thirty (30) days.

11.3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND INTEGRITY

Library employees are expected and required to:

- maintain the highest standards of honesty, integrity, impartiality, and conduct.
- avoid any misconduct and/or conflicts of interest.
- be impartial in all decision making and not give unjustified preferences to other staff or patrons.
- avoid using, or appearing to use, their position for personal gain (other than the remuneration received pursuant to employment) or for family members' personal gain.

No act shall be committed by an employee that could result in the questioning of the library's integrity. Library employees are required to comply with all state ethics laws regarding conflicts-of-interest, *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-4-101 et seq.* Associations, dealings, relationships, or interests that could affect, or reasonably appear to affect, an employee's objectivity in performing his/her job or in making decisions required of his/her position must be avoided. Any potential conflict of interest or situation that could be reasonably viewed as a conflict of interest must be immediately reported to the director.

A Library employee cannot serve in elected or appointed positions that have decision making authority over the library. A current Library employee must immediately resign if he/she accepts an elected or appointed position that has decision making authority over the library.

The library recognizes the potential conflicts of interest associated with employment of relatives, friends, or co-workers in a dating relationship. Potential claims of favoritism, partiality and conflict-of-interest are detrimental to the efficient operation of the library and a violation of Library policy. The director will take prompt action to address any actual, potential, or reasonably perceived conflicts of interest that arise involving employees.

Employees are not to engage in any activity in either a private or official capacity where a conflict of interest may reasonably exist. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In addition to complying with all state laws governing conflicts of interest, employees are also required to comply with all state laws regarding nepotism.

11.4 NEPOTISM

Nepotism is prohibited by Mississippi state law, *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25- 1-53.* It is unlawful for any public official or trustee to appoint or employ any person who is paid with public funds if that person is related to the public official or trustee by blood or marriage within the third degree as computed by civil law.

Nepotism does not apply to any employee who has been with the library or library system prior to the time his/her kinsman, within the third degree, becomes director of the public library system or a member of either an Administrative Board of Trustees or an Advisory Board of Trustees.

In Mississippi, the Guide to Civil Law Degrees of Kinship is as follows:

<u>First Degree</u>	<u>Second Degree</u>	<u>Third Degree</u>
Parents	Brothers	Uncles/Aunts
Spouse	Sisters	Nephews/Nieces
Children/Grandchildren	Grandparents	Great-grandparents

11.5 SOLICITATION

Public library buildings and grounds are defined as limited public forums. The East Mississippi Regional Library has authority to make reasonable rules that are universally applicable and content-neutral regarding the allowed uses of our buildings and property. The public property around our libraries are traditional public forums subject to reasonable time, place, and manner restrictions on those wishing to use them for purposes protected by the First Amendment.

The following guidelines apply to all such activities:

1. Persons may stand on Library property if they do not block entrances and exits or interfere with patrons seeking to use the library.
2. No activities may take place inside library facilities, with the following exceptions:
 - Those for fund-raising projects conducted to promote learning at the local schools, or that otherwise benefit learning and reading which are approved by the library director.
 - Those solicitation and fund-raising projects sponsored by the library staff.
with the approval of the library director.
3. No unauthorized solicitation of funds or sales of goods and services are allowed.
4. A letter of authorization must be secured from the city or town where the library property is located. A copy of each letter will be provided to the director before any activity may take place.

Employee Supplementary Employment Guidelines

Policy Overview: This policy is established to provide guidelines for public library employees engaging in supplementary employment while ensuring that library operations and the quality of service are not compromised. The policy aims to strike a balance between employee autonomy and the efficient functioning of the library.

- 1. Definition of Supplementary Employment:** Supplementary employment is defined as any legitimate and legal entrepreneurial or part-time activity pursued by an employee outside their regular library duties.
- 2. Permission and Notification:** Employees are required to obtain approval from their immediate supervisor before engaging in any supplementary employment. The supervisor will assess whether the supplementary employment may create any conflicts of interest, compromise the employee's performance, or negatively impact library operations.
- 3. Use of Break Times:** Employees are allowed to use their break times for supplementary employment activities, provided that it does not interfere with their regular library duties and is conducted in a manner that respects the library's work environment.
- 4. Personal Cell Phone Use:** Personal cell phones may be used during break times for supplementary employment activities, but their use should not disrupt library operations or affect the employee's primary responsibilities. Employees are encouraged to use discretion and keep personal calls and messages to a minimum during working hours. Library phones, work email, and other forms of communications used for official library use may not be used for supplementary employment activities. Direct anyone using these means to communicate with you to your personal channels.
- 5. Workplace Conduct:** Engaging in supplementary employment should not lead to any breach of workplace conduct, including but not limited to, excessive noise, disturbance, or use of library resources for personal gain. Employees are expected to maintain a professional demeanor at all times.

6. Confidentiality and Privacy: Employees must not disclose any confidential information related to library operations, patrons, or colleagues in the course of their supplementary employment activities. Any breach of confidentiality may result in disciplinary action.

Library user records can not be used in the course of supplementary employment activities. This includes, but is not limited to, using records to find out names, phone numbers, and home addresses of library patrons to use for the benefit of supplementary employment activities. Any breach of patron privacy may result in disciplinary action.

7. Accountability: Employees engaging in supplementary employment are accountable for managing their time effectively to ensure that their primary responsibilities at the library are not compromised. Excessive absenteeism or a decline in work performance due to supplementary employment activities may result in disciplinary action.

8. Communication with Supervisors: Employees are encouraged to communicate openly with their supervisors about their supplementary employment activities. Any changes in the nature or scope of the supplementary employment should be promptly communicated to ensure ongoing compliance with this policy.

9. Compliance and Review: Employees are expected to adhere to this policy, and any violation may lead to disciplinary action. The policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.

This policy aims to support employees in their entrepreneurial pursuits while maintaining a conducive and productive work environment at the public library. Other library policies regarding computer use, cell phone use, and other employment conduct are to be followed.

12 PUBLIC RECORDS

Library employees should be aware that Mississippi law provides for public records to be available for inspection by any person, subject to certain exceptions. Employees routinely create records, such as incident reports, emails, voicemails that may be subject to inspection according to the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated, § 25-61-1 et seq.*

13 DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

13.1 DISCIPLINARY ACTION

The library is committed to ensuring fair treatment of all employees. Disciplinary action shall be applied in steps of increasing severity whenever practical to stimulate a change in conduct or performance. The library adheres to fair and objective procedures and criteria for disciplinary action and is committed to progressive disciplinary action before an employee is dismissed, whenever practical. Examples of possible progressive disciplinary action prior to dismissal of an employee include a suspension without pay and/or a demotion to a position with less responsibility and/or salary.

The primary purpose of any disciplinary action is to correct and prevent problems in a timely manner and prepare the offending employee for satisfactory service in the future. The library distinguishes between less serious and more serious actions of misconduct and institutes disciplinary action using written reprimands. Reprimands are separated into First, Second, and Third Group offenses as defined below.

Corrective Action Meetings to address unacceptable conduct are conducted by the director in a timely manner. The director discusses the specific reprimand with the employee and direction is given by the director to the employee concerning the unacceptable conduct. The director also informs the employee of the potential consequences of any future unacceptable conduct. The discussion of the reprimand in the Corrective Action Meeting will be documented by the director and the employee is required to sign the memorandum acknowledging that the meeting took place, and the reprimand was discussed. The employee will have the right at this time to indicate that they do or do not concur with the text of the reprimand. The employee may also, within four (4) working days, submit in writing any information they feel is relevant to the circumstances behind the reprimand. This information will be kept in the employee's file with a copy of the reprimand text.

The following is a review of the Library's First, Second, and Third Group Offense reprimand policy. Offenses which are listed are some but not necessarily all examples of conduct which could result in a written reprimand under each offense. A written or verbal warning need not be given to the employee before written reprimands are issued.

First Group Offenses:

The accumulation of three (3) written First Group offense reprimands within a three (3) month period will result in suspension without pay not to exceed four (4) working days. A fourth First Group reprimand in that same three (3) month period will result in immediate dismissal.

Group One Offenses include:

- Unsatisfactory attendance or excessive tardiness
- Abuse of work time
- The use of obscene or offensive language during working hours
- Inadequate or unsatisfactory job performance
- Conviction of a moving traffic violation while operating a vehicle purchased with public funds.

Second Group Offense:

The accumulation of a Second Group offense may result in a suspension without pay not to exceed four (4) working days. Accumulation of two (2) second group offenses will result in immediate dismissal. Accumulation of one (1) second group offense and three (3) first group offenses will result in dismissal.

Group Two Offenses include:

- Failure to follow supervisor's instructions, perform assigned work, or otherwise comply with written policy.
- Leaving the work site during working hours (not to include break or lunch periods) for personal reasons without permission.
- Failure to report to work without giving proper notice to the director.
- Unauthorized use or misuse of state, county, or city property or records
- Negative, derogatory, or otherwise inappropriate discussion of library policies, administration, personnel, or other library related matters to the public.
- Other forms of insubordination as defined by the director or Regional Board of Trustees.

Third Group Offenses

The accumulation of a Third Group offense will result in the immediate dismissal of the employee.

Third Group offenses include:

- Absence or leave more than four (4) working days without satisfactory explanation.
- Reporting to work under the influence of, or when ability is impaired by, alcohol or any other substance.
- Use or possession of alcohol or controlled substances during working hours.
- Falsification of records
- Willful or negligent defacement of library records or property, or the property of library personnel or public
- Acts of physical violence
- Willful violation of safety rules
- Illegal possession or use of dangerous weapons during working hours
- Threatening or coercing library personnel or patrons
- Felony criminal convictions resulting from conduct during or after working hours.
- Other severe forms of insubordination as defined by the director or Board of Trustees

13.2 REMOVAL OF STAFF

The Library Director is responsible for the orderly and efficient administration of the library and may employ staff with the approval of the Board of Trustees as described in § 39-3-17 (3) of the *Mississippi Code 1972, Annotated*. The Director also has the authority to remove staff for cause. Unacceptable conduct, poor performance, reorganization plans and/or budget restrictions may be considered as cause to terminate the employment of an employee.

In the event a determination is made by the director or regional board of trustees to remove an employee for cause, written notice of such decision will be given to the employee. When practical, the notice will be hand delivered to the employee, otherwise the notice will be sent certified mail to his/her address on file.

13.3 NOTICE TO EMPLOYEE/OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING

An employee is entitled to a written notice of the reason(s) for the termination and a summary of the factual basis for the decision. In accordance with § 39-3-17 (3) of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, the notice will also inform the terminated employee that he/she may request a hearing before the Administrative Library Board of Trustees to present matters relevant to the reasons given for the termination decision, including any reasons alleged by the employee to be the reason for the action.

The terminated employee has four (4) working days from delivery of the termination notice to request a hearing via written notification to the Director. The Director will inform the Chairman of the Administrative Board of Trustees of the request. The Administrative Library Board of Trustees will send a notice of hearing to the terminated employee informing him/her of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

Prior to the requested hearing, all relevant documentation concerning the termination decision will be provided to the Administrative Board of Trustees. The Director will meet with the Board in executive session to review the documentation and answer questions.

The requested hearing will be held at least four (4) working days after written notice of hearing date. The hearing will be fair and impartial, and the terminated employee may be represented by counsel at his/her own expense. The Library Director and attorney for the Board shall also be present at the hearing. The hearing shall be informal and administrative in nature. Attorneys will not be permitted to cross examine witnesses and their participation may be limited by the Chairman, in harmony with the informal and administrative nature of the hearing.

The terminated employee and/or the employee's attorney will be permitted to present matters relevant to the reasons given for the termination decision, including any reasons alleged by the employee to be the reason for the action. The Board shall take the matter under advisement at the end of the meeting and will notify all parties in writing of the decision within ten (10) calendar days. The decision of the Administrative Board of Trustees is final.

If the terminated employee does not request a hearing before the Administrative Library Board of Trustees, the decision of the Director is final.

14 WORK SCHEDULES *(revised February 5, 2024 by board approval)*

Employees are required to observe the following hours of library operation, and number of working hours per week, as approved by the regional board of trustees, based on branch location:

Bay Springs Municipal Library

Two librarians, 40 hours per week each

Two librarians, 10 hours per week each

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 8 am – 6:30 pm

Wednesday: 7:30 am – 6 pm

Friday: 8 am – 6:30 pm

Saturday & Sunday: Closed

Enterprise Public Library

One librarian, 20 hours per week

Monday – Thursday: 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Friday, Saturday, Sunday: Closed

Mary Weems Parker Memorial Library

One librarian, 20 hours per week

One librarian, 4 hours per week

Monday - Thursday: 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Saturday: 9 am – 1 pm

Friday & Sunday: Closed

Pachuta Public Library

One librarian, 20 hours per week

Monday - Thursday: 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Friday, Saturday, Sunday: Closed

Stonewall Public Library

One librarian, 20 hours per week

Monday - Thursday: 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Friday, Saturday, Sunday: Closed

Regional Library Headquarters & Quitman Public Library

One director, 40 hours per week

One business manager, 40 hours per week

One cataloger, up to 20 hours per week

Two librarians, 40 hours per week each

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday: 8 am – 6:30 pm

Wednesday: 7:30 am – 6 pm; Friday, Saturday, Sunday: Closed

Branches must open at the above times, and close at the above times, unless otherwise indicated by the director or regional board of trustees. Hours of operation for the regional library headquarters may vary based on the need for regional staff to travel to other library branch locations and perform other duties required for the efficient operation of the library system. All hours of operation are set by the regional board of trustees in accordance with § 39-3-17 of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, and may be altered at any time.

- Employees working 40 hours per week are eligible to take two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute lunch period per 10-hour workday.
- Employees working 20-hour work weeks are eligible to take one 15-minute break per 5-hour workday.
- In certain circumstances, when Library operations cannot be fulfilled during regular working hours by staff, employees may be required to work more than normal working hours.
- When possible, advance notification of these assignments will be provided. All overtime worked must first be authorized by the Director. The library will comply with all requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), not to be confused with the leave provisions contained in the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA.)

14.1 LIBRARY VOLUNTEERS

The library system welcomes and encourages members of the community to volunteer their time and talents to enrich and expand library services. Volunteers are expected to conform to all library policies and the rules outlined in the employee guide, and they are selected and retained for as long as the library needs their services. Volunteers may be used for special events, projects, and activities, or on a regular basis to assist staff. Services provided by volunteers will supplement, but not replace, regular services, and volunteers will not be used in places of hiring full or part-time staff. Volunteers may apply for paid positions under the same conditions as other outside applicants. In accordance with labor laws and the policies of the regional board, paid staff may not volunteer their services to the library except with written permission from the library director. Staff may volunteer in other departments of city government outside the library. All volunteers must complete a volunteer application form. Volunteers under the age of 18 must receive permission from their parent or guardian to volunteer, indicated by a parent or guardian's signature on the application form.

15 HOLIDAYS

The library observes the ten (10) legal holidays set forth in § 3-3-7 of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated* and any additional holidays proclaimed by the Governor. The following have been designated as official state holidays:

- January 1 (New Year's Day)
- Third Monday of January (Robert E. Lee/Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthdays)
- Third Monday of February (Washington's Birthday)
- Last Monday of April (Confederate Memorial Day)
- Last Monday of May (National Memorial Day/Jefferson Davis's Birthday)
- July 4 (Independence Day)
- First Monday of September (Labor Day)
- November 11 Armistice Day (Veteran's Day)
- Thanksgiving Day
- December 25 (Christmas Day)

In lieu of the last Monday in April (Confederate Memorial Day), the library will observe Columbus Day as a holiday. If one of the ten regular state holidays mentioned above fall or is named by the governor to fall on a day that the library is not normally open, Confederate Memorial Day will be observed in lieu of that holiday.

16 LEAVE POLICIES – (Revised September 26, 2022)

16.1 PERSONAL LEAVE

The earned personal leave of each employee shall be credited monthly after the completion of each calendar month of service, and EMRL shall not increase the amount of personal leave to an employee's credit. It shall be unlawful for EMRL to grant personal leave in an amount greater than was earned and accumulated by the employee. Employees are encouraged to use earned personal leave. Personal leave may be used for vacation and personal business. Accrued personal leave may also be used for an illness in the employee's immediate family as defined in Section 25-3-95. There shall be no limit to the accumulation of personal leave. Upon termination of employment each employee shall be paid for not more than thirty (30) days of accumulated personal leave. Unused personal leave in excess of thirty (30) days shall be counted as creditable service for the purposes of the retirement system as defined by the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, § 25-11-103 and 25-13-5. All requests for personal leave must be received and approved by the director at least two days in advance of the leave day(s) requested by the employee. Leave can only be requested after it has been earned. Personal leave requests which total more than two weeks (eight working days) in a row will not be approved by the director except under rare circumstances. All requests for personal leave, no matter the length, are approved at the discretion of the director, based on the operational needs and staffing requirements of the library. Library employees accrue personal leave at a scheduled rate based on length of service with the library and number of regularly scheduled work hours per week as described below:

PERSONAL LEAVE	
Continuous Service	Hours per Month Annually
1 month-3 Years	12
37 months-8 years	14
97 months-15 years	16
More than 15 years	18

- 20-hour staff: 5 hours per month annually, increasing to 7 hours per month annually after 5 years of service.

16.2 MAJOR MEDICAL LEAVE (Revised September 26, 2022)

The earned major medical leave of each employee shall be credited monthly after the completion of each calendar month and shall not increase the amount of major medical leave to an employee's credit. It shall be unlawful to grant major medical leave in an amount greater than was earned and accumulated by the employee. Major medical leave for library employees may be used for the illness or injury of the employee or a member of the employee's immediate family. Immediate family is defined by the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, § 25-3-95 as: spouse, parent, stepparent, sibling, child, stepchild, grandchild, grandparent, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law. Child means a biological, adopted, or foster child, or a child for whom the individual stands or stood *in loco parentis*.

Employees who have an illness requiring the use of more than four (4) medical leave days in a row must submit to the library director a written note or form signed by their physician confirming the employee has visited the physician and is currently under their care for the specified illness. Whenever possible the note or form should also include a potential date that the employee may be able to return to work. Employees in this circumstance may also be required to receive authorization to return to work. For more information, see Section 16.12 of this manual.

An employee may use up to three (3) days of earned major medical leave for each occurrence of death in the immediate family (as defined by the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, § 25-3-95) requiring the employee's absence from work. No qualifying time or use of personal leave will be required prior to use of major medical leave for this purpose.

An employee may use up to six (6) weeks of earned major medical leave for the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one (1) year of placement.

Library employees accrue medical leave at a scheduled rate based on the number of regularly scheduled work hours per week as described below:

MAJOR MEDICAL LEAVE	
Continuous Service	Hours per Month Annually
1 month-3 years	8
37 months-8 years	7
97 months-15 years	6
More than 15 years	5

- 20-hour staff: 4 hours per month annually

If an illness or injury causes an employee to exhaust all accumulated medical leave, the employee may use accumulated personal leave. Unused major medical leave in excess of thirty (30) days shall be counted as creditable service for the purposes of the retirement system as defined by the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, § 25-11-103 and 25-13-5.

16.3 WORKERS' COMPENSATION

All Library employees are covered by the Mississippi Workers' Compensation Law, *Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated § 71-3-17 et seq.* which provides certain benefits in the event an employee suffers a work-related injury or illness. In case of a work-related fatality, the law guarantees payment of benefits to the spouse and dependents of the deceased. Workers' Compensation benefits are provided at no cost to the employee or dependents.

For injury/illness, benefits may include payment of all reasonable and necessary medical expenses, as well as partial compensation for wages lost due to the injury or illness. In certain cases, vocational rehabilitation may also be available.

Wage-loss benefits for injury /illness are not paid for the first five (5) days of disability unless the disability extends fourteen (14) or more days. These benefits are payable at the rate of two-thirds of the employee's average weekly wage. These benefits may also be subject to a weekly maximum set by law.

Workers' Compensation claims are time sensitive. Employees must report claims within thirty (30) days after the occurrence, subject to statutory exceptions as outlined in the *Mississippi Code of 1972 Annotated § 71-3-35*. Any injury/illness that happens on the job should be reported immediately to the director to ensure appropriate medical treatment is provided and any wage loss benefits due the employee are paid without unnecessary delay.

16.4 MILITARY LEAVE

The Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Act of 1994 (USERRA, 38 U.S.C. Sec. 4301-4335), grants re-employment rights, within certain time limits, to soldiers who leave employment to perform military duty and who satisfactorily perform that duty. The right to re-employment is not contingent on whether the orders were voluntary or involuntary.

Re-employment rights will be granted to employees who:

- provide the library with advance written or verbal notice of the military service.
- do not have more than five (5) years of cumulative service in the uniformed services while employed by the library.
- return to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner after conclusion of service; and
- have not been separated from service with a disqualifying discharge or under other than honorable conditions.

Pursuant to *Mississippi Code of 1972, annotated § 33-1-21*, employees are entitled to fifteen (15) days of paid leave when ordered to military duty, whether the orders were voluntary or involuntary. An employee requesting leave, pursuant to voluntary or involuntary orders, beyond the fifteen (15) days allowed by law is entitled to a leave-of absence which can be charged against his/her accrued personal or compensatory leave. If the employee does not have sufficient leave to cover the absence, the leave may be without pay. The employee is entitled to leave-of-absence from his/her respective duties without loss of time, annual leave, or efficiency (performance) rating until relieved from duty.

16.5 FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Employees who have worked for the library for at least one (1) year and for one thousand two hundred and fifty (1,250) hours over the previous twelve (12) months are covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

In compliance with FMLA, eligible Library employees are entitled to up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid, job-protected-leave per defined “rolling” twelve (12) month period for the following reasons:

- A. incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care, or childbirth.
- B. to care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care.
- C. to care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition; or
- D. serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

A "serious health condition" means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves:

- any period of incapacity or treatment connected with inpatient care (i.e., an overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or
- a period of incapacity requiring absence of more than **three calendar days** from work, school, or other regular daily activities that also involves continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a health care provider; or
- any period of incapacity due to pregnancy, or for prenatal care; or
- any period of incapacity (or treatment therefore) due to a chronic serious health condition (e.g., asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, etc.); or
- a period of incapacity that is permanent or long-term due to a condition for which treatment may not be effective (e.g., Alzheimer's, stroke, terminal diseases, etc.); or,
- any absences to receive multiple treatments (including any period of recovery therefrom) by, or on referral by, a health care provider for a condition that likely would result in incapacity of more than three consecutive days if left untreated (e.g., chemotherapy, physical therapy, dialysis, etc.).

According to FMLA guidelines, "Continuing treatment" is a period of incapacity of more than three (3) consecutive calendar days combined with at least two (2) visits to a health care provider. The two (2) visits to a health care provider must occur within thirty (30) days of the beginning of the period of incapacity and the first visit to the health care provider must take place within seven (7) days of the first day of incapacity.

During all FMLA leave, the employee's group health coverage will be maintained. Upon return from FMLA leave, the employee will return to the original or equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms. Use of FMLA will not result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave. Time spent performing assigned "light duty" work does not count against an employee's FMLA leave entitlement.

Employees must provide thirty (30) days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When thirty (30) days' notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable. The notice must be consistent with the usual and customary Library procedures for reporting an absence unless there are unusual circumstances.

Employees are required to provide sufficient information for an FMLA eligibility determination to be made. This information will also be used to determine the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Employees must complete and return, within fifteen (15) days of the first day of leave, one of the following U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) certification forms:

1. Serious health condition – USDOL Form WH-380-E
2. Care for a covered family member – USDOL Form WH-380-F.
3. Qualifying exigency for military family leave – USDOL Form WH-384.
4. Serious injury/illness of covered service member for military family leave – USDOL Form-385.

If information provided by the employee or the healthcare provider on the certification form is incomplete or insufficient, the employee will be notified, in writing, as to what information is lacking and given seven (7) calendar days to cure the deficiency. Employees may be required to provide a new medical certification each leave year for medical conditions that last longer than one year. Recertification may also be required every six (6) months for an ongoing condition resulting in recurring absences. Eligible employees requesting leave will be informed as to whether said condition/exigency qualifies for FMLA leave. An FMLA-qualifying employee:

- may use FMLA leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary or for qualifying exigencies.
- using FMLA leave intermittently must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt Library operations.
- must also inform his/her supervisor if leave being requested is for a condition/situation for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

No Library employee may interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under the Family and Medical Leave Act. No Library employee may discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to the FMLA.

Military Entitlement. An eligible employee is entitled to up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee is a member of any Armed Forces and/or a

reserve component of the Armed Forces on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member who is recovering from a serious illness or injury sustained in the line of duty any time during the five years preceding the treatment is entitled to up to 26 weeks of leave in a single 12-month period to care for the service member.

The twenty-six (26) week entitlement applies to additional family members (i.e., next of kin) not previously covered for qualifying reasons. This entitlement is not in addition to the twelve (12) week FMLA entitlement for qualifying exigencies.

The text provided in this section of the manual is not meant to represent the totality of information available about, or all employee rights under, the Family and Medical Leave Act. For updates and more detail visit the U.S. Dept. of Labor's webpage at <http://www.dol.gov/>.

16.6 SABBATICAL LEAVE

In accordance with the §39-3-20 of the *Mississippi Code of 1972, Annotated*, professional Library staff members are eligible for sabbatical leave for professional improvement, for up to one (1) year immediately following any six (6) or more consecutive years of active service. Absence on sick leave does not affect staff eligibility. Sabbatical leave for professional staff members must have the approval of the Administrative Library Board of Trustees.

Applications for sabbatical leave may be made to the administrative board of trustees, with the approval of the Director. Any person who is granted a sabbatical leave and who fails to comply with the provisions of such leave may have his/her leave terminated by the administrative board of trustees. Employees on sabbatical leave are not denied any regular increment of increase in salary because of absence on sabbatical leave.

A person on sabbatical leave shall enjoy all the rights and privileges pertaining to his/her employment, such as health insurance and credit for active service for the purpose of retirement and contributions to the retirement fund consistent with regulations of the Mississippi Public Employees Retirement System. Leave will not be granted unless there is a contract providing for continued service in the library, after expiration of the leave. Each person granted sabbatical leave may receive and be paid compensation up to the rate of fifty percent (50%) of such person's annual salary. Compensation payable to persons on sabbatical leave will be paid at the same time and in the same manner salaries of the other employees of the library are paid.

16.7 Non-Qualifying FMLA Unpaid Medical Leave Policy (approved October 5, 2020)

A. Eligibility

This Non-qualifying Family Medical Leave applies only to those employees who are not eligible under the Family Medical Leave Act due to not meeting the FMLA requirement of being employed for at least 1,250 hours of services during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of leave.

B. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is, to the extent allowed by law and on a fair and consistent basis, to protect the employment and benefits of newly hired employees, and our veteran employees who are scheduled to work less than 1,250 hours per year. It is not intended to otherwise increase or supplement any benefit received by an employee under FMLA.

C. Provisions

In lieu of FMLA leave, an employee is entitled to Non-Qualifying Family Medical Leave up to 120 hours during a 12-month period, for any one or more of the following reasons:

- The birth of a son or daughter, and to care for the newborn child (within 12 months of birth).
- The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care (within 12 months of the placement).
- To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition.
- The employee's own serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform the function of his/her job.

Implementation

- Payment of all insurance premiums during the leave period may be the responsibility of the employee, unless employee-only health insurance payments are approved by the State of Mississippi, Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Insurance.
- Additional leave will not be earned during the time of absence.
- Donated leave will not be accepted to extend employment protection beyond the stated limit.
- If an employee does not return after a period of Non-Qualifying Family Medical Leave, the employee may be required to refund insurance premiums paid on behalf of the employee.
- Subject to the eligibility and other provisions above, Non-Qualifying Medical Leave follows the same rules as FMLA leave.

Classification

Non-Qualifying Family Medical Leave is UNPAID LEAVE, but any paid leave must be used concurrently, subject to the same provisions as with FMLA leave.

16.8 TARDINESS

Employees who are tardy to work are eligible to receive a first group reprimand. For more information about reprimands and their associated consequences, see Section 13 of this manual.

16.9 EDUCATIONAL LEAVE

Employees may be granted up to eighty (80) hours of educational leave during regularly scheduled hours of work within any calendar year to participate in position and career-related educational or professional development programs. To be eligible, employees should have successfully completed a probationary period and have a performance level that is satisfactory or better.

Educational programs that are required for continued employment, as determined by the supervisor, are *excluded* from this policy, and do not count against the eighty-hour allotment.

Education leave may not accumulate from year-to-year. Participation in education leave shall be approved in advance and scheduled according to operational needs within the library.

Upon completion of a program and in accordance with departmental procedures, the employee may be required to submit verification of attendance or successful completion.

16.10 MATERNITY LEAVE

Employees with one year or more of service time shall be granted six (6) weeks of paid parental leave at the birth of a child or the placement of an adopted child under the age of twelve (12) years. Employees should provide at least one month's notice prior to the start of the leave, whenever possible. When additional time is needed beyond six weeks because of medical reasons, employees may use any accrued medical leave after the submission of proper medical documentation.

An employee who is unable to perform her duties due to medical reasons associated with pregnancy and childbirth is entitled to discharge accumulated sick leave for the length of time certified by her physician. An employee with at least six months service may request an unpaid leave of absence not to exceed six months. Employees on unpaid maternity leave shall receive health benefits paid by the library in accordance with the existing policy that is in effect when the employee is granted leave.

16.11 AUTHORIZED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

An employee with at least one year of service time may request a leave of absence without pay from his or her position for up to twelve (12) months. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the director and are subject to approval by the regional board of trustees.

16.12 AUTHORIZATION TO RETURN TO WORK AFTER SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITION

Following recovery from a serious health condition (as defined in section 16.5 of this manual), an employee must present documentation signed by his or her physician which states that he or she is eligible and able to return to work. Such documentation should also outline any limitations that the employee may temporarily or permanently have which may affect his or her job performance going forward because of the serious health condition.

16.13 TIMESHEETS/FULL TIME (NON-EXEMPT) EMPLOYEE PAY

Full Time (Non-Exempt) Employee Pay Policy: Hours worked shall be accurately recorded by each employee on a monthly time sheet or other means as required by the library. Employees using time sheets shall furnish all information requested and shall record the exact time of arrival and departure from work. Employees are expected to arrive and depart at the time specified by the Director (Section 14).

No deduction from the pay of any non-exempt employee may be made until after all sick and personal leave allowance credited to such non-exempt employee has been used.

The work week as defined by the library begins one second after midnight on Sunday and ends at midnight on the following Saturday. The regular workweek will be limited to forty hours within this time frame.

16.14 TIMESHEETS/PART-TIME LIBRARIAN/SUBSTITUTE LIBRARIAN PAY

Part-time librarians (any employee who regularly works less than 20 hours per week) and substitute librarians (any employee who works on an “as needed” basis), shall complete a monthly time sheet recording all hours worked for the pay period. Time sheets should be signed by the employee and sent to the Business Manager for processing no later than the Monday following the 3rd Saturday of the month. Part-time librarians and substitute librarians will be paid based on hours worked each month.

17 RETIREMENT/SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT

17.1 RETIREMENT

Certain employees, as specified below, become a member of the Mississippi Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) as a condition of employment. Retirement System participation and coverage is provided to employees in positions that require compensated work for at least twenty (20) hours per week OR at least eighty (80) hours per month. Participation is offered to employees whose wages are subject to payroll taxes and are reported on Form W-2. When an individual is first employed, the library furnishes the new employee with a member information form to establish a PERS membership account. Additional information concerning retirement benefits is contained in the PERS Member Handbook. Information may also be obtained by calling PERS at 1-800-444-7377 or (601) 359-3589 or by visiting Public Employees Retirement System of Mississippi at www.pers.state.ms.us.

17.2 SEPARATION – VOLUNTARY

Employees who wish to leave the workforce must give written notice two weeks (eight working days) prior to the last workday to leave in good standing. Employees who leave in good standing may elect either to be paid for unused vacation and medical time (up to 30 days), or to receive a credit for unused leave to go towards his or her retirement according to current PERS policy. Employees who leave in good standing will also be eligible for rehire in the future. An exit interview will be scheduled with the library director on the last day of employment. All library property, including keys and identification cards, must be returned before issuance of the final paycheck.

17.3 SEPARATION – INVOLUNTARY

Employees may be terminated for substandard work without notice during the probationary period. After the probation period, employees will receive oral and written counseling to improve substandard work before dismissal to correct unsatisfactory conduct. Serious offenses, including but not limited to, theft, use of drugs or alcohol while at work, and physical assault, may result in immediate dismissal without counseling. Employees who are terminated have the right to request a hearing with the regional board. For more information about the library's disciplinary process, see Section 13 of this manual.

In the event a determination is made by the director or regional board of trustees to remove an employee for cause, written notice of such decision will be given to the employee. When practical, the notice will be hand delivered to the employee, otherwise the notice will be sent certified mail to his/her address on file.

If budget cuts necessitate a reduction in staffing levels, the library director will determine which positions can be cut to create the least overall negative effect on library services. The director's plan will be submitted to regional board of trustees for approval before implementation. Longevity will be a primary factor in retaining staff, and whenever possible, staff will be moved into vacant positions for which they are qualified. Separated employees may elect either to be paid for unused vacation and medical time (up to 30 days), or to receive a credit for unused leave to go towards his or her retirement according to current PERS policy.

18 EMPLOYMENT REFERENCES

It is the library's policy to disclose in response to a prospective employer's request for an employment reference, both employment verification and performance related information about current or former employees. All requests for employment references shall be forwarded to the director. The director is the only person authorized to respond to the request. Responses to employment reference requests will only be given after receiving a properly executed release form signed by the current or former employee. The release form must adequately release and discharge the Administrative Board of Trustees, Library and its employees and officers, including the director, from all liabilities, claims and/or causes of action, known or unknown, that arise from or that are in any manner connected to disclosure of the requested reference information.

Responses to employment reference requests will only be given to the appropriate person asking for the information and only after the director has verified the identity of the requestor. In response to proper reference requests, the director shall verify the dates of employment; description of the duties performed; and salary information. The director will also give information related to the job-related performance and conduct assessments of the employee and limit responses to the specific questions asked by the requestor.

19 EMPLOYEE USE OF COMPUTERS AND INTERNET POLICY

It is important that each person employed by the library, whether full-time, part-time, temporary, contractor or subcontractor, understands and acknowledges the Computer and Internet Policy that governs the use of all computers, computer-based communications networks, and all related equipment.

The electronic communications and facility of the library are government property and by using these facilities, the user acknowledges consent to abide by these policies. No communications or uses of the information systems resources are to be considered private or confidential and use of such systems may be monitored at any time.

The library prohibits the use of these technology resources in any manner which is disruptive, offensive, harmful to morale, unethical or illegal under state and/or federal laws. It is the responsibility of each employee and volunteer to use these resources in a responsible, courteous manner following accepted standards of behavior and etiquette. All e-mail, instant messaging or other communication composed, transmitted, or received via the library's computers is part of the official records of the library. As such, the information may be subject to disclosure to public records requests or law enforcement agencies should circumstances arise that require such action. Any employee or volunteer found violating this policy may be restricted from, or denied, use of the information technology resources of the library, and are subject to disciplinary action. If an employee or volunteer is found committing unlawful activities, the appropriate law enforcement agency/agencies will be notified.

20 EMPLOYEE DRESS AND SPEECH

20.1 EMPLOYEE DRESS

The appearance of Library employees and volunteers reflects directly on how the library is perceived by the public. The following serve as guidelines:

- Slacks and shirts are appropriate for men and women. Dresses, skirts, or Capri pants which are at least knee-length, blouses, and pant suits are appropriate for women.
- Blue jeans and T-shirts are to be avoided except on occasions where the nature of the job to be performed is physical and involves contact with dirt and grime. Jeans should be dark in color and have no rips, tears, or stains.
- Clothing must not advertise alcohol, illegal acts, or substances, or have any sexual content or innuendo.
- Shoes should be appropriate to the task at hand. Rubber flip-flops are not permitted.
- The following are not permitted: provocative, revealing, or abbreviated clothing; athletic clothing (sweats, warm-up suits); tank tops; shorts; excessive amounts of perfume or cologne.
- Other items of clothing, accessories, etc., which affect the appearance of an employee not listed here may be deemed inappropriate at the discretion of the director.

20.2 STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA

The following policies in no way conflict with the Whistleblower Protection Act regarding statements to investigatory bodies. The Whistleblower Protection Act does not apply to media statements.

Employees of the library should refer all media inquiries and requests for information or an interview to the director. All other employees are not to make statements to the media regardless of media deadlines unless previous permission has been received from the director.

20.3 POSTING TO LIBRARY BLOGS, PODCASTS, SOCIAL NETWORKS, TWITTER, ETC.

Official library blogs, podcasts, photo sites, social network profiles, twitter feeds, etc. are an increasingly effective means of communication with library users and the larger community. Library staff must first be designated by the director to post on behalf of the library, and must always adhere to the following guidelines when posting:

- Use a professional voice. Use standard English spelling and grammar. Avoid use of slang language and abbreviations such as 4now ("for now").
- Always verify facts before posting.
- Minimize opinions unless specifically authorized by the Library Director.
- Do not post pictures of people, especially children, without written permission. In the case of children, written permission from a parent or guardian is required.

The library does not interfere with personal expression done outside the library setting. However, if employees' comment on any aspect of the library in their own personal blogs, they must clearly identify themselves as Library employees and include a disclaimer that the views expressed are their own and not those of the library.

21 DRUG AND SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE

Employees may not engage in the unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs and controlled substances in the workplace. Employees who violate the terms of this policy statement will be subject to immediate dismissal.

The library and its governing body recognize that the use of illegal drugs, or the abuse of legal substances such as prescription drugs or alcohol, may be a symptom of chemical dependency or mental health issues. Employees who pursue treatment under the library's health care program may use medical and/or personal leave while in treatment.

In compliance with local ordinances, and to protect the health of all employees and patrons, smoking is prohibited within the library and within 15 feet of the building. Smoking is not permitted in private offices. The library encourages employees to participate in smoking cessation programs, and sick leave may be used to attend smoking cessation classes or for health care appointments related necessary to quit smoking.

22 LIBRARY PROPERTY (Revised July 19, 2021)

22.1 INVENTORY AND DISPOSAL

All equipment and/or furnishings owned by the East Mississippi Regional Library estimated to be valued at over \$500 must be inventoried. Inventory information should include the item name, a short description, the purchase date, item location, and *serial number if applicable*.

When an item on the inventory list is no longer of use to the library system, the item may be disposed following *EMRL Board approval*.

All library materials should be inventoried at each branch location every three years.

22.2 LIBRARY VEHICLES

The East Mississippi Regional Library owns and operates a vehicle for the purpose of assisting in the fulfillment of the library's mission. The Library Director will be responsible for directing and administering the use of any library vehicle and must authorize all vehicle uses and users. Any vehicle owned and operated by the library may only be used for official library business, not for personal benefit. Official business includes purchasing library materials and supplies, the transport of library property between library facilities and program locations, and the transport of library personnel (employees, board members, etc.) to conferences, workshops, and seminars.

An employee may be authorized to take a vehicle home providing it is more efficient and cost effective to the library for the employee to take the vehicle home at the end of the day than it would be to return the vehicle to storage.

Operators of any vehicle owned by the library must be library employees and must have a valid, current motor vehicle operator license from the State of Mississippi in their possession while operating a library vehicle. Employees authorized to operate library vehicles must report any change in the status of their license, such as restrictions or suspensions, to the library director immediately.

Vehicle operators must observe all federal, state, and local laws and regulations and posted speed limits. Employees who violate any laws or regulations are personally responsible for the payment of any fines or other penalties, including but not limited to parking violations.

The library director and/or business manager will be responsible for maintaining any library owned vehicle in a safe and sound working condition through a program of regular internal maintenance and external repair when necessary or desirable.

22.3 EMPLOYEER TELEPHONE/CELL PHONE USAGE

The library telephone line must be kept open as much as possible for the library to provide the best service possible to our patrons. All call lengths should be kept to a minimum to allow others to reach the library. If a response to a patron inquiry cannot be provided within a few minutes, the patron should be called back later with the answer or be asked to visit the library.

Patron's use of library telephone lines is limited to emergencies only. Calls of this nature should only last for a few minutes at most.

Personal telephone calls to staff members will be made and received only in cases of emergencies on library phone lines.

Cellphones owned by employees and patrons must be turned off or placed on silent when in the library building. When making a call, patrons and staff must leave the building or go to a place in the building where the call will not disrupt others from using the library.

Employees may send and receive short personal phone calls during work hours on their cellphone. However, under no circumstances should a personal phone call be made behind the circulation desk or anywhere that patrons can hear the conversation, or when patrons are waiting for service.

Employees are also permitted to send and receive text messages during work hours. However, such activity should be kept to a minimum, and should in no way affect patron service or the performance of other job duties.

22.4 HOUSEKEEPING

Housekeeping is the responsibility of all library employees. Employees will be evaluated on the cleanliness of their personal area and their library branch during yearly evaluations.

23 SAFETY AND SECURITY

Inappropriate behavior by patrons or staff will be addressed with a response proportionate to the severity of the behavior. Enforcement of the safety and security of patrons and library property is the responsibility of all Library staff. All staff members are expected to deal with problems they encounter in the manner most appropriate to the situation. Staff response will vary according to the severity of the disruption, ranging from tolerance and warnings to, in severe or repeated cases, eviction, calling local law enforcement, or banning. When in doubt as to the appropriate response to a behavior, staff members should contact the library director if time and situation permits. However, if this is not possible due to the circumstances of the incident, library staff members who have acted in their best judgment in confronting a person on violations of policies and rules will be supported by the director.

Any staff member may issue a verbal warning. Any staff member may evict a patron for violations of library rules or policies. Eviction will generally be from the library, not just an area, and is generally for the balance of the day. In the case of juvenile patrons, staff may contact their parents or guardians.

Any staff member may contact local law enforcement at any time to preserve his or her own safety, the safety of Library users or for assistance in enforcing policy and preserving the library environment as defined by the policies adopted by the Library Board of Trustees.

Any staff member observing serious criminal behavior, such as assault, robbery, child pornography, child endangerment, etc. should contact local law enforcement immediately, followed by contacting the director.

Patrons exhibiting inappropriate behavior are subject to be banned from all EMRL library branches. The regional board delegates authority to ban patrons from the library for an extended period to the director. Individuals may be banned for a limited time, indefinitely pending some specified legal condition, or permanently. The length of the ban will depend on the following factors, as applicable, though other factors may be relevant in specific cases:

- Severity of offense
- Repeated offenses
- Likelihood of possible continued offenses
- Safety of staff and patrons

When an individual is banned, that person and the police will be notified, and the information will be made available to Library staff. Should a banned individual return to the library in violation of the ban, staff should contact the police.

23.1 SECURITY CAMERAS

All EMRL branch locations have security cameras installed to help ensure the safety of library staff, patrons, and library property. All EMRL employees must agree to be recorded as a condition of employment with the library system.

All branch locations must maintain a sign on library entrances informing the public that they are being recorded while on the library campus.

23.2 SEVERE WEATHER AND EMERGENCY POLICY (Revised/Approved April 25, 2022)

Purpose: In order to fulfill its mission of public service the East Mississippi Regional Library will make every reasonable effort to open to the public as scheduled, consistent with safe access for the public and staff. However certain situations such as severe weather and emergencies may warrant a change in library business hours.

Severe Weather:

The decision to close, postpone opening or close early due to inclement weather will be made by the library director and/or the library board chairperson based on local weather conditions and alerts. Should the board chairperson be unavailable, the Director would make the decision for inclement weather closure.

In the event that inclement weather makes it unsafe to open the library building, the library director or designee will notify staff that they should not report to work or that the library will open on a delayed schedule.

In the event of severe thunderstorms, high winds, or tornados during business hours, library staff should move patrons away from windows and other areas where glass is present into areas such as interior hallways, restrooms, or interior rooms with no windows until the danger is passed.

Once the danger has passed, the staff should check for injuries and check the building for damage. If there are injuries, 911 should be immediately called. In the event of building damage staff members should notify the library director immediately.

Emergencies:

While it is impossible to anticipate every emergency situation that may arise, the library director and/or library board chairperson may close any EMRL branch location when, in his or her best judgment, conditions are such that they pose a serious safety risk or danger to staff and/or patrons. Librarians should alert the library director when conditions warrant closure if possible. However, if in the judgement of that staff person the safety of library staff or patrons is under immediate threat, all appropriate actions including notifying local law enforcement, evacuation of a library building, etc., should be taken immediately to ensure the safety of those individuals before an attempt is made to contact the director.

Every staff member should be familiar with the layout of the library building, as well as each exit from the building. If it is necessary for a library building to be evacuated, library staff must first make certain that it is safe to evacuate, and then ensure that the evacuation proceeds in a quick and orderly fashion until all members of the public and staff have left the building. The building will then be secured to the extent possible (doors locked, security system armed, etc.) based on the current situation.

Emergency kits, including basic first aid supplies, a flashlight and batteries, biological hazard gloves and masks, and a battery-operated radio, will be maintained at each branch's circulation desk and in the regional library office. These kits should be checked periodically to make sure supplies are replenished when necessary.

Following any emergency, staff members will be required to submit a written report to the library director. The library director will provide a report on the emergency and its handling to the board of trustees at their next meeting.

General Policy and Procedure:

Staff members who are notified that they should not report to work based on the above situations will receive their regular pay. Staff on sick or vacation leave during an emergency closure will have their time charged to those pay accounts. Depending on the exact nature of the emergency closure, key staff may be required to report to work.

The Library Director or designee should notify the public of library closings using any or all the following methods: Facebook, Instagram, the library webpage, or local media outlets.

24 INCIDENTS

Library employees are required to report all accidents or unusual incidents to the Library Director in writing. The time, place, nature, and circumstances of the accident/incident are to be included in the report. The report should also list the names of any library employees or patrons who may have witnessed the accident or incident.

25. LIBRARY POLICIES/PROCEDURES FOR EMPLOYEES

25.1 BULLETIN BOARD POLICY (approved January 14, 2020)

Purpose: As an educational, cultural, and community institution, the East Mississippi Regional Library welcomes postings, exhibits, and displays of interest, information, and enlightenment for the citizens of our communities to view. As such, the bulletin boards at our branches are made available for the posting of community announcements. To best utilize the limited space available for such postings, please adhere to the following policy and procedures regarding usage of the library's bulletin boards:

Policy & Procedure:

1. Library materials take priority over community announcements.
2. Any library staff can approve postings that are consistent with this policy. Library staff will be responsible for removing notices.
3. Non-profit, cultural, educational, scientific, humanitarian, self-help, employment, commercial or other community services' postings for events or activities will remain posted, as space allows, until the event, or deadline for registration for the event, has passed.
4. Notices that are not date sensitive may be posted for up to three months, space permitting. Each notice will be marked with the initials of a Branch Librarian and the date in which it was posted.
5. Limited space demands that no signage larger than 8.5" x 14" may be posted, and Library staff may choose to post a reduced size of a notice to make more space available.
6. The bulletin boards are in a public space, so postings must be appropriate for viewing by all ages. No nudity, profanity, or other obscene materials are allowed.
7. Use of the library's bulletin boards does not imply endorsement by the East Mississippi Regional Library of the events or services posted.

25.2 PURCHASING AND PROCUREMENT:

The East Mississippi Regional Library System shall maintain the following Purchasing and Procurement Policy. At all times and under all circumstances, even when not specifically stated below, the EMRL Purchasing and Procurement policy shall be consistent with the procedures described in the *Mississippi Code 1972 Annotated* § 31-7-13. All purchases are subject to review by the EMRL Regional Board of Trustees.

Bidding procedure for purchases not over \$5,000.00:

- The EMRL Regional Board of Trustees has authorized the library system director to make purchases of single items or services costing less than \$1,500.00 without prior board approval. For purchases of this amount, the director shall make every effort to obtain the item or service needed at the price which is the lowest available to the library system.
- The purchase of a single item or service costing between \$1,500.00 and \$5,000.00 must have prior approval by the Regional Board of Trustees. The board may also require the director to collect up to three written quotes for their review before they make their final decision.

Bidding procedure for purchases over \$5,000.00 but not over \$50,000.00:

- Purchases which involve an expenditure of more than \$5,000.00 but not more than \$50,000 exclusive of freight and shipping charges may be made from the lowest and best bidder without publishing or posting advertisement for bids, providing at least two competitive written bids have been obtained.
- All purchases of this amount must have prior approval by the Regional Board of Trustees based on written bids collected by the library system director.

Bidding procedure for purchases over \$50,000.00:

- Purchases which involve an expenditure of more than \$50,000.00, exclusive of freight and shipping charges, may be made from the lowest and best bidder after advertising for competitive bids once each week for two consecutive weeks in the Clarke County Tribune, the Jasper County News, or both publications when relevant.
- The Regional Board of Trustees has designated that bids for this amount be received in a sealed envelope at the library system headquarters.
- All purchases of this amount must have prior approval by the Regional Board of Trustees based on sealed bids collected by the library system director.

Purchases involving grant funds:

- Items/services purchased because of grant funding will follow the procedures outlined by the grant's individual requirements. If no procedure is specified, the library system shall follow the above policy based on the actual amount of funds the library will expend from its budget toward the purchase.

25.3 COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT (Approved July 27, 2020)

Purpose: The Collection Development Policy is designed to support the library's mission and vision statements. It is also to serve as a guide in the selection, acquisition, maintenance, and retention of library materials which anticipate and meet the needs and interests of the EMRL service area. The Collection Development Policy shall be evaluated at least once every five (5) years, or when deemed necessary by the Administrative Board of Trustees.

Philosophy of Selection

The library fully endorses the principles of the Freedom to Read Statement, the Freedom to View Statement, and the Library Bill of Rights adopted by the American Library Association. In support of its vision to provide information that “should be free and easily accessible to all who seek it,” the library may provide materials to individuals that others may deem controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable. The library shall not place any restrictions on what anyone may read, view, or listen to, unless otherwise restricted by law.

Responsibility of Selection

The library director is ultimately responsible for the purchase of library materials and implementation of the Collection Development Policy. Direct selection of library materials is delegated to Branch Librarians. Other staff members may submit requested books to the Branch Librarians or administrative staff for consideration.

Material Selection

Library staff shall use sources such as published reviews, book lists, vendor catalogs, or other high quality, professional resources to select materials for the library. Personal knowledge, patron requests, recommendations, and data from local surveys may also be used by library staff to select materials.

Criteria

- Suitability of the format for library use
- Creative, literary, or technical merit
- Scientific merit
- Historical significance
- Relevant to the service area
- National popularity/demand
- Quality of binding
- Space and budgetary limits
- Meets diversity needs/treatment of subject for intended audience.
- Reputation of the author, publisher, illustrator, creator, or producer of the work
- Local significance of the author (otherwise, independent authors/publishers are usually not considered)
- Evaluation in review media
- Relation to existing collection and other materials on the subject

Gifts and Donations

The library accepts monetary gifts intended for the purchase of library materials when donors' intentions for the gifts are consistent with the library's collection objectives.

The library accepts donations of materials that are in good condition if deemed valuable to the collection. The library reserves the right to make final disposition of all gifts received. Gifts may be added to the collection or rejected at the discretion of the library. Gift materials not added to the collection are not returned to the donor. Unused gifts may be used for public sale or disposed of in some other way.

Discarding Materials

Part of maintaining a well-rounded library collection is to consistently discard materials that are no longer needed or relevant to the library collection. When discarding materials, the library follows the most recently published guidelines of *Crew: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries* by J. Larson. Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Retrieved from www.tsl.state.tx.us/ld/pubs/crew/index.html.

The library will not discard an item to censor access to it due to controversy. Older materials may be preserved or retained if it holds significance to the library collection and cannot be easily replaced. The final authority in discarding an item rests with the Library Director.

Material Reconsideration

A patron may file a formal complaint against an item by filling out the Material Reconsideration Form. The form shall then be given to the Library Director for review. The Library Director will issue a decision within one week of receiving the form. If the decision of the Library Director does not satisfy the complainant(s), they may then request an appeal before the Administrative Board of Trustees, which will be held at the next regular board meeting. The decision of the Administrative Library Board of Trustees shall be final.

26 East MS Regional Library Use Policy/Procedures for Patrons

26.1 LIBRARY USE POLICY

Purpose: The East Mississippi Regional Library supports the rights of all individuals to free and equal access to information and use of the library without discrimination, intimidation, threat of harm or invasion of privacy. The East Mississippi Regional Library provides friendly, courteous, and respectful service. The goal of the East Mississippi Regional Library is to provide an enjoyable, clean, and comfortable environment for all library users. This environment encompasses the interior of East Mississippi Regional Library buildings, as well as the grounds.

Inappropriate Behavior

For the purpose of this policy, inappropriate behavior is defined as any behavior that either consciously or unconsciously violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library; prevents library employees from doing their jobs, or jeopardizes the safety of library users, staff and/or property. This policy exists to correct and/or stop inappropriate behavior in the library environment, and is designed to:

Protect Library Property

The East Mississippi Regional Library protects collections, equipment, and property for present and future users. Intentionally damaging, destroying, or stealing any materials, equipment or property belonging to the library, another customer or staff member is prohibited, and may be a violation of the law.

Ensure a Safe and Secure Environment

The role of the East Mississippi Regional Library is to ensure a safe and secure environment. Committing or attempting to commit any activity that would constitute a violation of any federal, state, or local criminal law or ordinance is prohibited on East Mississippi Regional Library property. Examples of prohibited activities include but are not limited to:

- Verbally or physically threatening or harassing other patrons, volunteers, or staff, including stalking, staring, lurking, offensive touching, and obscene acts such as sex acts and indecent exposure.
- Bringing unauthorized weapons on library premises
- Being under the influence of alcohol/illegal drugs and selling, using, or possessing alcohol/illegal drugs.
- Soliciting, panhandling, or gambling on library property
- Trespassing in nonpublic areas, being in the library without permission of an authorized Library employee before or after Library operating hours
- Impeding passageways with personal property
- Leaving personal property unattended
- Failure to supervise children or otherwise comply with library safe child policy.
- Failure to leave the library during emergencies and at closing time.

Provide a Comfortable and Welcoming Environment

The East Mississippi Regional Library provides a comfortable and welcoming environment.

Mutual respect makes it possible for everyone to enjoy library materials and services. We ask library users to be respectful of each other and behave in a manner that does not disrupt other library users or interfere with normal operation of the library. Examples of disruptive behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Using profane, obscene, or abusive language, including epithets directed at race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.
- Creating unreasonable noise and engaging in boisterous activity
- Using audible devices without headphones or using headphones set at a volume that disturbs others. Using any communication devices in a manner that disturbs others.
- Running, pushing, fighting, or shoving
- Operating roller skates, cycles, skateboards, scooters, or other similar devices inside the library
- Failing to comply with staff instructions.

Maintain a Healthy and Clean Environment

The East Mississippi Regional Library maintains a healthy, clean, alcohol and smoke-free environment for all library users. Examples of behaviors which are not conducive to providing a clean and hygienic environment include but are not limited to:

- Use or sale of alcohol, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, drugs, chewing tobacco or other tobacco.
- Consuming or openly possessing food or beverages
- Lying down or sleeping in the restrooms or on any floor, couch, table, or seat in the library, and by blocking aisles, exits, or entrances by sitting or lying down in them.
- Improper dress including not wearing shoes or a shirt.
- Personal hygiene that poses a health risk or disrupts normal library use.
- Bringing animals inside library buildings, except for service animals and those allowed during special library programs.
- Using restrooms for bathing or washing of clothes

Enforcement of the Library Use Policy

The staff member shall approach the patron courteously, tell the patron the behavior is unacceptable, and ask the patron to refrain from the behavior. The staff member shall step back or walk away but continue to observe the behavior. If the behavior continues, the staff member shall approach the patron a second time, reiterate the relevant policy, and warn that he/she may be asked to leave the library. Again, the staff member shall step back or walk away but continue to observe the behavior. NOTE: this second warning is at the option of the staff member. Some behaviors may be so disruptive as to require only one warning before the patron is asked to leave or local law enforcement is called.

If the behavior persists, the staff member shall tell the person to leave. If the patron refuses to leave, the staff member will warn that he/she has no choice but to call the police and will go to the phone to do so. The staff member shall meet the police officer at the door (or a second staff person shall be alerted to meet the police) to inform the officer of the situation.

Any library employee is empowered to enforce the behavior policy.

Anyone ejected under enforcement of this policy may not re-enter any EMRL branch location that day and possibly longer. The procedure for a suspension of longer than one week is covered under the following section.

Suspension Policy and Procedure

Any patron ejected through the procedure explained in the Enforcement section may be subject to a longer suspension for habitual or improper behavior.

Suspension from the library means that the patron may not enter any EMRL branch location for any reason or be present on outdoor library property. If the suspended patron enters the library or is on the property outside the library, the police will be called to remove the patron and the patron may be subject to criminal charges.

The library director may suspend a violator's library privileges, including the right to enter the library, for a period greater than one week for repeat offenders or egregious behavior. In the event of a suspension for one week or longer, an incident report of the event will be written by relevant staff and reviewed by the library director, and the name of the patron and length of suspension will be added to a list accessible to all library employees.

Any patron banned from the library for a period of more than one week shall be entitled to appeal that ban to the library board of trustees. That appeal shall consist of a written request to the board to reconsider the decision of the library director and include a summary of the events which gave rise to the action and the reasons for challenging the decision to impose a ban. The library director will provide the written report (and any other information pertaining to the action) to the board detailing the incident(s) in question and grounds for the decision.

The patron may request that the board take statements from him/her in person, but whether the board allows for verbal statements is within their discretion. The board shall uphold the decision of the library director if there is reasonable evidence that the incident occurred, and that the decision was not arbitrary and capricious under the circumstances.

26.2 MEETING ROOMS POLICY

The East Mississippi Regional Library System (EMRL) has meeting room space available at its Bay Springs, Heidelberg, and Quitman branches, primarily to support library programs and functions that further the work of the library system. When not being used by the library, the rooms are available for use by established not-for-profit organizations and noncommercial groups based in Clarke or Jasper Counties in Mississippi.

In accordance with the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, the library does not limit use of the meeting room based on the subject matter or content of the meeting or on the beliefs of affiliations of the meeting's sponsors. However, all meetings must adhere to the following rules as established by the EMRL Board of Trustees. Failure to comply with established library system rules may result in loss of future use of library system meeting rooms.

Eligible Organizations:

The following types of organizations are eligible to use EMRL meeting room spaces:

- Educational
- Civic
- Cultural
- Charitable
- Governmental (a group sponsored by a city, county, state, or federal agency)
- Religious, under the following circumstances:
 - Denominational groups, organizations, or associations will be allowed the use of the meeting rooms when no religious services are to be conducted. While no group shall be denied access based on the content of their meetings or religious views expressed therein, the meeting rooms are not designed to be used for church services for any one organization or to provide a forum to organize or build membership for one particular church, congregation or equivalent thereof.

Depending on availability and the reason for the request, individuals may be permitted use of the meeting room at the discretion of the librarian(s) or library director. Any established not-for-profit organizations and/or noncommercial groups that are not based in Clarke or Jasper Counties may be considered for use of the meeting room if the organization is providing a service to local residents. Any organization may be required to provide written documentation of non-profit status 72 hours prior to the use of the meeting room.

Unacceptable use of EMRL Meeting Rooms:

EMRL meeting rooms are not available for the following non-library sponsored functions:

- Private social purposes: weddings, family reunions, birthday parties, etc.
- Promotion of commercial products or services
- Political campaign events
- Sales or solicitation of funds of any kind, or events requiring any type of fee including admission charges and payment for products or services. This includes events which are initial introductory or explanatory meetings to be followed by other meetings in other locations where fees will be charged, or items will be sold.

EMRL Meeting Room Reservation and Setup: (Revised/Approved July 19, 2021)

Reservations for meeting rooms will be taken during normal EMRL business hours over the phone or in person at the relevant library branch. The rooms should be booked at least two weeks but not more than 90 days prior to the event. Meeting rooms are only available for use during the library's regular operating hours, except when previously approved by the library director or board of trustees. *Any group that regularly used a meeting room after-hours before July 19, 2021, may continue to use it after-hours.* Library sponsored programs and events take precedence over meeting room use by outside organizations. If a cancellation of a scheduled program is necessary, notice will be given as soon as reasonably possible.

Use of the meeting room does not imply, nor should an organization claim, any endorsement, support, or co-sponsorship by EMRL of the activities that take place in the meeting room or of the beliefs of the group in the meeting room.

Any organization using a meeting room is responsible for setting up the room according to its own needs. After the conclusion of the meeting, chairs, tables, and other furniture must be returned to their original positions. All trash must be collected and removed from the meeting room. The room must be left clean and returned to the condition it was in before the meeting was held.

Equipment:

Though it is recommended that users provide their own audiovisual equipment, if possible, the library has limited audiovisual materials available for use in the meeting room. Such equipment must be requested at the time of the room's reservation. Those who use library equipment are responsible for its setup and operation during the meeting. Library staff will not be available to operate equipment.

Wireless internet access is available at all EMRL meeting room locations. The wireless password will be available at the library circulation desk.

General Rules for the Use of EMRL Meeting Rooms:

- Groups must read and agree to the EMRL Meeting Room Policy.
- All meetings must be open to the public.
- No illegal activities are permitted.
- The distribution and/or consumption of alcohol are prohibited.
- Groups using the meeting room will be expected to conform to all library rules.
- Youth organizations using a meeting room must always have two adults (18 and over) present.
- The library may require proof that any public audiovisual presentation is not in conflict with copyright laws.
- Groups are responsible for ensuring that attendance at meetings does not exceed room capacity, as established by the library system.
- EMRL assumes no responsibility for personal injuries, thefts, or losses of private property while on or using library facilities.
- The EMRL Board of Trustees and library system director reserve the right to change this policy at any time.

**Parent/Guardian Responsibility Form
East Mississippi Regional Library**

By signing this form, you as a parent or guardian of the person under the age of 18 named below agree to assume all responsibility for:

Materials:

- Any materials which the minor borrows from the library.
- This responsibility includes paying all fines and fees associated with late, lost, or damaged items.

Contact Information:

- Notifying the library when a change has been made in the name, address, or phone number of the minor.

Library Card:

- Maintaining possession of the minor's library card and notifying the library if that card is lost or stolen.

General Supervision:

- Assuming responsibility for the actions and behavior of the minor at all times while on library property, as described in EMRL's "Safe Child Policy."

Internet use (optional, as indicated below):

- Assuming responsibility for the minor's use of the internet while in the library according to the rules described in EMRL's "Computer and Internet Use Policy."

Name of minor (person under the age of 18):

Name of Parent or Guardian (person over the age of 18 accepting responsibility for above-named minor):

_____ Date: _____

I, the above-named parent, or guardian, agree to allow the above-named minor access to the internet while he or she is on library property, and agree to take responsibility for his or her internet behavior in accordance with EMRL's "Computer and Internet Use Policy:"

YES (Minor's use of the internet at the library will be permitted)

NO (Minor's use of the internet at the library will *not* be permitted)

26.3 REGISTRATION OF PATRONS-(Revised – Board approved July 25, 2022)

Eligibility: The East MS Regional Library is supported primarily by taxes paid by the residents of the cities, town, villages, and counties where out branches are located. One (1) library card is provided at no additional charge to residents of these locations. Additionally, residents of counties adjacent to Clarke and Jasper Counties are also eligible to receive (1) library card at no charge. Eligibility of other individuals will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Requirements: The library has a responsibility to protect the taxpayers' investment in the library's collection, therefore, to obtain a library card, patrons must provide the following forms of identification:

- A driver's license photo or government issued ID displaying his/her current address. If a photo ID is not available, other forms of identification will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- One form of address verification. Examples of accepted forms of address verification include, but are not limited to, bank statement, utility bill, physical address verification from your local 911 office, letters from Social Security, Medicare, or other government entities, a current pay stub, a valid lease agreement, etc.
- In the case of minors, a parent or guardian must assume responsibility for materials borrowed by a person under eighteen years of age; therefore, no identification is necessary for the minor, but the responsible adult must have a valid library card and agree that the card belonging to the minor be linked to their own library account. The adult must also read and sign the "Parent/Guardian Responsibility Form" before a minor can be issued a library card. Children must be five years of age before they are eligible to be issued a library card.

Inactive Library Cards (approved July 25, 2022)

If a patron's library card account has been inactive for three (3) years, it is purged from the library's patron database. This is done to comply with the Mississippi Library Commission's accreditation requirements.

A library card may be renewed at the request of a patron. At this time, the patron will be asked to verify their current address and telephone number.

Privacy: Demographic information may be gathered from our patron records to plan library services or compose reports. This information is used in the aggregate (no identifying information is compiled or reported) and is not stored or disclosed in any way that would identify the person registering. Information about the use of library materials and services will be disclosed only under court order or in keeping with federal legislation.

26.4 SAFE CHILD POLICY

Purpose: The East Mississippi Regional Library provides a warm, welcoming, and safe environment for people of all ages. Sharing this environment with other people requires that everyone follow the Library Use Policy, which is available to view on the library's website, or at any of our branch locations.

The library encourages frequent visits by children and their families. However, library staff cannot provide childcare or assume responsibility for children's safety. Parents, caregivers, teachers, and caregivers, not library staff, are responsible for the behavior and safety of children visiting the library. Staff cannot be placed in the position of supervising unattended children.

Policy Statement (Revised – Board approved April 24, 2023)

Parents should not view the library as an alternative to day care or after-school programs. Staff cannot monitor everyone who enters, and all patrons are free to use any public area within the library. Parents should be advised that if the conduct of their child is inappropriate, the child may be instructed to leave the library. Parents should further realize that, even in their absence, they are legally responsible for the behavior and activity of their children. All children should have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency.

All children 9 years or younger must have a parent/caregiver in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. The assigned caregiver must be at least 14 years old and must carry emergency contact information. The parent/caregiver must maintain visual contact with the child unless the child is participating in story time or any other library program.

Contd. (Revised – Board approved April 24, 2023) Though parents of older children are strongly encouraged to be present, children ages 10 through 13 may use the library on their own, subject to the rules and regulations of the library. However, parents are still responsible for the actions of their children. Children demonstrating inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the building. Thus, if a child of this age group is not able to leave the library without an adult, he/she should not be in the library unattended. In the event that a child of this age group is demonstrating inappropriate behavior and is unable to leave or is left unattended, appropriate authorities will be contacted by library staff to handle the situation.

Young people ages 14 through 17 are treated as adult users. However, they are still legally the responsibility of their parents and should have an emergency contact available.

Unattended Children

For the purposes of this policy, an unattended child refers to a child in the library alone, or a child whose parent or caregiver is in the library but is not adequately supervising that child. The latter situation may occur when the adult and child are in separate areas of the building, or when the adult is using library materials or equipment and is not supervising the child.

As previously stated in this policy, library staff members cannot supervise children in the library or when the child leaves the building. However, if a staff member is concerned that a child (of any age) may not be sufficiently capable and mature to be on Library premises without supervision, the staff member may take action to correct the situation and will inform the library director of the concerns and the actions taken and submit a written report when appropriate and necessary.

To ensure a positive Library experience for everyone, if a child appears not to be sufficiently capable or mature to be on Library premises without supervision:

Staff will try to comfort the child if the child is ill or upset. Staff will make a concerted effort to locate the child's parent, guardian, or caregiver in the library and express the library's concern for the child's safety and explain the Library's Safe Child Policy.

If staff is unable to locate the parent, guardian, or caregiver in the library, staff will make a concerted effort to contact the parent, guardian, or caregiver to pick up the child.

Staff will express the library's concern for the child's safety and explain the Library's Child Safety Policy.

(Board approved edit, April 24, 2023) If the parent, guardian, or caregiver cannot be located within an hour, or if the library is closing (see below) or an emergency exists, staff will call local law enforcement. Local law enforcement will then assume responsibility for the child. Staff will notify the library director that local law enforcement has been called.

Staff will encourage any unattended child to contact his or her parent, guardian, or caregiver before closing time. Based on the age of the child, if a child is not picked up within 15 minutes of closing, library staff will call local law enforcement so an officer can assure the child is brought home safely. Under no circumstances will a library staff member take a child out of the library building. If the library has been closed, then two library staff members (if possible) will wait with the child inside the library building until the parent/caregiver or a police officer arrive to take the child home. No staff member will ever take the child home under any circumstances. Once the child is in the protective care of local law enforcement, a note will be attached to the library entrance with the following information: "Unattended child is in the care of local law enforcement." Neither the name of the child nor the name of the parent, guardian, or caregiver will be listed on the note.

Disruptive Children

Disruptive or inappropriate behavior is defined in the Library Use Policy as any behavior that either consciously or unconsciously violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library; prevents library employees from doing their jobs, or jeopardizes the safety of library users, staff and/or property. The following are procedures that staff will follow when a child is demonstrating disruptive or inappropriate behavior:

Disruptive Attended Children

A staff member will inform the parent/caregiver that their child is disturbing others. If appropriate, the staff member will issue a warning at that time. If the parent/caregiver refuses or is unable to control the behavior of the child, the family will be asked to leave the library. If the parent/caregiver does not cooperate, local law enforcement will be called.

Disruptive Unattended Children Over Age 10 (Revised – Board approved July 25, 2022)
(Note: for unattended children under age 10, staff will follow the procedure outlined in the previous section, even if that child is not being disruptive.)

A library staff member will tell the child that he or she is causing a disturbance, and this is a warning, and that the next time he or she will be asked to leave. If the disruptive behavior continues, the staff member will attempt to contact the parent/caregiver to pick up the child from the library. If the child does not cooperate and/or a parent/guardian does not pick up the child, local law enforcement will be called.

Access to Children's Areas

Library children's areas are reserved for use by children, their parents or caregivers, and adults interested in children's literature. Adults in that area not using children's materials or not using the area for the purpose intended will be asked to use other areas of the library.

Truancy

Pursuant to MS Code §37-13-91, a parent, caregiver, or custodian of a compulsory-school-age child in this state shall cause the child to enroll in and attend a public school or legitimate nonpublic school for the period of time that the child is of compulsory-school-age. Any child at the library during school hours will be informed of this law and given the opportunity to call a parent/caregiver for a ride to school. If the child does not cooperate, local law enforcement will be called.

Home Schooled Students

To use the public library alone during school hours, those children aged over 10 who are home schooled, will be required to have a letter with them from the parent/caregiver stating the child is home schooled. The letter will include emergency contact information. The parent/caregiver may be called by staff to confirm the home school status. The school district may also be contacted to confirm the home school status.

Illness

Children who are absent from school due to illness will not be permitted in the library and should remain home for their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of library staff and patrons. When appropriate, staff will follow the same procedure outlined in the “unattended child” section of this policy should this situation occur.

26.5 PATRON COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE POLICY

Purpose: The East Mississippi Regional Library provides residents of Clarke County, Jasper County, and all other eligible patrons with materials in a variety of formats, as well as services and programs to meet their cultural, educational, informational, and recreational needs. In order that we may continue to meet the needs of community members in a time when access to information is increasingly important for educational, economic, and personal success, the Board of Trustees and the Staff of the East Mississippi Regional Library present this policy to offer and regulate Internet and computer use in the library.

Filtering

All Library computers with Internet access and the library’s wireless network use a technology protection measure that protects all users including minors against access to visual material considered inappropriate for or harmful to minors. However, filtering software may not always block all material users find offensive.

Internet Resources

The East Mississippi Regional Library does not and cannot control the content or quality of information obtained from sources that are accessed via the Internet. Library users should consider the following when evaluating information obtained from the Internet:

1. Information obtained via the Internet may or may not be reliable, authoritative, accurate, or current.
2. Links to information on the Internet may not always be valid. Internet sites may sometimes be unavailable; this unavailability may occur unpredictably.
3. Certain information obtained via the Internet may be considered controversial by some library patrons.

The East Mississippi Regional Library is not responsible for the online information, graphics, and messages accessible through the library’s computers and wireless access points and originating outside the library.

The East Mississippi Regional Library urges library patrons to be informed consumers and to evaluate information obtained from the Internet carefully. The library cautions patrons about the potential danger of transmitting personal information, such as credit card numbers, via the Internet. The library is not responsible for damages, direct or indirect, that arise from a library patron's use of Internet information resources. There is no guarantee that your account(s) or email is private on library computers. Email users should not expect or treat email as confidential or private. Further, in case of a request from law enforcement authorities, your email and other data may be available to the requesting agency.

Legal and Ethical Concerns

The East Mississippi Regional Library requires that patrons using library computers and wireless access points do so within the guidelines of acceptable use. Unacceptable use may include but is not limited to:

1. the use of electronic information networks for any purpose that results in the harassment of other users.
2. the destruction of, damage to, or unauthorized alteration of library computer equipment, software, or network security procedures.
3. the use of electronic information networks in any way that violates a federal or state law, including copyright law.
4. the unauthorized duplication of copy-protected software or digital recordings.
5. behaving in a manner that disrupts other users, including overuse of computer equipment that serves to deny access to other users.

Illegal acts involving library computer and wireless access point resources may be subject to prosecution by local, state, or federal authorities. Internet users are requested to limit use to viewing online service sites that are appropriate in a public setting. Library equipment should not be used to access material that is obscene or pornographic (by other patrons or staff). Persons who use the library's computers and wireless access points for unacceptable uses may lose the privilege of using Library facilities including access to its computer systems. Users should be aware that they may encounter messages or graphics that they find offensive.

East Mississippi Regional Library staff will assist patrons with Internet use as time permits, but staff cannot offer extended personal instruction. It is also not possible for staff to evaluate or judge the quality or merit of every site that a patron may access.

General Procedures for Use of Computers

Internet users using the Library's Internet workstations acknowledge acceptance of this Internet and Computer Access Policy each time they log into the library's computer workstations. Library cards must be in good standing, overdue items must be returned or renewed, and fines of \$10.00 or more must be paid before computer use is allowed.

Internet workstations are available on a first come, first served basis. If all stations are in use, patrons may be required to wait up to 30 minutes to use a computer, depending on the situation.

To preserve the integrity of the library computer network, patrons are prohibited from installing software in library computers. However, patrons may use personal storage media to transport and save data, including but not limited to flash drives, CD-R disks, etc. (Note that personal files should not be saved to the hard drives of the library's computers. All data of this kind is deleted at the end of each day.)

Personal storage devices left in library computers will be kept for two weeks. After two weeks, the contents will be erased, and the devices disposed of.

Supervising Computer Use by Children:

While Internet access for all patrons is subject to filtering, such software may not block all material users find offensive. Librarians cannot act in the place of parents in providing constant care and supervision of children as they explore the Internet. Parents and legal guardians are responsible for monitoring any and all Internet use by minors and consent given on the part of parents or legal guardians for a Library card constitutes acknowledgment by the parents or guardians that they have a responsibility for monitoring their child's use of all Library resources, including the public computers. If a parent or guardian does not wish for their child to have access to the Internet while at the library, he or she may indicate that during the registration of their child on the "Parent/Guardian Responsibility Form."

Wireless Internet Access

Patrons with wireless access capabilities on their own equipment, such as laptops, tablets, cell phones etc., are welcome to use the Internet through the Library. This access option is open to patrons of all ages; parents or guardians of children under the age of 18 are responsible for supervising and guaranteeing their child's proper and safe use of the Internet.

Use of the Library's wireless access points constitutes acceptance of this Computer and Internet Use Policy. Patrons are responsible for configuring their equipment to access the library's wireless Internet access point. Library staff will only be able to provide a network address or name and password to the patron.

26.6 3D PRINTER POLICY

Purpose: The East Mississippi Regional Library System desires to offer our community access to new and emerging technologies to inspire an interest in science, engineering, and design and to help bring their creations and imaginations to life. This policy establishes how and under what circumstances the public may use the library's 3D printers.

What is a 3D Printer?

With a 3D printer, library patrons will be able to make three-dimensional objects in plastic using a design that is uploaded from a digital computer file.

Cost: .50¢ setup fee, plus .05¢ per gram of weight for printed item.

Want to find a printable file? Try: www.thingiverse.com

The library's 3D printers cannot be used to create material that is:

- Prohibited by local, state, or federal law.
 - Unsafe, harmful, dangerous or poses an immediate threat to the well-being of others. (Such use may violate the terms of use of the manufacturer.)
 - Obscene or otherwise inappropriate for the library environment.
 - In violation of another's intellectual property rights. For example, the printers will not be used to reproduce material that is subject to copyright, patent, or trademark protection.
- The library reserves the right to refuse any 3D print request.
 - Items printed from Library 3D printers that are not picked up within **7 days** of notification will become property of the library. Items must be picked up by the individual who printed them.
 - Only designated Library staff will have hands-on access to the 3D printer.
 - The library cannot guarantee that an item will be completed in a set amount of time. Designs will be printed in the order that they are received.
 - The library cannot guarantee the quality of the printed item.
 - Printed items such as bowls, cups, and kitchen utensils are meant for display purposes only, and should not be used for food service or preparation.
 - The library will always attempt to have as many colors as possible on hand. However, we cannot always guarantee to have all colors.
 - In addition, the library reserves the right to:
 - Stop printing a request due to time or printer capabilities.
 - Limit the number of print requests.
 - Scale down prints which would take more than 8 hours to complete.
 - Change this policy as needed at any time.

Lost and Found Policy for East Mississippi Regional Library (Board approved April 24, 2023)

1. Reporting Lost Items: If a library patron loses an item while in the library premises, they must report it to library staff immediately. This can be done at the circulation desk or any other designated area.
2. Found Items: Library staff will diligently search for and collect any items found within the library premises, including books, personal belongings, and other items left behind by library patrons or staff.
3. Labeling of Found Items: All found items will be labeled with the date and location they were found, and any other relevant information.
4. Retention Period: The library will retain found items for a period of 30 days from the date they are found.
5. Publicizing Found Items: Library staff will make reasonable efforts to publicize the found items, such as posting a list of found items in a conspicuous location within the library or on the library's website.
6. Claiming Lost Items: Patrons who have lost an item should contact the library with a detailed description of the lost item, including any unique identifiers or markings, and provide proof of ownership, such as a library card or other identification.
7. Returning Found Items: If a patron claims a lost item that matches the description of a found item, library staff will verify the ownership of the item and return it to the rightful owner.
8. Disposal of Unclaimed Items: If a found item remains unclaimed after the 30-day retention period, the library may dispose of the item as deemed appropriate, including donating it to a charitable organization, discarding it, or turning it in to authorities.
9. Liability: The library is not responsible for any lost or damaged items.
10. Privacy: The library will make reasonable efforts to protect the privacy of individuals claiming lost items and will not disclose personal information without the consent of the individual.
11. Prohibited Items: The library will not accept or store hazardous, perishable, or illegal items, and such items will be immediately discarded or turned into authorities.
12. Documentation: Library staff will maintain accurate records of all lost and found items, including descriptions, dates found, and dates returned or discarded.
13. Disputes: Any disputes regarding lost or found items will be resolved at the discretion of the library director or designated staff member, and their decision will be final.
14. Review: This policy will be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

By implementing a comprehensive lost and found policy, EMRL aims to provide efficient and reliable assistance to patrons who lose their belongings, while also ensuring the proper management and disposal of unclaimed items.