



# VESTAL PUBLIC LIBRARY HARASSMENT POLICY

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The VPL Harassment Policy applies to the behavior of patrons and staff of the Vestal Public Library (the Library) and others on Library business or engaged in activities relating to the Library.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Library is committed to supporting the right of all to work and study in an environment which is free from all forms of harassment including bullying, sexual harassment, racial harassment and other forms of discriminatory harassment. Such behavior can create an intimidating, hostile atmosphere and is unacceptable. It can damage an individual's welfare and can also undermine the mission of the Library. These guidelines aim to provide guidance for providing such a work and study environment free of harassment, and a framework for dealing effectively with harassment complaints. The Library is committed to reviewing this policy and procedure on a regular basis in line with changes in the law, relevant case law and other developments.

## **RESPONSIBILITY**

All members of the Library community share the responsibility for ensuring an environment that is free from any form of bullying or harassment.

## **BULLYING**

Bullying is repeated inappropriate behavior, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. A single incident of the behavior described in this definition may be an affront to dignity but, as a single incident is not considered to be bullying. Bullying can take many forms, from open aggression, threats, and shouting to subtle comments or exclusion. It can be verbal, physical or psychological. It is destructive and may have serious consequences. The impact of the behavior on the recipient will be taken into consideration when dealing with cases of bullying.

## **EXAMPLES OF BULLYING:**

**Verbal:** personal insults, demeaning remarks, humiliation in front of others, nicknames, ridicule, persistent identification of one person 'as a joke', threats

**Non-verbal or indirect:** exclusion, hostile attitude, spreading malicious rumors

**Abuse of power:** excessive criticism, withholding essential information

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**Physical:** aggressive behavior, physical intimidation, unwelcome physical contact up to and including assault

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

Sexual harassment includes acts of physical intimacy, or requests for sexual favors or any act or conduct by a perpetrator, including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material that is unwelcome to the recipient and could reasonably be regarded as sexually offensive, humiliating or intimidating to the recipient. The unwanted nature of sexual harassment distinguishes it from flirtatious or sexual behavior, which is entered into freely and mutually. It is the damaging impact of the unwanted behavior on the recipient, not the intention of the perpetrator, which counts. The impact of sexual harassment is taken into account when cases of sexual harassment are investigated.

### **EXAMPLES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT:**

**Verbal:** unwelcome sexual advances, suggestive jokes and innuendo, requests for sexual favors, threats

**Non-verbal or indirect:** sexually suggestive pictures or written material, leering or gestures; spreading rumors about a person's sexual behavior or orientation

**Electronic:** sexually suggestive messages or images transmitted by computer

**Physical:** unwelcome physical contact, up to and including assault

**Racial Harassment** Racial harassment, which is harassment on the grounds of race, including national or ethnic origins, is defined as unwanted or unwelcome conduct, or incitement to such conduct, based on a person's race, which is offensive to the recipient and which might threaten a person's security or create a stressful, hostile, or intimidating work or study environment.

### **EXAMPLES OF RACIAL HARASSMENT**

**Verbal:** offensive jokes or remarks about a person's race or ethnic origin, ridicule or assumptions based on racial stereotypes

**Non-verbal or indirect:** exclusion, hostile or demeaning attitudes, spreading malicious rumors

**Visual:** production, display or circulation of materials offensive to particular racial or ethnic groups, such as cartoons or racial propaganda

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## **OTHER FORMS OF HARASSMENT**

Any act or conduct by a perpetrator is considered to be harassment if it is unwelcome to the recipient and could reasonably be seen as offensive, humiliating or intimidating to the recipient, in relation to one or more of the following characteristics of the recipient: gender; marital or family status; sexual orientation; religion; age; and disability.

## **REPORTING AN INCIDENT:**

A person who feels that she / he is being bullied or harassed may use one or all of the following steps. A person may prefer to proceed directly to the formal process and their decision to bypass the informal process should not be held against them.

## **CONFIDENTIAL HOTLINE**

### **Call 1-800-HARASS-3**

Anyone experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace may use the free and confidential hotline to connect with pro-bono attorneys on sexual harassment issues, or submit a complaint.

## **INFORMAL PROCESS:**

The objective of this approach is to resolve the difficulties with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved. Make it clear to the perpetrator that the behavior is unwelcome and unacceptable and ask them to stop. If this is not possible or you find it difficult to approach the perpetrator, then you should approach one of the contact persons listed below for help. Keep a record of incidents as they occur: what happened, dates, times, places, witnesses (if any), your response and the impact on you. Discuss the matter with one of the following contact persons:

Library Director  
Staff Member's Direct Supervisor  
President of the Board of Trustees

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## **FORMAL PROCESS:**

A formal complaint involves providing a written statement to the appropriate contact person listed above. The Library Director and/or the President of the Board of Trustees will investigate all formal complaints with the assistance of outside agencies if necessary. Investigation meetings will be held in confidence and with sensitivity, and all parties will be treated with dignity and respect. Confidentiality is required of all parties involved in the investigation. The Library will maintain a record of all complaint forms and meetings. All parties involved will receive written notification of the resolution of the complaint.

Adopted on March 2017 by the Board of Trustees of the Vestal Public Library

Please sign to acknowledge the receipt of this document.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_