

<p style="text-align:center">MIDLOTHIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY REFERENCE AND READER'S ADVISORY POLICY</p>

I. PURPOSE

The library offers confidential and personalized reference and reader's advisory service to help patrons find library materials and online resources for their informational and recreational needs. This service is provided by both professional librarians and paraprofessional staff trained in accordance with the guidelines and ethics of the American Library Association.

Any library patron who requests information or materials will be assisted. If information appropriate to the patron's need is not available in the library, patrons may be referred to other local libraries or agencies. Library card holders from SWAN member libraries will be assisted in the request of materials available through the SWAN consortium. Midlothian Public Library cardholders may also request additional materials through other Interlibrary Loan networks in which the Library participates.

II. SERVICE TO NON-RESIDENTS

Library card holders from SWAN member libraries will be assisted with local library resources and resources available through the SWAN consortium. Other non-residents will be assisted with local library resources. If the request requires resources beyond the Midlothian Public Library, the library reserves the right to refer patrons back to their home libraries for service.

III. FORMS OF INQUIRY AND RESPONSE

Reference and reader's advisory service will be provided in response to various forms of inquiry, including in-person queries, telephone, fax, mail or e-mail. Inquiries are answered in the form library staff judge to be the most expedient.

IV. RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS

- A. Requests will generally be handled in the order in which they are received. Requests submitted by patrons in the library are given priority over telephone requests that are received at the same time. Staff members will attempt to answer questions at the time the request is made and to work within the patron's time limits. This may not be possible for complex questions. In such situations staff will inform the patron that a longer response time will be necessary. Staff will also inform the patron if it becomes necessary to refer the questions to an outside agency.
- B. Providing advice and suggestions for recreational reading, listening, and viewing is an essential service in a public library. Any requests which fit into the category of reader's advisory will be treated with equal priority to informational or reference requests.
- C. When answering a patron's reference or reader's advisory question, staff will cite the resource(s) from which the information is obtained. The producers of that resource, not the library itself, are responsible for that resource's accuracy. Staff will decide when all reasonable resources have been exhausted at this library and will also decide when it is time to refer the question to another agency or to cease working on a question. Staff will

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offer no interpretation, advice or personal recommendations in any area other than library science. Staff does not provide medical, legal, financial, or tax advice.

- D. Whenever possible and practical, library staff who are responding to reference and reader's advisory inquiries will also attempt to guide and instruct patrons in how to use library resources.
- E. Students working on homework assignments will be directed to resources and given assistance with their use.
- F. Electronically retrievable information, such as online databases, is provided to patrons according to terms of the library's *Internet and Public Computer Use Policy*.

V. FEES

There is no charge for reference or reader's advisory service. However, charges assessed by outside agencies and costs incurred for providing photocopies and printouts will be passed on to the patron. The patron will be notified in advance of any such charges.

VI. ETHICS AND STANDARDS

All transactions with patrons will be treated with equal importance and confidentiality. Each patron's information requests and reading, listening, or viewing tastes will be taken seriously and treated without judgment. Patron records will be disclosed only by force of legal authority.

VII. AVAILABILITY OF SERVICE

Midlothian Public Library reference and reader's advisory service is available during all the hours that the library is open.

Reviewed 6/2015, Revised 6/2016, 7/2017, 9/2018, 9/2019, 6/2020, Reviewed 8/2021, 8/2022