



OTSEGO DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

401 Dix Street • Otsego, MI 49078 • (269)694-9690 • www.otsego.library.org

INNOVATE • INTERACT • INSPIRE

Otsego District Public Library Code of Ethics Policy: Guiding Principles Adopted 8/21/24

The Otsego District Public Library Board, and the management and staff of the Otsego District Public Library, will conduct themselves in accordance with the following Code of Ethics and guiding principles. The principles of this Code are expressed in broad statements to guide ethical decision making. It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of situations that might involve violations of this policy. These statements provide a framework; they cannot and do not dictate conduct to cover every particular situation.

Code of Ethics

The Otsego District Public Library serves a vital role in the community, providing free access to ideas, resources, and information in a non-judgmental and unbiased environment. It informs, educates, enlightens, and entertains the members of the community. Employees and trustees will perform their duties conscientiously, honestly, and in accordance with the best interests of the library.

Financial Ethics

In addition, because these services are provided primarily through the expenditure of public funds, the Board adopts the following statements to guide the Board and staff of the Library in ethical financial decision making:

- We will exercise prudence in the management of public funds;
- We will disclose the information needed for the public to understand the financial condition of their Library;
- We will uphold the letter and the spirit of the law;
- We will not seek personal gain in the conduct of the Library's business;
- We will be transparent regarding any conflicts of interest and avoid them if they do not benefit the library. Neither employees nor trustees may use their position, or the knowledge gained as a result of their position for private or personal advantage or to obtain financial gain. Specifically, in the event that a trustee or staff recognizes an actual or potential conflict of interest, the trustee or staff is expected to disclose to the board chair or library director any financial or personal beneficial interest, direct or indirect, and abstain voluntarily from discussion or voting on any issue that raises such conflict of interest. If any member of the board perceives a possible conflict of interest position for any other trustee, the possible conflict should be brought to the attention of the board and the board as a whole should determine whether the issue represents a conflict of interest. In some cases, the board may decide the conflict of interest is not disadvantageous to the library but rather a benefit to the library, in which an annual statement will be signed disclosing the conflict of interest.
- We will refuse gifts or favors that could be perceived to influence our decision making. Employees and trustees must not accept entertainment, gifts or personal favors that could, in any way, influence, or appear to influence, business decisions in favor of any person, business, or organization with whom or with which the library has, or is likely to have, business dealings. No vendor shall be given advance notice of upcoming price comparisons, facts concerning other vendors' prices, or any other information that may limit or which may appear to limit open and free competition. With

regard to the library's business activities, employees and trustees may not receive payment or compensation of any kind. In particular, the library strictly prohibits the acceptance of kickbacks and commissions from suppliers or others. This policy is not intended to prohibit the acceptance of modest courtesies, openly given and accepted as part of the usual business amenities, for example, occasional business-related meals or promotional items of nominal or minor value, defined as under \$100 value.

- We will develop the policies, procedures, and systems necessary to ensure honest and transparent financial management of the Library. Accurate and reliable records of many kinds are necessary to meet the library's legal and financial obligations and to manage the affairs of the library. The library's financial records must reflect all business transactions in an accurate and timely manner. Employees and trustees responsible for accounting and recordkeeping must fully disclose and record all assets and liabilities and must exercise diligence in enforcing these requirements. Employees and trustees must not make or engage in any false record or communication of any kind, whether internal or external, including but not limited to:
 - False expense, attendance, financial, or similar reports and statements
 - False advertising, deceptive marketing practices, or other misleading representations

Communications

Employees and trustees must take care to separate their personal roles from their library positions when communicating on matters not involving library business. Employees and trustees must not use library identification, stationery, supplies, and equipment for personal or political matters. The Library Director and Assistant Director are the central contact point for all requests for information from the media and law enforcement. All information requests received by employees, board members, or volunteers should be forwarded to the Library Director, and in their absence, the Assistant Director. In some cases, the Library Board President may speak on behalf of the library. The following designated spokespersons are permitted to speak on behalf of the Otsego District Public Library:

- Library Director
- Assistant Director
- Library Board President

No one else is authorized to speak or write to the media or law enforcement on behalf of the Otsego District Public Library without prior written authorization from the Library Director or their designee.

When dealing with anyone outside the library, including public officials, employees and trustees must take care not to compromise the integrity or damage the reputation of the library, or any outside individual, business, or governmental body. Trustees must remember that all authority is vested in the full board and not with individual board members. All board members are expected to support the majority decision of the board, regardless of how they personally voted on the matter.

In all matters relevant to patrons, suppliers, government officials, the public and others within the library, employees and trustees must make every effort to achieve complete, accurate and timely communications, responding promptly and courteously to all proper requests for information and complaints.

General Conduct

The library expects its employees, trustees and volunteers to conduct themselves in a professional and businesslike manner. The Board adopts the following statements to guide the Board and staff of the Library in ethical employment and work at the library:

- We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources; equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests.
- We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist censorship of library resources.

- We protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted. The library has a Confidential and Privacy Policy which it adheres to: <https://otsego.library.org/library-privacy-and-confidentiality-policy/>
- When handling financial and personal information about patrons or others with whom the library has dealings, employees and trustees should observe the following principles:
 - Collect, use, and retain only the personal information necessary for library business
 - Protect the physical security of this information at all times and retain information only for as long as necessary or as required by law, including the Library Privacy Act.
 - Limit internal access to personal information to those with a legitimate business or legal reason for seeking that information, and only use personal information for the purposes for which it was originally intended.
- We respect intellectual property rights and advocate balance between the interests of information users and rights holders.
- We treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness, and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of our library.
- We do not advance private interests at the expense of library users, colleagues, or the organization as a whole.
- We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources.
- We strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing our own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of potential members of the profession.
- We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person.

The Library's credibility is the sum total of each of our actions and behaviors. We must avoid all appearances of impropriety and be diligent in our protection of our collective integrity in all forms, including online. Behavior inconsistent with the highest standards of integrity and business or personal ethics is subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

The Library has zero tolerance for intentional acts of deception or illegal behaviors.

Approved and adopted: 8/21/2024