Confidentiality and Access to Library Records

Purpose
The Nippersink Public Library District ("Library") is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all individuals who use its services. This policy ensures compliance with the Illinois Library Records Confidentiality Act (75 ILCS 70/1), the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140/), and the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, which affirms that every library user's right to privacy and confidentiality is fundamental to intellectual freedom.

General Policy
Library registration and circulation records, including information that identifies a patron or links them to specific Library materials, resources, or electronic usage, are confidential and shall not be disclosed except as permitted by law.

The Library will not disclose:
- The identity of any patron;
- Any information about items checked out, overdue, or on hold;
- Any information about electronic resource use or program attendance; or
- Any list of registered patrons or Library users.

Confidential records may only be released:
1. In compliance with a court order under the Library Records Confidentiality Act; or
2. To the parent or legal guardian of a child under the age of 16, as permitted by the Protecting Minors Act (PA 102-0370, effective Jan. 1, 2022), with proof of identity and guardianship.

Patron Information and Verification Procedures
To maintain confidentiality while ensuring service accuracy, Library staff shall follow these procedures:
1. **Verification** – Patron identity must be verified, either in person or by confirming account information (e.g., library card number, address, or phone number), before discussing any account details.
2. **Information Restricted to Patron** – Staff will only share account details with the registered cardholder, unless otherwise authorized by law.
3. **Family or Household Requests** – When a family member or caregiver requests information about a patron's account:
   - Staff may confirm non-content details only (e.g., "A DVD is overdue," "A book on hold is ready for pickup").
   - Titles or subject matter will not be disclosed.
4. **Minors Under Age 10** – For children under the age of 10, the Library recognizes that parents or legal guardians are responsible for the child's well-being and may inquire about materials checked out on the child's card.

- o Staff may discuss due dates, renewals, or fines related to the child's account, but may not release detailed information about the content of materials (e.g., specific titles, topics) unless the parent or guardian is listed as the responsible party on the account.

Requests for Records

All requests for access to Library records, including under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), must be submitted to the Library Director, who serves as the FOIA Officer.

- The Library will comply with all lawful requests while protecting patron privacy as required by the Illinois Library Records Confidentiality Act.
- Any court order or subpoena requesting Library records shall be referred to the Library Director immediately and reviewed by the Library's legal counsel before any information is released.

Data Privacy and Electronic Use

The Library maintains the confidentiality of information collected through its digital and online services, including catalog searches, eBook downloads, and public computer or Wi-Fi usage.

- The Library does not share, sell, or disclose personal data or reading history to third parties except as required by law or for operational necessity (e.g., integrated vendor services under contract).
- Patrons are responsible for logging out of shared or public devices to maintain their own privacy.

Staff Responsibility and Training

All Library employees, volunteers, and Trustees are expected to protect patron confidentiality as a condition of their employment or service.

- Staff shall receive periodic training on confidentiality, privacy laws, and proper handling of patron information.
- Any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.