



HR-10 – Employee Conduct Policy

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Employee Conduct Policy is to establish clear, accountable, ethical, respectful, and operationally appropriate conduct standards for employees of Norfolk County Public Library (NCPL).

This policy is intended to align strongly with Norfolk County's AD-46 HR-01 Code of Conduct Policy while preserving NCPL-specific operational requirements, public library governance, and Board-approved library-specific provisions.

Employees are expected to provide excellent public service, act honestly and responsibly, protect public trust, and support a safe, respectful, accessible, and productive workplace.

2. Application and Policy Relationship

This policy applies to all NCPL employees, subject to any applicable individual employment agreement, legislation, Board-approved policy, and any specific policy process that applies to the subject matter.

This policy should be read together with NU-01 Non-Union Staff Policy Manual, HR-07 Workplace Harassment and Discrimination Policy, OP-16 The Library and Political Elections Policy, OP-04 Code of Conduct (Public) Policy, and any Norfolk County policy, directive, or procedure applicable to NCPL under the Memorandum of Understanding, administrative arrangement, or Board direction.

Where this policy conflicts with applicable legislation, the legislation prevails. Where a question arises regarding alignment with Norfolk County policy, NCPL will review the matter through the appropriate governance and approval process.

Discipline, corrective action, suspension, and termination arising from this policy will be administered in accordance with NU-01, applicable law, applicable employment

agreements, and County Human Resources or legal consultation requirements where appropriate.

3. Definitions

Conflict of Interest: A situation in which an employee has, or is perceived to have, a personal, private, financial, professional, organizational, or other interest that may compete with the interests of NCPL or the public interest, or may influence or appear to influence the employee's impartial judgment.

Actual Conflict: A conflict that exists where a personal or private interest is known to the employee and is connected to the employee's duties in a manner sufficient to influence or appear to influence those duties.

Apparent or Perceived Conflict: A conflict that may reasonably be perceived by an informed person to exist, whether or not an actual conflict exists.

Potential Conflict: A situation that could reasonably develop into an actual or perceived conflict if circumstances change.

Confidential Information: Information not generally available to the public, including patron information, employee information, personnel matters, operational information, security information, procurement information, financial information, privileged information, and any information protected by law or policy.

NCPL Resources: NCPL or County assets, including facilities, Library materials, technology, devices, software, vehicles where applicable, accounts, intellectual property, records, equipment, funds, networks, time, email, access credentials, and other resources provided for work purposes.

Personal Electronic Device: A personally owned cell phone, smartphone, tablet, wearable technology, entertainment device, or other personal device capable of communication, recording, photography, or internet access.

4. Core Standards of Employee Conduct

Employees shall:

- perform their duties professionally, honestly, ethically, competently, and in good faith;
- serve patrons, coworkers, the Board, the County, and the community with dignity, respect, fairness, and accountability;
- support NCPL's mission, vision, strategic direction, policies, and approved operational directives;
- comply with all applicable NCPL policies, Norfolk County policies applicable to NCPL, procedures, health and safety requirements, privacy obligations, and provincial or federal legislation;

- advise their Manager, or the CEO where pending charges or legal restrictions may reasonably affect the employee's ability to perform their duties, maintain required credentials, or protect NCPL's operational integrity;
- take lawful and reasonable direction from Managers, or authorized designates;
- cooperate fully and honestly with authorized workplace investigations, reviews, audits, or fact-finding processes, and not falsify, conceal, or misrepresent information, whether written or oral;
- promptly report incidents that result, or could have resulted, in injury, safety risk, property damage, privacy breach, security concern, or operational disruption;
- use NCPL and County property with care and accountability, and not vandalize, deface, alter, damage, disengage, or misuse any asset, device, material, or facility;
- attend work for scheduled shifts and follow attendance, scheduling, and notification requirements;
- refrain from horseplay, unsafe conduct, and conduct that interferes with effective performance or public service;
- refrain from foul, abusive, insulting, vulgar, discriminatory, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate language or communications in the workplace or in work-related interactions;
- maintain personal presentation and hygiene appropriate to safe, respectful, and professional public library service;
- provide NCPL or County-issued identification where required for security, operational, or service purposes; and
- follow safety, security, emergency, and evacuation directions when working or attending at non-NCPL sites or host locations.

5. Professional Communications, Duty of Loyalty, Media, and Public Representation

Employees are expected to communicate in a manner that protects public trust in NCPL and respects their role as public-service employees.

Employees shall not represent that they are speaking on behalf of NCPL, the Library Board, or Norfolk County unless specifically authorized to do so.

Employees shall distinguish personal opinions from professional communications connected to their NCPL role. Personal comments shall not be made using NCPL or County resources in a manner that implies official endorsement.

Employees shall not disclose confidential or non-public information, use their position for private advantage, or communicate in a way that constitutes harassment, discrimination, bullying, retaliation, or a serious breach of professional obligations.

This section does not prohibit good-faith use of workplace complaint processes, protected disclosures required or permitted by law, participation in lawful democratic processes consistent with this policy and OP-16, or other rights protected by applicable law.

Media inquiries about NCPL matters shall be handled only by authorized spokespersons or referred promptly to the CEO or designate, in accordance with applicable media-relations requirements.

6. Alcohol, Drugs, Impairment, and Fitness for Work

Employees must report to work and remain at work fit for duty, able to perform their responsibilities safely, effectively, and with sound judgment.

Impairment in the workplace is unacceptable. An employee will be considered unfit for work where alcohol, illicit drugs, cannabis, medications, other substances, or the after-effects of any substance impair or appear to impair alertness, productivity, coordination, judgment, behaviour, or safe performance.

The possession, use, distribution, storage, sale, or personal consumption of alcohol or illicit drugs on NCPL property or while conducting NCPL business is prohibited, except where specifically authorized under an approved NCPL or County event, policy, or legal framework.

Employees using prescribed or over-the-counter medication are responsible for understanding any potential adverse impact on alertness, judgment, and safe job performance. Where medication may affect safe or effective work, the employee must disclose work-related limitations through the appropriate accommodation, safety, or manager process, without being required to disclose unnecessary diagnosis or treatment details.

Where an employee appears unfit for work, NCPL may remove the employee from duty, arrange safe transportation where appropriate, and address the matter through applicable workplace, accommodation, discipline, and payroll processes.

Any pay treatment, accommodation step, investigation, corrective action, or discipline arising from suspected impairment will be administered in accordance with applicable law, NU-01, employment agreements, and applicable County Human Resources or legal consultation requirements.

7. Smoking, Vaping, and Similar Products

Employees shall not smoke, vape, or carry lighted tobacco, cannabis, plant products, or electronic smoking products on NCPL property, except in locations or circumstances expressly permitted by applicable law and approved site rules.

This section is subject to any stricter legal, occupational health and safety, or property-specific requirements that apply to NCPL facilities.

8. Food and Drink in Staff and Public Service Areas

In staff-only work areas, food and beverages may be permitted where they do not:

- disturb coworkers or patrons;
- create a health, safety, cleanliness, or accessibility concern;
- pose a risk to electronic equipment, records, collections, or Library materials; or
- appear on desks or in areas where Library materials are received, repaired, processed, checked in, or otherwise handled, unless specifically approved by management.

In staff and public service areas, including circulation or service desks, beverages may be consumed discreetly where operationally appropriate. Food is not permitted unless specifically approved for operational, accommodation, emergency, or program-related reasons.

Management may impose additional reasonable restrictions where required to protect public service, Library materials, equipment, cleanliness, or health and safety.

9. Gifts, Hospitality, Discounts, and Benefits

Employees shall perform their duties so that they do not realize, or appear to realize, undue personal gain from their NCPL role.

Employees shall not directly or indirectly solicit, request, accept, or receive any gift, favour, money, service, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promise, discount, benefit, or other advantage that may compromise, or reasonably appear to compromise, impartiality, public trust, or independent judgment.

Employees shall not accept a specific gesture or hospitality where there is uncertainty about appropriateness without first seeking direction from their Manager, or the CEO, as appropriate.

Permitted exceptions, subject to applicable direction and no conflict of interest, may include:

- normal hospitality among persons doing business with NCPL where approved and appropriate;
- tokens exchanged as part of protocol or official public-service courtesy;
- normal presentations made to persons participating in public functions; and
- generic government discounts offered broadly on a provincial or national basis, where applicable and not otherwise prohibited.

Customer or vendor discounts based specifically on the employee's NCPL employment are not permitted unless expressly approved under an applicable program or policy.

Employees shall not benefit personally from NCPL purchasing or procurement activity unless a specific exception is approved in the interests of NCPL and in accordance with applicable procurement and conflict-of-interest requirements.

A nominal, unsolicited token of appreciation from a patron may only be accepted on behalf of NCPL, not for private gain, where it is of minimal value, cannot reasonably influence decision-making, and is handled in accordance with a CEO-approved procedure. Cash, cash equivalents, and gifts tied to service decisions, procurement, employment matters, or preferential treatment are not permitted.

10. Personal Electronic Devices, Cell Phones, and Emergency Communications

Personal electronic devices shall not interfere with work performance, patron service, safety, privacy, or operational effectiveness.

During regular working time, employees are not permitted to use personal cell phones to make or receive personal calls, send or receive personal texts, or engage in personal messaging, except during break or meal periods, emergency circumstances, accommodation-related circumstances, or where specific manager approval has been given.

Personal cell phones shall not be used to conduct NCPL business, unless use is specifically authorized.

Personal electronic devices will remain out of sight.

NCPL recognizes that some employees work alone or outside the sightline of coworkers. Where a personal device is kept on the employee for safety or emergency contact, the device must remain on silent or vibrate mode where practicable and may be used only as necessary for the approved safety purpose unless another use is expressly authorized. However, staff are provided with and expected to use handheld radios for added security when working at the Simcoe Branch.

Employees with caregiver or emergency-contact needs may provide approved NCPL business contact information for urgent situations, and workplace flexibility may be provided where circumstances require immediate attention.

Employees shall not use phones or other devices to record, transmit, or distribute images, video, or conversations in a manner that may breach privacy, constitute bullying, exploit another person, or conflict with this policy or other applicable rules.

11. Photography, Video, Audio Recording, and Recorded Images

NCPL is committed to protecting the privacy, dignity, and safety of patrons, visitors, employees, volunteers, and program participants.

Employees are prohibited from taking photographs, videos, or audio recordings of patrons, visitors, employees, volunteers, or program participants on NCPL premises or during NCPL activities for personal reasons.

Employees are prohibited from posting, sharing, or distributing photographs, videos, recordings, or personal information concerning patrons, visitors, employees, volunteers, or program participants through social media, the internet, personal messaging, or any

other channel unless expressly authorized in writing and completed in accordance with applicable consent, privacy, and communications procedures.

Photography, recordings, or images created for legitimate NCPL business purposes must comply with approved operational procedures, privacy requirements, program requirements, and any applicable consent or authorization process.

Employees shall not post sensitive, libellous, incendiary, confidential, personal, or privacy-protected information about patrons, visitors, employees, volunteers, or program participants.

Any video surveillance or related monitoring must be administered only under approved surveillance, privacy, and records-management requirements.

12. Computer, Internet, Email, Collaboration Tools, and Social Media

12.1 Authorized Use of Technology

NCPL technology, networks, email, collaboration tools, accounts, and electronic resources are provided for authorized NCPL business purposes.

Personal use of NCPL or County electronic resources is prohibited.

12.2 Prohibited Technology Uses

Employees shall not use NCPL technology, devices, systems, or networks to:

- introduce malicious software or knowingly create cyber-security risk;
- access, store, transmit, or display unlawful, hateful, discriminatory, harassing, obscene, or otherwise prohibited material;
- perpetrate fraud, piracy, theft, unauthorized copying, or other dishonest conduct;
- hack, bypass, or attempt to access unauthorized systems, accounts, or areas;
- send offensive, threatening, harassing, discriminatory, or abusive communications;
- disclose passwords, access codes, or security credentials to unauthorized persons; or
- download software, applications, or files in a manner that violates authorized IT approval processes.

12.3 Electronic Communications

All communications through NCPL or County email, Teams, Zoom, messaging, collaboration systems, or other electronic channels must meet professional conduct standards and comply with this policy, HR-07, confidentiality obligations, records requirements, and applicable law.

Employees must observe privacy and confidentiality requirements when communicating electronically.

12.4 Official NCPL Social Media

Official NCPL social media accounts, profiles, page content, passwords, and associated data are NCPL property and shall be managed only by authorized employees.

Any proposal to introduce a new social media application, account, or service for NCPL purposes requires approval by the CEO or designate.

Official NCPL accounts shall be created using an approved NCPL email address. Credentials shall be centrally maintained in accordance with approved access-control procedures.

Employees shall not use false screen names, pseudonyms, or undisclosed identities when communicating through official NCPL channels unless specifically approved for a lawful, operationally justified purpose.

Official NCPL posts shall reflect NCPL's mission, values, approved positions, and service objectives; provide accurate and useful information; respect copyright and permissions; and maintain a professional and respectful tone.

12.5 Personal Social Media

Employees using personal social media must not disclose confidential information, create the impression of speaking officially for NCPL without authorization, or use NCPL employment status to obtain private advantage.

Where an employee's employment relationship with NCPL is known or reasonably inferable, the employee shall use good judgment and maintain the standards of professionalism, confidentiality, impartiality, and respectful conduct required by this policy.

12.6 Review of Misuse

Suspected misuse of NCPL technology or electronic resources may be reviewed or investigated by the CEO or designate, with appropriate consultation where required. Access privileges may be limited, suspended, or revoked where necessary, and any corrective or disciplinary response will be administered in accordance with NU-01 and applicable law.

13. Conflict of Interest

13.1 General Rule

Employees shall avoid actual, apparent, and potential conflicts of interest. A conflict exists even if no unethical or improper act results.

13.2 Prohibited Conduct

Employees shall not:

- engage in any business, transaction, outside work, or activity that conflicts or appears to conflict with the discharge of NCPL duties;

- undertake outside work or activities that interfere, or appear to interfere, with job duties or provide an advantage derived from NCPL employment;
- place themselves under obligation to a person or organization that may seek special consideration, favourable treatment, or preferential access;
- derive, or appear able to derive, direct or indirect benefit from contracts, procurement, partnerships, grants, hiring, promotion, scheduling, or other decisions over which they may exercise influence;
- use non-public information acquired through employment for private gain or for the gain of friends, family, or any person or organization;
- participate in a decision, recommendation, review, selection, promotion, hiring process, procurement process, or other matter in which the employee or their family has a financial or non-financial interest;
- accept a specific gesture, hospitality, or benefit without seeking direction where its appropriateness is uncertain; or
- use their position, confidential information, NCPL time, materials, facilities, technology, or resources for private gain or advancement.

13.3 Disclosure and Recusal

As soon as an employee becomes aware of an actual, apparent, or potential conflict of interest, the employee must disclose the matter in writing to the CEO, Manager, or designate, as appropriate, and follow the direction provided.

Where the disclosure concerns the CEO, or where the CEO has an actual or perceived conflict of interest, the matter shall be referred to the Board Chair or Board designate in accordance with NU-01, Board procedures, and applicable law.

Once a conflict has been disclosed, the employee may be removed from the relevant decision-making process and may be directed not to discuss the matter with another employee, interested party, vendor, patron, applicant, or member of the public except as authorized.

Conflict disclosures and management steps shall be documented and retained in accordance with applicable privacy, records, and personnel-file requirements.

14. Political Acumen, Political Activity, and Democratic Participation

Employees are expected to act in a neutral, professional, and non-partisan manner when carrying out NCPL duties, communicating on NCPL business, or addressing matters connected to Board or County direction.

Employees shall distinguish personal political opinions from professional opinions related to their NCPL role and shall not use NCPL resources, records, titles, uniforms, work time, email, or premises to advance personal political activity unless expressly permitted by law or approved policy.

Employees may participate in civic and democratic processes in their personal capacity where doing so does not create an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest, interfere with work duties, breach confidentiality, or imply NCPL endorsement.

An employee who speaks at a public meeting, appears before Council or the Library Board, or participates in a public process in a personal capacity shall clearly state that they are speaking as an individual and not on behalf of NCPL, unless expressly authorized.

Where the subject matter is related to the employee's NCPL duties, department, professional responsibilities, or access to non-public information, the employee must disclose the intended participation in advance and seek guidance from the CEO or designate. Where the matter involves the CEO or creates a CEO conflict, guidance shall be sought through the Board Chair or Board designate as appropriate.

Employees wishing to campaign for a candidate, run for political office, or participate in election activity shall comply with OP-16, NU-01, applicable election legislation, applicable employment requirements, and any required leave, conflict-management, or Board/CEO direction.

Employees shall not engage in service on local agencies, boards, commissions, or outside bodies where that service affects or appears to affect their objectivity in discharging NCPL duties. Potential conflicts must be disclosed before or as soon as they arise.

15. Property, Resources, Time Records, and Access Credentials

NCPL resources shall be used responsibly and only for authorized purposes.

Employees shall not use NCPL facilities, vehicles where applicable, equipment, technology, materials, funds, procurement channels, or other resources for personal purposes unless specifically authorized in writing or expressly allowed under an applicable approved policy or procedure.

Employees shall protect NCPL property, Library materials, computer programs, technological innovations, work product, accounts, records, and other assets from loss, misuse, unauthorized access, damage, alteration, or disengagement.

Employees shall not operate NCPL equipment or vehicles where applicable while impaired or otherwise unfit for work.

Employees shall accurately record hours of work, breaks, overtime or additional hours where applicable, leaves, and other payroll or attendance information. Misrepresentation of time or attendance records is prohibited.

Employees shall use only their own authorized access card, key, PIN, password, account, or security credential and shall not allow another person to use their credentials except through an approved access-management process.

16. Theft, Fraud, Dishonesty, and Improper Gain

Employees shall exercise honesty, integrity, objectivity, and diligence and shall not knowingly participate in fraudulent, dishonest, or deceptive activity.

Theft, fraud, misuse of NCPL property, falsification of records, misuse of access credentials, improper personal gain, procurement abuse, and intentional misrepresentation are serious matters and may constitute major misconduct.

NCPL may promptly review or investigate suspected theft, fraud, or dishonest activity and may pursue corrective action, discipline, restitution, reporting, or legal remedies where appropriate and lawful.

Any resulting employment action shall be administered in accordance with NU-01, applicable law, applicable agreements, and consultation requirements.

17. Confidentiality, Privacy, Records, and Continuing Obligations

Employees shall sign and comply with all required policy acknowledgements and confidentiality undertakings before or during employment as directed.

Employees shall not disclose, release, copy, reproduce, transmit, divulge, use, or allow unauthorized inspection of confidential information acquired through NCPL employment, except where authorized and required for legitimate work purposes or required by law.

Confidential information includes, without limitation, patron information, employee personnel matters, operational plans, procurement information, security information, internal investigations, privileged communications, unpublished Board or management material, non-public financial or business information, and any information protected under privacy or access-to-information legislation.

Employees shall not use confidential or non-public information for perceived or actual private gain or for the gain of friends, relatives, businesses, organizations, or any person or entity dealing with NCPL.

Personnel matters and employee files shall be kept confidential and accessed only by persons who require the information to perform authorized duties and where disclosure is necessary and proper.

Where an employee is uncertain whether information is confidential, private, privileged, or otherwise restricted, the employee shall seek direction from the CEO or designate before disclosing or using the information.

Confidentiality obligations continue after employment ends.

18. Employee Responsibility, Reporting, Contravention, and Enforcement

Compliance with this policy is a condition of employment. Employees who are unclear about their responsibilities shall seek direction from their manager, Manager, CEO, or appropriate Human Resources contact.

Managers and managers are responsible for promoting compliance, addressing concerns within their areas of responsibility, and escalating suspected breaches where appropriate.

Employees who reasonably believe that this policy has been breached should report the concern through an appropriate workplace channel, designated complaint process, or Board-level escalation pathway where the CEO is involved or has a conflict.

Reports shall be handled as fairly, discreetly, and promptly as circumstances permit. Retaliation for making a good-faith report, participating in an authorized investigation, or using an approved complaint process is prohibited.

Where a potential contravention is identified, NCPL may conduct a review or investigation, consult County Human Resources or legal counsel where appropriate, and determine corrective or disciplinary action in accordance with applicable policy and law.

19. Corrective Action, Discipline, and Termination

A violation of this policy may result in coaching, direction, training, mediation, reassignment, restriction of access, corrective action, discipline, suspension, or termination of employment, depending on the circumstances.

Corrective action and discipline are not automatic or identical in every case. The response will be determined case by case, considering the seriousness of the matter, the employee's role, prior record, operational risk, evidence, legal requirements, accommodation obligations, and any applicable investigation findings.

Discipline and termination decisions shall be administered in accordance with NU-01 Sections 18 and 19, applicable employment agreements, applicable law, and County Human Resources or legal consultation requirements where appropriate.

Nothing in this policy limits NCPL's ability to address serious misconduct, including but not limited to fraud, theft, serious confidentiality breaches, violence, harassment, serious impairment-related risk, conflict of interest, serious insubordination, or major policy breaches.

20. Acknowledgement and Records

Employees shall acknowledge that they have reviewed, understood, and agree to comply with this policy and any related confidentiality undertaking or policy sign-off process required by NCPL.

Acknowledgements and related records will be maintained in accordance with personnel-file, privacy, and records-management requirements.

21. Related Documents

NCPL NU-01 - Non-Union Staff Policy Manual

NCPL HR-07 - Workplace Harassment and Discrimination Policy

NCPL HR-11 - Professional Development, Performance and Discipline Policy, if retained and applicable

NCPL OP-04 - Code of Conduct (Public) Policy

NCPL OP-16 - The Library and Political Elections Policy

Norfolk County AD-46 HR-01 - Code of Conduct Policy

Norfolk County media relations, privacy, acceptable use, video surveillance, smoking, alcohol, occupational health and safety, and related policies or procedures where applicable to NCPL under approved alignment arrangements.