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SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF MINOR LIBRARY USERS IN THE LIGHT OF THE SO-CALLED “KAMILEK’S ACT”¹



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¹ On February 15, 2024, an amendment to the Family and Guardianship Code came into force in Poland. It was introduced following the tragic death of 8-year-old Kamilek from Częstochowa, who died as a result of brutal abuse by his stepfather, which is why it is often referred to as “Kamilek’s Act”.

marketing) Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe i Edukacyjne Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich, 2023, s. 574-585.

KEYWORDS: user safety, need for safety, Kamilek's Act, Standards for the protection of minors, school libraries, public libraries.

ABSTRACT: **Purpose** – The aim of this article is to present the role of school and public libraries in meeting the need for user safety in light of the so-called “Kamilek's Act”. **Methods** – Guidelines and templates for developing standards for the protection of minors on the gov.pl website and the Empowering Children Foundation website, as well as standards developed by provincial libraries in Poland, were analyzed. **Conclusions** – Libraries are established to meet user needs, including the need for safety. The so-called “Kamilek's Act” introduced the requirement to develop standards for the protection of minors, which emphasized the obligation to ensure the safety of children and young people. When implementing these standards, libraries define, among other things: principles for ensuring safe relationships between minors and staff; rules and procedures for intervening in situations of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor; requirements for safe relationships between minors, particularly prohibited behavior; rules for using electronic devices with internet access; and procedures for protecting children from harmful content and threats online and otherwise. The standards take into account the situation of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. These are important areas of library activity and can serve as safe spaces for users.

NEEDS, INCLUDING THE NEED FOR SECURITY

Libraries, regardless of type, are institutions created to meet the needs of users (Tokarska, 2013, p. 483). E. B. Zybert even emphasizes that “a characteristic feature of libraries in the second decade of the 21st century is the transformation in organizational solutions and forms of activity, driven by the need to best meet the needs and expectations of the environment in which they operate” (Zybert, 2017, p. 15). J. Wojciechowski notes that it is difficult to meet the requirement that everyone who needs easy access to a library has it (Wojciechowski, 2014, p. 21); however, it is worthwhile to meet the needs of library users to the greatest extent possible within each institution. There are many concepts that consider human needs. The most well-known is Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Koźmiński & Piotrowski, 1999, p. 402), which distinguishes five basic needs: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. According to Maslow, safety needs, alongside physiological needs, are dominant. According to the principles of humanistic psychology, safety needs play a significant role, especially in the early stages of human development, and proper human development depends on them. They also plays a significant role in adult life.

In Marshall B. Rosenberg's model of Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg, 2013), needs also play a significant role. Communication based on NVC aims to support dialogue between people and build a society based on empathy and consideration for the needs of all individuals. It is used in conflict mediation worldwide. Instead of focusing on problems or compromises, it focuses on understanding the needs of both parties and then seeking ways to meet them. Each party should be able to fully express these and then propose realistic actions that will meet these needs. A characteristic feature of NVC is that it is based on the concept of human needs, which builds rapport and mutual understanding. It is based on the ability to identify and express needs and on the ability to be attuned to the needs of others (Göthlin & Widstrand, 2012, p. 7). The need for safety is one of many, but in mediation, naming or identifying this is crucial. When describing it, we often use words such as order, structure, predictability, protection from harm, rest, self-esteem, stability, and trust (Göthlin & Widstrand, 2012, p. 8). Nowadays, more and more is being said and written about the feelings and needs of children and young people, especially as the mental well-being of children in Poland is deteriorating (*Młode głowy*, 2023).

When caring for children's psychological well-being from a communication perspective, attention is paid to factors such as: expressing love and acceptance, strengthening self-esteem and self-worth, supporting self-confidence, strengthening resilience, appreciating social relationships, strengthening motivation, developing the ability to cope with stressful situations, emphasizing the importance of mental and physical health, and, of course, ensuring a sense of security (Stradomska, 2024, p. 23).

On February 15, 2024, an amendment to the Family and Guardianship Code, the so-called "Kamilek's Act", entered into force.² It was introduced following the tragic death of 8-year-old Kamil from Częstochowa, who died as a result of brutal abuse by his stepfather. It was designed to prevent child abuse and also to alert staff in institutions that come into contact with children to the fact that they can, and even should, strive to ensure their safety. This applies to all educational, care, and developmental facilities, as well as other institutions that come into contact with children. These include libraries, especially school and public ones.

² Pursuant to the Act of 28 July 2023 amending the Act – Family and Guardianship Code and certain other acts (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1606), the Act of 13 May 2016 on counteracting threats of sexual crimes (Journal of Laws of 2023, item 1304, as amended) was amended, which after the amendment, i.e. from 15 February 2024, is titled the Act of 13 May 2016 on counteracting threats of sexual crimes and the protection of minors and introduced standards for the protection of minors (child protection standards).

STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS

The obligation to implement standards for the protection of minors applies to all institutions providing educational, care, upbringing, rehabilitation, religious, artistic, medical, recreational, sports, or hobby-related services, as well as those providing hotel and tourism services and other collective accommodations attended by children or in which children reside or may reside. These standards define principles of safe relationships with children and procedures for intervention in cases of suspected violence. They outline the principles and procedures intended to protect children from harm. There is no perfect model that can be adopted by all institutions providing services to children, as each facility has its own specific characteristics that must be taken into account when developing them.

The guiding principle in developing standards is that institution employees act for the benefit of children and in their best interests. They treat child users with respect and consider their needs. Institutions must operate in accordance with applicable law and internal regulations. Employees, in turn, use their authority to comply with applicable arrangements. It is worth noting that the regulations define an employee as anyone employed under an employment contract or a civil law contract, whether paid or unpaid, or performing activities for the institution, including interns, volunteers, or parents or legal guardians of children. Institutions are required to:

- 1) establish principles for responding to risk factors and symptoms of abuse,
- 2) establish principles for safe employee recruitment,
- 3) ensure appropriate employee preparation through training,
- 4) establish employee responsibilities,
- 5) establish principles for safe relationships between employees and children, and among children themselves (Service of the Republic of Poland).

The standards must therefore include principles defining safe relationships with children and specify prohibited behaviors. They also establish procedures for intervention in cases of suspected child abuse and for reporting suspected crimes against minors. They also require the institution to designate a person to whom such reports can be made.

EMPLOYEES

According to standards, employees must have qualifications and competencies to work with children. Employers are also responsible for ensuring that the employee does not pose a threat to the well-being of children or their safety. Therefore, before engaging in any work, it is

necessary to check whether the individual is listed in the National Criminal Register for Sex Offenders. The prospective employee must provide the employer with information from the National Criminal Register regarding offenses specified in the Penal Code. Therefore, a teaching staff member must submit information about their criminal record from the National Criminal Register, and the principal must verify whether the individual is listed in the Register. Citizens of other countries must provide information from the criminal records of their country of citizenship, obtained for professional or volunteer purposes related to contact with children. If they have resided in different countries, this information must be provided from all countries they have resided in over the last 20 years. If the countries do not maintain such records, a certificate from the Penal Code must be submitted. If this is not possible, the individual is required to provide a declaration under penalty of perjury.

Individuals hired to work with children are also expected to declare that they have become familiar with child protection standards and safe relationship principles and are committed to complying with them. Individuals who do not hold Polish citizenship must submit a declaration of the countries in which they have resided for the past 20 years and a declaration of no criminal record for crimes against children (if, for valid reasons, they cannot provide information on their criminal record from national criminal records).

PRINCIPLES OF SAFE RELATIONSHIPS

Standards should include provisions regarding safe relationships. Every employee must be familiar with and adhere to the principles of safe relationships. They must act for the well-being of children and in their best interests. They must treat them with respect and take into account their dignity, needs, and right to privacy. Any form of violence against children is unacceptable, whether:

- physical,
- psychological (emotional unavailability, emotional neglect, hostile relationship with the child, blaming, slandering, rejection, developmentally inappropriate or inconsistent interactions with the child, failure to recognize or acknowledge the child's individuality, failure to recognize or acknowledge the psychological boundaries between the child and the responsible person, inadequate socialization, demoralization, situations in which the child witnesses violence),
 - sexual violence (sexual abuse of the child),
 - child neglect,
 - allowing peer violence (verbal violence, e.g., name-calling, teasing, ridicule; relational violence, e.g., exclusion from a group, ignoring, turning others against the person, blackmail; physical violence, e.g., beating,

kicking, pushing, pulling; material violence, e.g., theft, destruction of objects; cyberbullying/electronic violence, e.g., malicious messages) in instant messaging, posting on a social networking site, posting embarrassing photos or videos online; sexual abuse - touching intimate parts of the body or forcing someone into sexual intercourse or other sexual activities by a peer; violence conditioned by gender norms and stereotypes, e.g. violence in romantic relationships between peers, origin, nationality, sexual orientation, religion or other characteristics.

It is also unacceptable to establish any sexual, romantic, or partnership-related relationship with a child, or to record a child's image (filming, recording voices, or photographing) for the employee's personal use. Individuals interacting with children should do so openly and within the scope of their job duties. Contact with children should not be based on financial or material gratification resulting from the exploitation of physical advantage, a position of authority, or the child's dependence, with the intention of satisfying or fulfilling the employee's needs.

Messages and actions taken with a child should be appropriate to the situation, tailored to their age, development, and individual psychophysical abilities. They should be safe, reasonable, and based on equal treatment of all children, with no one favored over another. Children's involvement in assigned tasks should be valued.

The detailed rules emphasize that communication with children should be patient and respectful. Listening and responding appropriately to the child's age and situation is essential. Children should not be embarrassed, humiliated, disrespected, insulted, or shouted at. Sensitive information about children should not be disclosed to unauthorized persons, including other children. This also applies to the child's image and information about their family, economic, medical, caregiving, and legal circumstances. Children's rights to privacy should be respected; if deviations from this principle are necessary, the child should be informed, and their expectations should be taken into account. Inappropriate behavior in the presence of children should be avoided, and if the child feels uncomfortable, they should be given the opportunity to express their concerns.

SAFE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHILDREN

Staff are responsible for monitoring the implementation of safe relationships between children. It is best if the rules are developed with the children themselves, taking into account the specific needs of the facility. They should also be familiar with and adhere to them. It is worth remembering that if children of different age groups participate in library activities, separate rules for each age group should be developed. They have different abilities, so it is worth considering them. Established rules

should be modified depending on the situation, often at the children's request, and they should certainly participate in this process. The rules should be evaluated at least every two years. These should include: communication methods, prohibition of violence in any form, conflict resolution methods, respect for others' property, privacy, and space, equal treatment, and respect for diversity, individual identity, and expression.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, INCLUDING DISABILITIES

Every child should be treated with respect, without discrimination based on any characteristic, including special needs, disability, race, gender, religion, skin color, national or ethnic origin, language, marital status, sexual orientation, health, age, abilities, political beliefs, or social status. Their well-being and development should be ensured, including by providing adaptations that are most appropriate to identified individual developmental needs and ensuring equal access for individuals with special needs, including disabilities. Care should be taken to eliminate information, communication, architectural, and digital barriers that may hinder independent functioning. Children's families and local communities can assist in this endeavor.

RISK OF CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

If there is a risk of challenging behavior (aggressive, self-harming, or problematic sexual behavior), a risk assessment should be conducted, including identifying the factors that may trigger such reactions. An individual intervention procedure should be developed in collaboration with caregivers. Then, efforts should be made to reduce emotional stress and protect the child and others involved in the challenging behavior. All children, including witnesses, should be protected. An individualized approach to children with diverse educational and developmental needs, including those with disabilities, also requires developing a clear form of communication that is adapted to the child's psychophysical abilities and allows them to express their wishes.

DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

Minors should be familiar with their rights and responsibilities and know where they can get help. All information provided should be tailored to the intended audience and understandable. Children should be aware of applicable norms and rules, as well as the consequences for non-compliance. It is important to conduct psychoeducational and preventative activities aimed at countering all forms of discrimination and violence, and to sensitize children to the right of every person to respect for their

dignity. There is an increasing amount of helpful literature available for all ages. It is also important to remember about caregivers.

It is also worth training employees to improve their skills in handling children in their care. The most important areas include: knowledge of applicable child protection policies and procedures, recognizing risk factors and symptoms of child abuse, and crisis management skills.

Children should be informed about how to avoid and respond to threats in interactions with adults and peers. During these sessions, minors should learn the principles of safe peer relationships and appropriate interpersonal behaviors, as well as practicing conflict resolution skills. Information on where to seek help should be made available.

RULES FOR SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET

Safe use of the internet and social media, as well as awareness of image protection laws, are also important. Educational materials on safe internet use should be made available.

Every library is obligated to take steps to protect children from accessing content that may pose a threat to their proper development. This includes illegal, harmful, and age-inappropriate content. Children must also be protected from inappropriate online contact. The most common online threats listed in the Guidelines (Guidelines, Chapter 4) include: peer pressure, cyberbullying, grooming, sexual blackmail, sexual activity as a source of income for minors, online gambling, access to age-inappropriate advertising, and social media.

STANDARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINORS IN LIBRARIES

School libraries, as an integral part of schools, have implemented standards for the protection of minors in accordance with the decisions of the directors responsible for these institutions.

Public libraries should also ensure the implementation of standards. *The IFLA Guidelines for Libraries Serving Children 0-18* emphasize that “the purpose of a children’s library is to gather diverse collections and provide services tailored to the level of education, information, and personal development of children of all ages and abilities” (*IFLA Guidelines*, 2020, p. 10). It is clearly emphasized that institutions are expected to meet needs, and the need for safety is one of them. The introduction of standards for the protection of minors also applies to public libraries. They must implement them, and not only because the law provides for sanctions (fines). Users under 19 years of age in public libraries in 2024 constituted 34.2% (Central Statistical Office), making this a significant group worth addressing. For the purposes of this article, the websites of sixteen provincial libraries in

Poland were analyzed, recognizing that these institutions should support other institutions within the library network.

LOWER SILESIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE LOWER SILESIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY IN WROCLAW

The library's website provides abbreviated and full versions of the standards for the protection of minors³. The "Standards for the Protection of Minors" tab is on the home page (<https://www.wbp.wroc.pl/wbp/pl/>). It states that "the library's goal is to provide children and young people (using and wanting to use the library's resources) with a safe environment, organized with respect for their rights and dignity". The full text of the standards is attached as Annex 1 to Order No. 3/2024 issued by the director of the Lower Silesian Public Library in Wrocław. They detail: principles of safe relationships between library staff and minors, principles of safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, recognizing and responding to signs of child abuse, and monitoring compliance with the standards. Attached are: a declaration of familiarity with the standards, registry verification procedures, forms of child abuse, an intervention sheet, a survey on the application of the standards, and the "Standards for the Protection of Minors" (shortened version for minors). On the library's website we can read that the library "wants to provide children and young people with free access to educational and cultural offerings in a safe and comfortable manner, free from threats and inappropriate behavior, and in particular free from any forms of violence and discrimination".

KUYAVIAN-POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP AND MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN BYDGOSZCZ

On the library website, under the "For Readers" tab, there are abbreviated and full versions of the standards for the protection of minors.⁴ The standards are presented in the form of a poster with graphic elements. They were introduced by Order No. 4/2024 of the Director of the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Bydgoszcz. A declaration states that "the library is implementing these standards to provide children and young people with a safe environment for using the library's offerings". The abbreviated version expands on the following points: safe relationships between library staff and minors, safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, and recognizing and responding to signs of child abuse. There is some confusion in the names of the documents and attachments. The following are available for download: Order No. 4/2024 – Standards for the Protection of Minors, Consent to the Publication of an

³ <https://www.wbp.wroc.pl/wbp/pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich>

⁴ <https://biblioteka.bydgoszcz.pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/>

Underage Participant's Image, Consent for the Unassisted Participation of Minors in Events, Abbreviated Standards for the Protection of Minors, and Standards for the Protection of Minors. There are duplicate documents.

LUBLIN VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN LUBLIN

No standards for the protection of minors were found on the library's website⁵.

LUBUSZ VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN ZIELONA GÓRA

The library website contains standards for the protection of minors in a downloadable form.⁶ The tab is on the institution's main website (<https://biblioteka.zgora.pl/>). They are attached as Annex 1 to Order No. 19/2024 issued by the Director of the Cyprian Norwid Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Zielona Góra. The Order states that "the well-being and safety of children are the priority in all actions taken by library staff for the benefit of children". The standards include the following sections: Glossary of terms, Areas of the Standards for the Protection of Minors from Abuse, Risk factors and symptoms of child abuse – principles of recognition and response, Principles of responding to cases of abuse and suspicions that a minor is experiencing abuse, Principles for protecting a child's image and personal data of minors, Principles for the safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, Monitoring the application of standards for the protection of minors from abuse, Personal data protection. Eight annexes are included: Principles of safe recruitment in the library, Declaration of no criminal record and commitment to comply with basic principles of the protection of minors from abuse, Principles of safe employee-child and child-child relationships established in the library, Intervention card regarding suspected child abuse, Principles for the protection of minors' and children's personal data, Principles for the safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, Survey monitoring the level of implementation of standards for the protection of minors from abuse, Written declaration of familiarization with standards for the protection of minors from abuse.

⁵ <https://wbp.lublin.pl>

⁶ <https://biblioteka.zgora.pl/index.php/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich>

ŁÓDŹ VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY IN ŁÓDŹ

The library website contains standards for the protection of minors in full and abbreviated versions⁷. The tab is on the institution's main website (<https://nowa.wbp.lodz.pl/>). It states that "the library, as a place where children learn about culture and spend their free time, recognizes its important role in promoting and respecting children's human rights. The library accepts responsibility for promoting appropriate attitudes towards children and promoting education in the scope of a free childhood without violence". The standards include seven chapters: Safe Relationships, Safe Recruitment, Intervention in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse (specifically: Abuse by an Employee/Co-worker, Abuse by Other Third Parties, Abuse by Parents/Guardians, and Peer Abuse), the Internet, the Image of Children, Monitoring Policy Implementation, Final Provisions, and a Glossary. The following appendices are included: Principles for Safe Contact with Children, a Code of Safe Child-Child Relationships, Learn about the candidate's details, which allows for best understanding their qualifications, including their attitude toward values such as protecting children's rights and respecting their dignity, template declarations (declaration of no criminal record, declaration of country of residence, data for verification in the National Register of Sex Offenders with limited access), an intervention card, a template for a notification of a possible crime, a template for an application to a family court for information into the family/child's situation, and a template for an application to a social welfare center. The short version includes telephone numbers where minors can seek help.

LESSER POLAND VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP PUBLIC LIBRARY IN KRAKÓW

The library website contains standards for the protection of minors⁸. The Menu now includes a tab titled "Regulations and Standards", which includes the Standards for the Protection of Minors (<https://www.rajska.info/regulaminy>). The goal of implementing these standards is to ensure a friendly and safe environment for minors to use the library's resources and services.

MASOVIAN VOIVODESHIP – WARSAW PUBLIC LIBRARY – THE CENTRAL LIBRARY OF THE MASOVIAN VOIVODESHIP

On the main page of the library, in the section for readers, you can find the Standards of Protection of Minors, a leaflet and a statement

⁷ <https://nowa.wbp.lodz.pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich-2/>

⁸ <https://www.rajska.info/regulaminy>

for parents⁹. They constitute an Annex to Order No. 24/2024 of the Director of the Warsaw Public Library - Central Library of the Mazovian Voivodeship. They include the following points: Principles for safe employee recruitment; Principles ensuring safe relationships between minors and library staff, including prohibited behavior; Requirements regarding safe relationships between minors; Procedures for protecting minors from harmful content and threats; Rules for using the Internet and protection against online threats; Persons responsible for receiving reports of incidents threatening minors and for providing them with support; Principles and procedures for intervening in the event of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor; Threat to the life or health of a minor; Suspected violence; Abuse by an employee; Abuse by other third parties; Procedures and persons responsible for submitting notifications of suspected crimes against a minor; Principles for establishing a support plan for a minor following the disclosure of abuse; Scope of responsibility of the Representative for the Protection of Minors; Principles for reviewing and updating standards; Method of documenting and storing disclosed or reported incidents or events threatening the well-being of a minor; Principles and method of making the standards available to parents, legal or actual guardians, and minors so that they can become familiar with them and apply them. Seven appendices are attached: Templates for declarations regarding citizenship/citizenships and residence over the past 20 years; Template for an intervention card; Template for a notification of a suspected crime; Template for an application for information about a family situation; Template for an intervention register; Template for an employee's declaration of familiarization with the Child Protection Standards in force in the library; an abbreviated version of the Child Protection Standards.

OPOLE VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN OPOLE

Standards for the Protection of Minors were not found on this institution's website.

PODKARPACKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN RZESZÓW

On the library website, in the readers' section, in the regulations and price lists, you can find the Child Protection Policy for the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in Rzeszów¹⁰. It was introduced by Order No. 8/2024 of the Director of the Provincial and Municipal Public Library in

⁹ <https://www.koszykowa.pl/dla-czytelnikow/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich>

¹⁰ <https://www.wimbp.rzeszow.pl/regulaminy-i-cenniki.html>

Rzeszów. The document is an annex to the order and consists of eleven chapters: Preamble, i.e., introduction to the document; Glossary of terms/ explanation of terms used in the document; Policy for the Protection of Children from Abuse; Recognizing and Responding to Risk Factors of Child Abuse; Principles of Employee Recruitment and Procedures for Verifying Staff Before Allowing Them to Engage in Activities Requiring Contact with Children; Principles of Safe Staff-Child Relationships; Principles of Safe Relationships Between Children; Intervention Procedures in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse; Principles for the Protection of Personal Data and Images of Children in the Institution; Principles for the Safe Use of the Internet and Electronic Media; Monitoring; Final Provisions. Four annexes are included: Principles of Safe Staff-Child Relationships, Intervention Card, Principles for Protecting Images of Children, and Policy Monitoring – Survey. The preamble states that “the guiding principle of all actions undertaken by the staff of the Voivodeship and Municipal Public Library in Rzeszów is to act for the good of the child and in his or her best interests. Each staff member treats the child with respect and takes into account his or her needs. It is unacceptable for anyone to use violence against a child in any form. In pursuing these goals, the institution’s staff acts within the framework of applicable law, the institution’s internal regulations, and their own competencies”.

PODLASKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE PODLASKIE LIBRARY IN BIAŁYSTOK

On the library’s home page, in the About Us section, you can find full and abridged versions of the Standards for the Protection of Minors at the Łukasz Górnicki Podlaskie Library in Białystok. The document is Appendix No. 1 to Order No. 18/2024 of the institution’s director. After the general provisions, the subsequent chapters in the standards are: Methods for documenting compliance with the obligation to screen employees before allowing them to work with minors to ensure they meet the requirements regarding no criminal record for crimes against sexual freedom and decency; Rules ensuring safe relationships between minors and employees, in particular prohibited behavior towards minors; Rules and procedures for intervening in the event of suspected abuse or having information about abuse of a minor; Procedures and persons responsible for submitting notifications of suspected crimes against a minor, notifying the Guardianship Court, and initiating the “Blue Card” procedure; Requirements regarding safe relationships between minors, in particular prohibited behavior; Rules for the use of electronic devices with internet access; Procedures for protecting minors from harmful content on the internet and content recorded in another form; Invasion of privacy; Cyberbullying; Principles for establishing a support plan for minors

following the disclosure of abuse; Principles and the methods for making the policy available to employees, minors and their parents and guardians for familiarization and application, as well as principles for updating and reviewing standards.

POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE VOIVODESHIP AND CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY IN GDAŃSK

The standards are posted on the library website under the About Us tab.¹¹ These regulations are introduced by Order No. 10/2025 of the Director of the Joseph Conrad-Korzeniowski Voivodeship and City Public Library in Gdańsk (WiMBP). The stated purpose of these regulations is to “provide children and young people using or wishing to use library resources with a safe environment, organized with respect for their rights and dignity”. The document consists of the following sections: Introduction, Glossary of Terms Used in the Document, Recognizing and Responding to Child Abuse Risk Factors, Principles for Recruiting Library Employees and Collaborators, Principles for Safe Relationships Between Employees/Collaborators and Minors and Between Minors, Intervention Procedures in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse, Principles for the Protection of Personal Data and Images of Children and Young People in the Library, Principles for Safe Use of the Internet and Electronic Media, Monitoring the Application of Standards, and Final Provisions. The following attachment is attached: Minor Protection Standards – an abbreviated version for minors. The tabs specify: Minor Protection Standards at WiMBP in Gdańsk, Minor Protection Standards - abbreviated version for minors, Forms of child abuse and symptoms by which it can be recognized, Principles of safe relationships for employees working with children, Verification procedures in the Sex Offenders Register and the National Criminal Register, Declaration of familiarization with the Minor Protection Standards, Intervention Card, Minor Protection Monitoring at WiMBP in Gdańsk – questionnaire, Declaration of no criminal record, SPM – leaflet, SPM – poster.

SILESIA VOIVODESHIP – THE SILESIA LIBRARY IN KATOWICE

The Standards for the Protection of Minors are available on the library website under the Library tab¹². It states that “the document is structured as a set of rules and procedures at the Silesian Library in Katowice, which are to be followed and applied in the event of suspected abuse or harm to a minor (child, student)” and that it “defines the organization of protection

¹¹ <https://wbpg.org.pl/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/>

¹² <https://bs.katowice.pl/biblioteka/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/>

of minors from abuse, the method of documentation, the principles of developing a support plan for a person experiencing violence, and other principles of conduct". The standards discuss: Rules for ensuring safe relationships between minors and library staff; Rules and procedures for intervening in the event of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor, the method of documentation and the principles of storing disclosed or reported incidents threatening the well-being of a child; Rules for ensuring safe relationships between minors and responding to peer abuse; The scope of competencies of the person responsible for preparing staff to apply the standards, the principles for preparing this staff to apply them and the method of documenting this activity, the principles for reviewing and updating the standards and for staff verification; Protection of children's personal data; Protection of children's images; Rules for using electronic devices with Internet access and procedures for protecting children from harmful content and threats on the Internet or recorded in other forms; Rules and methods for making the standards available to parents or legal or actual guardians and minors. Six annexes are attached: Intervention card template, Intervention register template, Declaration template, Personal verification principles, Consent to personal verification and a version of the standards for children.

ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE VOIVODESHIP – THE REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN KIELCE

The standards are available on the institution's home page under the Library tab, under the Regulations subtab¹³, immediately after the library's statute. They were introduced by Order 4/2024 of the library's director and constitute an annex thereto. Attached to them are: a declaration of familiarization with the standards for the protection of minors; an intervention card; a survey on the application of the standards; and an abbreviated version of the standards intended for minors.

WARMIAN-MASURIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN OLSZTYN

The standards are available on the library website under the About the Library tab.¹⁴ The Child Protection Policy at the Regional Public Library in Olsztyn is Appendix No. 1 to Order No. 021.I.7.2024 of the facility's director. It consists of the following chapters: Safe Relationships; Safe Recruitment; Intervention in the Event of Suspected Child Abuse; The Internet; Children's Images; Monitoring Policy Application. Attached are: Principles of Safe Contact with Children, the Code of Safe Child-

¹³ <https://www.wbp.kielce.pl/biblioteka/regulaminy>

¹⁴ <https://www.wbp.olsztyn.pl/>

Child Relationships, sample declarations, an information card, a sample notification of a possible crime, a sample application to the family court for information regarding the family/child's situation, and a sample application to a social welfare center.

GREATER POLAND VOIVODESHIP – THE REGIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY AND CULTURE ANIMATION CENTER IN POZNAŃ

The standards are available on the library website under the Library tab in the About Us subtab¹⁵. They were established by the director of the Regional Public Library and Culture Animation Center in Poznań by order no. 7 of 24 June 2024. They consist of six points, including: Basic principles for the protection of minors, Principles for the safe use of the internet and electronic media in the library, Principles and procedures for recognizing and intervening in situations of suspected abuse or information about abuse of a minor, and Principles for reviewing and updating standards.

WEST POMERANIAN VOIVODESHIP – THE POMERANIAN LIBRARY

No standards were found on the facility's website.

CONCLUSIONS

The websites of three libraries did not contain standards for the protection of minors, while the remaining thirteen libraries have implemented standards. They are most often posted on the institution's home page or in the Library section, sometimes also in the For Readers section. The level of detail also varies. Indeed, when developing standards, institutions attempt to adapt them to their own specific needs. Regional libraries most often specify: rules for safe relationships with children, specifying prohibited behaviors; procedures for intervention in the event of suspected child abuse; and policies regarding internet use. While developing standards is important, implementing them is paramount in order to ensure that minors feel safe in the library.

SUMMARY

Libraries are established to meet the needs of their users, of course to the best of their abilities. The so-called "Kamilek's Act" introduced the requirement to develop standards for the protection of minors, which emphasized the obligation to ensure the safety of children and young people. By implementing these standards, libraries define, among other

¹⁵ <https://wbp.poznan.pl/biblioteka/o-nas/standardy-ochrony-maloletnich/>

things: principles for ensuring safe relationships between minors and staff; principles and procedures for intervening in situations of suspected abuse or of information about the abuse of a minor; requirements for safe relationships between minors, particularly prohibited behavior; rules for the use of electronic devices with internet access; and procedures for protecting children from harmful content and threats on the internet and from other sources. The standards take into account the situation of children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. These elements should be considered important areas of library activity, as they concern communication and the creation of safe spaces. This is related to meeting the need for safety, which is important at every stage of life. It is crucial that libraries not only develop and implement standards for the protection of minors but also recognize their importance. For those unconvinced, here is a quote from the book *Sweden Reads, Poland Reads*, illustrating the role of libraries: "When I was nine, a library saved my life. [...] What they offer cannot be measured or quantified. Thanks to a library, a person can take control of their life, discover a new world, find hope, language, strength. This is precisely what has always fascinated me about libraries" (Tubylewicz & Diduszko-Zyglewska, 2015, pp. 53-54). The entire story is not recounted here (referring to the source), but these words demonstrate what a safe space a library can be for its users.

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