

# Pickens County Library System - Review of Materials Policy

**Adopted 8/15/24**

The Pickens County Library System supports the principles stated in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States and endorses the principles documented in the Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read statement of the American Library Association. The Library has a responsibility to provide public information and enlightenment through its collections. Individual patrons may not restrict access to other Library users because they personally object to materials or other Library resources.

Materials selected and made available in the Library present diverse viewpoints, enabling citizens to make the informed choices necessary to a democracy. The library upholds the right of the individual to access these resources, even though the content may be controversial, unorthodox, or unacceptable to some. The Library's collection is available to all. Resources are selected by trained professionals to meet the varied needs of the community; however, it is not expected that all resources will appeal to every user.

Patrons may request reconsideration of physical library materials, displays, programs, electronic materials, or digital resources. Staff will provide the patron with information regarding the reconsideration process and procedures. The patron must be an adult (18+) and a resident of Pickens County with an active library card. Professional librarians within the Library System are responsible for addressing requests for material review. Patron concerns may be addressed by completing a **Request for Reconsideration of Library Resources** form. After the Request for Reconsideration form has been submitted, a formal review of the material in question shall be undertaken in accordance with this policy.

The petitioner (1) is required to have read the entire book or examined the entire resource and (2) is solely responsible for originating and preparing the request. Requests will not be considered if they are submitted on behalf of or at the request of another individual or organization. *Signing the reconsideration form is a testament that the petitioner has conformed to these policies.* No Request for reconsideration will be considered if the principal reason for the request is construed to be based on content related to sexual orientation or preference, gender, race, or religious or political belief.

Because of the timeline for response and the amount of staff time that goes into a thoughtful and well-considered reconsideration request, submissions are limited to one active request per patron at a time. If a title has already been submitted and considered, the decision rendered will remain in place for two years. After such time has passed, the Board must approve by a majority vote to proceed with any new reconsideration request for the material.

When multiple reconsiderations are being addressed, availability of library materials being reviewed may result in delays; in this case, library staff may determine the order of materials to be reviewed and how many simultaneous reviews will take place. A maximum of three reconsideration requests will be taken up for appeal by the Board within any thirty-day period. During the reconsideration process, the material under review will remain in circulation and be available in the library within the section in which it was housed prior to the initiation of the review process. A list of all items being reconsidered and their current status within the Reconsideration process will be available on the library's website. Please note, the Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form, accompanying materials and any written responses to the Reconsideration become part of the public record.

Throughout this reconsideration process, all parties involved will adhere to the following:

### **Guiding Principles**

- Libraries have diverse materials reflecting differing points of view, and a library's mission is to provide access to information to all users.
- All library users have a First Amendment right to read, view, and listen to library resources.
- The Library Bill of Rights and the Freedom to Read Statement of the American Library Association can be used as guiding documents.
- Patrons have the right to express concerns about library resources and expect to have the objection taken seriously.
- Parents or guardians have the right to guide the reading, viewing, and listening of their own children but must give the same right to other parents/guardians.
- A questioned item must be considered in its entirety, not judged solely on excerpts.
- Board members voting on an appeal must have read an entire book or examined an entire resource or recuse themselves from voting.
- Any communication regarding the review that does not adhere to the Library's Code of Conduct including abusive or defamatory statements or comments that are menacing or intimidating in nature will terminate the reconsideration process.

**While most reasons for proposed action will be considered by the Board, there are several which will not factor into the Board's decision, including:**

- The fact that the Libraries are publicly funded.
- Presumptions of, or demographic data pertaining to, ideological, religious, or political opinions, beliefs, or affiliations held by the majority of the population of Pickens County.

**Additionally, the following actions will not be considered by the Board:**

- A request that calls for moving a book or item to a section of the Library that does not currently exist.
- A request to completely remove materials from the Library System that are currently placed within the adult collection.

## Reconsideration of Library Materials Procedure

1.	Petitioners submit a completed Request for Reconsideration form to a Department/Branch Manager. The Department Head/Branch Manager will make sure the form is complete and fill out the staff portion of the form with location, staff initials, and date received.
2.	The Department/Branch Manager will make a copy of the request, scan the request and email it to the Library Director. The original form is then sent to the Library Director via interoffice mail.
3.	The Department /Branch Manager will send the petitioner an acknowledgement that the review request has been received. A copy of the Review of Library Materials Policy and Procedures will also be enclosed.
4.	Managers will select 2 professional librarians to conduct an independent review of the library material. Each may consult and rely upon professional reviews and other expert sources in their review process. These librarians will provide their individual recommendation to the Manager, who will make a decision with respect to the materials. The Manager is not bound by any of the librarians' recommendations when rendering a decision. The Manager's decision will be communicated in writing to the petitioner within 45 business days of receipt of their initial request. If additional time is needed, the Manager will notify the petitioner who submitted the request.
5.	If the petitioner is not satisfied with the decision of the Manager, the matter may be appealed to the Library Director. To initiate this review, the petitioner must send a written notice of appeal to the Director within 15 business days of receiving the decision from the Manager. The Library Director will send the petitioner a written acknowledgement of receipt. The Library Director will review the recommendations of the librarians, the decision letter of the Manager, any material submitted by the petitioner and may also request additional independent review. The Library Director is not bound by any previous review or recommendation when making his/her decision. Within 30 business days of receipt of the petitioner's notice of appeal, the Library Director will notify the petitioner in writing of the Library Director's decision. If additional time is needed, the Library Director will notify the petitioner who submitted the request.
6.	If the petitioner wishes to appeal the Library Director's decision, a review by the Pickens County Library System Board of Trustees may be requested.
7.	To initiate review by the Library Board, the petitioner must send a written notice of appeal to the Board within 15 business days of receiving the Library Director's decision. The Board will be notified of the appeal at the next scheduled meeting. The matter may be reviewed at a Regular or Special Meeting as determined by the Library Board Chair, or in the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair. Copies of the Reconsideration Form and accompanying materials, librarian reviews, the decisions of the Manager and the Library Director, and any other pertinent materials will be provided to the Library Board. The Library Board will be provided with the following resources to guide their review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Library's Collection Development Policy</li> <li>- Mission Statement</li> <li>- Library Bill of Rights</li> <li>- The Miller Test</li> <li>- Review of Materials Policy with Guiding Principles and Procedures</li> </ul>
8.	Written notice of the Library Board's final decision will be sent to the petitioner within 7 business days of that meeting date. The decision of the Library Board is final.