

Dunlap Public Library District

Reference Services Policy

Adopted 26 April 2021

Reviewed 19 May 2025

I. Purpose

The purpose of reference service is to provide accurate answers to library patrons' questions by trained staff members during all hours the library is open.

- A. To provide materials and services to meet patrons' needs for timely, accurate, and useful information.
- B. To provide trained staff to assist patrons and facilitate access to the library's collections and cooperative resources.
- C. To assist patrons in the use of reference resources, library materials and in the development of research strategies.
- D. To provide readers' advisory service.
- E. To provide efficient referral and effective follow-through including interlibrary loan, resource sharing, and supplementary reference services to Dunlap Public Library District (DPLD) cardholders.
- F. To keep the community well-informed about the reference services and resources available and encourage their use.

II. Scope

- A. The DPLD reference service is available during all the hours that the library is open. All staff members providing reference service must read and understand the written reference policy.
- B. The staff of the DPLD strive to handle all inquiries with impartiality and confidentially in a courteous and efficient manner. Effort is made to answer all kinds of questions. No distinction is made about the purpose of the inquiry or the use of information.
- C. The library subscribes to the American Library Association's Code of Ethics.
- D. Non-residents will be assisted with local library resources. If the request requires resources beyond the DPLD, the library reserves the right to refer patrons back to their home libraries for service.

III. Response to Questions

- A. Requests will generally be handled in the order in which they are received. Requests submitted by patrons in the library are given priority over telephone requests that are received at the same time. Staff will attempt to answer questions at the time the request is made and to work within the patron's time limits. This may not be possible for complex questions. In such situations, staff will inform the patron that a longer response time will be necessary. Staff will also inform the patron if it becomes necessary to refer the question to an outside agency.
- B. When answering a patron's reference question, staff will cite the resource(s) from which the information was obtained. The producers of that resource, not the library staff, are responsible for that source's accuracy. Staff will decide when all reasonable resources have been exhausted at this library and will also decide when it is time to refer the question to another agency or to cease working on the question. Staff will offer no

interpretation, advice, or personal recommendation in any area other than library science. Staff does not provide medical, legal, financial, or tax advice.

- C. Whenever possible and practical, library staff who are responding to reference inquiries will also attempt to guide and instruct patrons in how to use library resources.
- D. Students working on homework assignments will be directed to resources and given assistance with their use.

IV. Limits of Services

- A. In the instance of legal, medical, investment, or tax reference questions, the staff may only guide the patron to the material available on the topic of interest. Library staff's personal opinion will never be given as fact. While library staff will provide sources of information, information will not be interpreted and the librarian will not offer legal, medical, or tax advice. If it is not possible to answer a question by the above means, questions will be referred to another agency, when appropriate.
- B. Library staff will guide patrons doing extensive research or compiling large amounts of information to appropriate sources. Reading and interpretation of materials is the patron's responsibility.

V. Fees

There is no charge for reference services. However, charges assessed by outside agencies and costs incurred for additional library services, such as photocopies, printouts, or faxing, will be passed on to the patron.

VI. Ethics and Standards

All transactions with patrons will be treated with equal importance and confidentiality.