

Hinsdale Public Library

Confidentiality of Patron Library Records Policy

A. Confidentiality of Patron Records and Court Orders

General Guidelines

Personally identifiable information about library users must be kept confidential in accordance with the Illinois Library Records Confidentiality Act 75 ILCS 70/1-2 ('the Act'). The Act provides that confidential library records (records pertaining to an individual patron's use of library materials or resources) may not be published or made available in any format to a federal agent, state or local law enforcement officer, or other person without a court order. Library staff must cooperate with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies when they are acting within the scope of a lawfully issued court order.

Exception to Guidelines

75 ILCS 70/1-2 allows an exception to the Act. Enforcement officers may request information in emergency situations regarding the identity of suspects, witnesses, or victims where the officer believes there is imminent danger of physical harm, provided:

1. A sworn law enforcement officer represents to the library it is impractical to get a court order as a result of an emergency; and
2. The officer has probable cause to believe there is imminent danger of physical harm; and
3. The information requested is limited to identifying a suspect, witness or victim of a crime; and
4. The information requested does not include records reflecting materials borrowed, resources reviewed, or services used at the library.

Under this exception, only information identifying a suspect, witness or victim of a crime may be disclosed to an officer without a court order; all other information remains confidential without a court order. Following compliance with the law under this exception, the Library may seek subsequent judicial review. Libraries are protected from patron claims that disclosure under the law constitutes a breach of confidentiality. Finally, the right of a patron to challenge the disclosure remains.

B. Court Orders

A court order may take the form of either a subpoena or a search warrant. A subpoena allows a period of time in which to respond to or contest the court's order. A search warrant can be executed immediately by law enforcement officials.

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C. Designated Contact Person

For the purposes of this policy, the Executive Director is the designated contact person and will handle all requests to search HPL records pursuant to a court order. In the absence of the Director, the staff member designated as "Person in Charge" will handle the request.

D. Responsibilities of the Designated Contact Person

Upon the presentation of a request to search HPL records, the designated contact person will:

1. Request identification from the law enforcement officials and record their names, badge numbers and agencies.
2. Notify the Hinsdale Police Department if the law enforcement officials presenting themselves at HPL are from any other jurisdiction.
3. Provide a copy of this policy to the law enforcement officials promptly upon their arrival at HPL.
4. If the law enforcement officials do not have a court order for the information that is being requested, the designated contact will explain that HPL is prohibited by law to give access to confidential records without a court order.
5. If the law enforcement officials represent to HPL that:
 - a. There is imminent danger of physical harm;
 - b. That it is impractical to get a court order as a result of an emergency;
 - c. That the information requested is limited to identifying a suspect, witness or victim of a crime;
 - d. And that the information requested does not include records reflecting materials borrowed, resources reviewed, or services used at HPL.

Then the designated contact will cooperate with the official during the search under the provisions of the Act.

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6. When law enforcement officials present a subpoena, the designated contact will tell the official that HPL's attorney will respond. The Executive Director will ask the attorney to review the subpoena and advise the Library on an appropriate response.
7. When law enforcement officials present a search warrant, the designated contact will call HPL's attorney immediately. (Contact information for HPL's attorney is in the Emergency Handbook.)
8. If HPL's attorney is not present during the search, the designated contact will appoint another staff member to accompany the designated contact and law enforcement officials during the search.
9. When cooperating with law enforcement officials during the search, the designated contact will help locate the records/evidence specifically identified in the court order and ensure that no other patron's records are viewed.
10. No access will be given to any records beyond the scope of the court order, i.e., records not specifically identified in the court order. The designated contact will not volunteer or suggest any additional information beyond that specifically requested in the court order.
11. The designated contact may communicate with other Library staff as needed to obtain the specified information. Otherwise, the contact will not discuss the search with any other individuals, staff or non-staff; doing so may subject the contact and/or HPL to serious penalties under applicable law.
12. The designated contact will make a list of all records or evidence viewed, copied, or removed from HPL pursuant to the order.
13. The designated contact will ask the requesting officer to sign the Officer's Request for Confidential Library Information form (appended). If the Executive Director is not present, the Person in Charge will notify them as soon as possible that the search has taken place.
14. As allowed, the Executive Director will notify the Board of Trustees any time a court order is received.

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E. Disclosure of a Court Order

If the search warrant or order is issued by an FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) court or otherwise under a statutory provision of the USA PATRIOT Act, it will contain a “gag order.” This means that no person or institution served with the warrant can disclose that the warrant has been served or that records have been produced pursuant to the warrant. No Library staff member will disclose the receipt of the court order or any information about the records sought to anyone, including the patron whose records are the subject of the search, except the Executive Director and/or HPL’s attorney. Any questions about the incident from the press or any other individuals should be referred to the Executive Director.

Hinsdale Public Library Board of Trustees
Approved and Adopted by Library Board on January 27, 2004.
Revised 4/28 /09, 09/25/12, 11/17/15, 11/27/18, 3/22/22.

Illinois Records Confidentiality Act (75 ILCS 70/1-2)

(75 ILCS 70/1) (from Ch. 81, par. 1201)

Sec. 1. (a) The registration and circulation records of a library are confidential information. No person shall publish or make any information contained in such records available to the public unless:

(1) required to do so under court order; or

(2) the information is requested by a sworn law enforcement officer who represents that it is impractical to secure a court order as a result of an emergency where the law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe that there is an imminent danger of physical harm. The information requested must be limited to identifying a suspect, witness, or victim of a crime. The information requested without a court order may not include the disclosure of registration or circulation records that would indicate materials borrowed, resources reviewed, or services used at the library. If requested to do so by the library, the requesting law enforcement officer must sign a form acknowledging the receipt of the information. A library providing the information may seek subsequent judicial review to assess compliance with this Section. This subsection shall not alter any right to challenge the use or dissemination of patron information that is otherwise permitted by law.

(b) This Section does not prevent a library from publishing or making available to the public reasonable statistical reports regarding library registration and book circulation where those reports are presented so that no individual is identified therein.

(b-5) Nothing in this Section shall be construed as a privacy violation or a breach of confidentiality if a library provides information to a law enforcement officer under item (2) of subsection (a).

(c) For the purpose of this Section, (i) "library" means any public library or library of an educational, historical or eleemosynary institution, organization or society; (ii) "registration records" includes any information a library requires a person to provide in order for that person to become eligible to borrow books and other materials and (iii) "circulation records" includes all information identifying the individual borrowing particular books or materials. (Source: P.A. 95-40, eff. 1-1-08.)

(75 ILCS 70/2) (from Ch. 81, par. 1202) Sec. 2. This Act may be cited as the Library Records Confidentiality Act. (Source: P.A. 86-1475.)

Officer's Request for Confidential Library Information

- A. This is a request under the Illinois Library Records Confidentiality Act, 75 ILCS 70/1 (copy attached) for information contained in Hinsdale Public Library's registration and circulation records.
- B. My request for information is limited to identifying a "suspect, witness, or victim of a crime."
- C. As the basis for this request, I represent the following:
 - 1. I am a sworn law enforcement officer.
 - 2. As a result of an emergency where I believe there is imminent danger of physical harm, it is impractical to secure a Court Order for the identification information.
- D. The information I request relates to the following (Description of information sought):

Officer's Acknowledgement

I acknowledge receipt from the Library of the information I requested.

_____	_____	_____
Officer's Printed Name	Officer's Signature	Officer's Badge #
_____	_____	_____
Officer's Agency/Department	Time Signed	Date Signed

(Library Use Only)

Name(s) of Library Staff assisting with the information requested:
