

Grimsby Public Library – Disconnect from Work Policy

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H-22-24

Policy Type:

Human Resources

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Effective Date:

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Notes:

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Definitions

“Disconnecting from Work” means not engaging in work-related communications, including emails, telephone calls, video calls or the sending or reviewing of other messages, so as to be free from the performance of work.

“Employee” means a person who works at the Grimsby Public Library, either part-time or full-time.

“Library” means the Grimsby Public Library

“Library Board” or *“Board”* means the Grimsby Public Library Board

Purpose

The Grimsby Public Library Board recognizes that changes in technology have allowed employees to be constantly connected, however the Board recognizes the right of an employee to disconnect from work outside of scheduled work hours. This policy supports the Board’s commitment to support the work-life balance of library staff.

Disconnecting from work is vital for a person's well-being and sustaining a healthy work-life balance. Disconnecting also enables employees to work more productively during their actual working hours and reduces the likelihood of employee stress and deterioration of mental health and overall well-being.

Since the library does not have more than 25 employees, a written policy is not currently required according to the Ontario Employment Standards Act 2000, Part VII.0.1, however, the Library Board acknowledges how important it is for library employees to disconnect from work in order to encourage and support overall employee health and wellness.

Guidelines

An employee's time outside of scheduled working hours is meant for employees to recharge and spend time as they wish, and should not be used to complete work-related tasks; however, there may be a lack of separation between home and work that makes it difficult for some employees to truly disconnect. Using personal time to work can make an employee feel as though they are 'always on' or obligated to continue working or respond to communication.

Application

1. The Right to Disconnect

The right to disconnect means that employees:

- a) Can and should stop performing their job duties and work-related tasks when they are not scheduled to work.
- b) Are not required to take work home with them to complete outside of regularly scheduled hours of work.
- c) Are not expected or required to respond to work-related communications outside of their regular working hours, while on break, or during any paid or unpaid time off.
- d) Should take and use all of their scheduled breaks (including meal breaks) and time-off entitlements (including vacation time) for non-work-related activities.
- e) Will not face repercussions or be penalized for not communicating outside of their regularly scheduled hours of work.

2. Needs of the Library

Occasionally, there may be legitimate situations when it is necessary to contact employees outside of normally scheduled working hours, including but not limited to:

- a) Checking availability for additional shifts such as to fill in at short notice for a sick or absent co-worker

- b) Where unforeseeable circumstances require contact out of normally scheduled working hours such as inclement weather or other special emergency conditions
- c) For any reason as described in the employee's job description which requires them to be contacted outside of regular work hours, for example, for on-call operational responsibilities.

3. Workload and Productivity

- a) The Library understands that employees may want or need to work outside of their normal scheduled hours of work to meet a time-sensitive deadline, to attend to an urgent matter, or due to unforeseen circumstances, however employees should not regularly or frequently work outside their scheduled hours of work to complete or catch up on work.
- b) Employees who cannot manage their workload during their regularly scheduled hours should meet with their direct supervisor to evaluate their current workload, priorities, and deadlines.

Communication

1. The Library may on occasion send general communication to all employees including those who are not presently at work. Employees should not feel obligated to respond, nor are they expected to respond, to any communication when not at work, apart from unforeseen circumstances, such as an emergency situation. Employees on vacation or sick leave will only be expected to respond upon their return to work.
2. Employees must also respect others and avoid direct work-related communication including sending e-mails, messages or calling other employees outside their regularly scheduled working hours, during breaks, or during an employee's time off, such as their regular day off or vacation time.
3. Since work hours differ for library employees, those sending communications should consider the timing of their communication and understand that the recipient will not be expected to respond until their return to work.
4. Those employees on sick leave may be contacted for limited information related to their return to work.
5. Employees who do not reply to work-related communications outside of normal scheduled working hours will not face repercussions or be penalized.

Responsibility

1. The Library CEO & Chief Librarian is responsible for implementing the appropriate procedures in accordance with this policy.
2. It is the responsibility of the Library CEO & Chief Librarian to ensure that a copy of this policy is given to all new employees as part of the new employee onboarding communications, within 30 days of being hired and given to all employees with 30 days of any changes being made.
3. Employees are responsible for ensuring that they have read and understand this policy as it relates to their own work and that of other employees.