Library Programming Policy

Purpose

The Hamden Public Library is committed to offering an array of programs that cater to the diverse needs and interests of the community. Library programming is a resource for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas and to promote free expression and free access to ideas by residents. It offers learning and entertainment opportunities that provide for the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of attendees. By addressing both emerging community interests and established demands, it expands the library's role as a community anchor. All library materials are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in [section 46a-64 of the Connecticut State General Statutes](), including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability.

This policy serves as an overview of library programming as a service and knowledge resource. It offers guidance on what the public should expect when attending and participating in programming. It ensures that Library's partners and external facilitators/presenters are aware of the objectives and expectations of library programming. This policy is also a framework for library staff to use in the development and delivery of high-quality programming.

The Hamden Public Library offers library programs for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all residents. These programs represent a wide range of varied and diverging viewpoints and are curated by professionally trained library staff. Programs may be live, hybrid, virtual, and prerecorded. These programs serve to provide access to content that is relevant to the research, independent interests and educational needs of residents.

Definition of Library and Private Programs

A Library program is defined as: A free presentation, meeting, workshop/class, or event planned by the professionally trained librarians for the benefit of those members of the public who opt to attend. A library program is a resource for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas, as such it promotes free expression and access to ideas by attendees. It may involve outside presenters, facilitators, or performers. It may be presented in collaboration or in cooperation with other entities. A program can be a single event or a series of events, be scheduled or occur as a pop-up, take place inside or outside of a library, or beheld virtually. Attendance is voluntary.

A Private program is defined as: A presentation, meeting, workshop/class, or event offered by other organizations or individuals on the library premises under the terms and conditions of the [Meeting Room Use Policy](). Generally, these programs are closed to the public and intended for selected audience members.

Program Selection

Objectives:
1. **Support Lifelong Learning**: Programs are developed to provide educational opportunities that cater to various age groups and learning levels.

2. **Foster Community Engagement**: Programs are designed to be welcoming, encourage discussion, understanding, and collaboration among community members.

3. **Enhance Civic Participation**: Programming includes topics that promote civic awareness and participation, empowering residents to engage actively in their community.

4. **Promote Cultural Awareness**: Programs will reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of our community, celebrating and educating about different traditions and perspectives.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Hamden Public Library Board of Trustees delegates development, presentation and oversight of programs to the Library Director and staff.

Professionally trained librarians curate and develop programs. The Programming Committee, the Podcast Committee, the Department Head of Children and Family Services, the Teen Librarian, and the Branch Managers are accountable for planning, scheduling, and implementing of programs. The final responsibility for programming is held by the Library Director, but day-to-day responsibility is shared by library employees throughout the library that are professionally trained to curate and develop programs.

Program Development, Coordination and Supervision:

The Library is committed to providing a diverse range of free programs that are educational, informative, cultural, or recreational in nature. Our programming is curated by professionally trained staff to meet the varied interests and needs of our community while adhering to the principles of inclusivity and accessibility. Programming is developed in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in section 46a-64 of the Connecticut General Statutes. While some topics may be viewed as controversial, they will not be excluded if they meet Library criteria. The Library's sponsorship of a program does not signify endorsement of the content or presenter.

The following criteria are used in making decisions about program topics, speakers, and accompanying resources:

- Alignment with current library strategic focus goals and mission;

- Timeliness and relevance of topic to community needs and interests;

- Availability of funding;

- Availability of programming space;

- Promotional opportunities and publicity resource constraints;

- Presenter background/qualification in content area;

- Appropriateness of content for the intended audience;

- Connection to other community programs, exhibitions or events;

- Diversity, equity and inclusion;

- Historical or educational significance;

- Relation to library collections, resources, exhibits or programs.

The Library collaborates with community agencies and organizations to offer programs and hiring professional performer/presenters with specialized expertise without bias towards their background or views. Members of the public may suggest and offer programming through our online portal or by emailing the library. Presenters undergo vetting by staff, which may include checks on references, background, and credentials. Professionally trained library staff present programs as part of their regular duties.

Programs of a purely commercial nature or those designed to solicit business will not be offered by the Library. Examples of programs that would be considered of a commercial nature include, but are not limited to, presentations offered for free but with the intention of attracting participants to purchase items or services in the future.

The Library serves as a portal of civic education and engagement. Educational programs, such as candidate forums that include invitations to all recognized candidates may be offered; or community conversations which serve as access portals for information about government services, processes, and/or mission. However, programs that support or oppose any political candidate or ballot measure will not be approved or offered by the Library.

Library programs may address religious themes to educate or inform, but not to promote, observe or proselytize a particular religious conviction. Holiday programs may be offered for the entertainment of attendees, or to serve as an introduction to other cultural and ethnic traditions.

The following activities will be permissible at Library-initiated programs or on property governed by Library policy:

- Fundraising to benefit the Friends of the Hamden Library.

- The sale of books, music, movies or other items by authors, performers or presenters as part of a Library sponsored program.

Library selection and development of a program does not constitute an endorsement of the content of the program or the views expressed by presenters.

Program Access:

To ensure programs are accessible and inclusive, the Library considers the availability of resources such as collections, services, space, security, and facilities. Patron safety is prioritized in all programming activities. Not all facilities or venues are equally accessible. However, the Library strives to make reasonable accommodations for those who request them in advance.

The library reserves the right to limit attendance based on the specific parameters of a program, such as the age of the intended audience or space limitations.

Sometimes programs may require local residency requirements due to funding restrictions. Otherwise, all programs that are capped with a participation limit will be in order of registration: first come, first served. Registration may be completed in-person, by calling the library, or online.

Some programs are tailored for specific audiences, such as children or teens, and may require adult supervision. The Library can set age limits and will consider factors like material suitability, topic relevance, and presentation style. Programs for specific age groups will be clearly identified, while others are open to all ages. Caregivers are responsible for children attending Library programs.

Virtual Programs

To reach more patrons, the Library will offer virtual programs using approved meeting platforms. These programs may be held simultaneously at library facilities or exclusively online. These may be hosted by designated library staff and collaborators. Generally, registration is required for virtual presentations. The Library reserves the right to remove or mute participants who are disruptive or attempt to hijack the program.

Program Materials

When a library program is centered on the use of material resources to accomplish its objective [i.e. arts and crafts workshops, journaling, or book discussion] these materials will be provided at no cost to the participant. Provision of program materials may be restricted by cost and availability; thus, the library reserves the right to limit attendance at a program.

However, there could be a supplies charge required by the presenter. When this is the case, it will be noted in publicity for the program. Generally the Library strives to absorb the cost of supplies but this is not always possible.

Program Evaluation:

The Library encourages programming feedback by offering evaluation forms at programs. Other aspects of the evaluation process includes feedback from staff, participants, and partners to identify and address community gaps. Professional library staff assess whether the program met its goal and whether it encouraged inclusive, accessible participation. This assessment uses various data points, such as attendance, public knowledge gaps, and patron feedback, alongside budget considerations for paid presenters.

Expectation of Privacy

Presenters/Performers are expected to keep all personal information acquired while performing or conducting a program confidential. A person's library record and information are private and confidential.

When registration is required, the Library maintains the registration contact information and distributes communication from presenters to the registrants; the registrant list for an event is not shared outside of the library. All library communications to registrants will be sent as blind carbon copy in order to maintain confidentiality.

Presenters may not require personal information (names, addresses, phone numbers, emails, etc.) from the program participants, either as part of a pre-registration process or during the program itself. Participants can voluntarily give presenters their contact information if they wish.

The Library may photograph or video-record attendees at its programs, implying consent for future use in publications or online. It is general practice of the Library to request media permission for minors. Furthermore, images will not include full names or personal information without written approval. Participants can request in writing for their images not to be used.

Procedures for Questioning Library Programming:

The Library welcomes expressions of opinion from any attendee concerning programming. The Library limits consideration of request to reconsider material, programs, or programs to Hamden residents. Please see our Material Review and Reconsideration policy for further information on this process.

Approved by the Hamden Public Library Board of Trustees: Nov. 5, 2025