

Fact Sheet: Proposed APLS Rules Changes 2024

A 90-day public comment period about proposed changes to the Alabama Public Library Service Administrative Code opened on January 31, 2024. The deadline to submit comments is 4:30 PM on April 29, 2024. The proposed changes to the code will ensure our local public libraries are a safe place for children and teens of Alabama.

What is Alabama Administrative Code 520-2-2.03?

The Alabama Administrative Code outlines the purpose and policies of all Alabama state agencies. Section 520 establishes the administration of the Alabama Public Library Service (APLS). Chapter 2 explains the policies for providing state aid to public libraries. Subsection 2.03 explains requirements for public libraries to receive supplemental state aid from the Alabama Public Library Service.

Why is Governor Ivey Requesting changes to the Administrative Code?

On October 4, 2023, after receiving requested information from the Alabama Public Library Service, Governor Ivey requested four changes to the Administrative Code. She stated in this letter to the APLS, “parents should be confident that the materials available in the children’s section, are in fact, suitable for children. And children should have the freedom to wander freely in a children’s section without being exposed to harmful materials.” The modifications she proposes will require each local library to make certain policy changes to be eligible for state funding.

What Are the Proposed Changes and Why Do They Matter?

The proposed changes to the current administrative code are underlined.

1. “In order to receive state aid, a library board must approve written policies for the public library which cover (A) the physical location (and relocation) of sexually explicit or other material deemed inappropriate for children or youth and (B) advance approval of materials recommended, displayed, or otherwise actively promoted to children or youth”

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Library boards will need to determine the criteria for "sexually explicit" or otherwise "inappropriate" material for minors, then establish written guidelines for where this material should go in the library. Boards will also need to establish a process for staff to seek approval for all youth displays and recommendations. The APLS will withhold supplemental state funding to libraries that choose not to address these policy changes.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Read Freely Alabama’s Opinion:

The first part of this proposed change suggests that there is even such a thing as sexually explicit content aimed at children, which is simply not the case. The children’s materials that purportedly qualify as "sexually explicit" are largely about gender expression, gender identity, same-sex parents, and antiracism. Educational titles such as *It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health* by Robie Harris have also been targeted as "pornographic" despite presenting factual information about puberty in an age-appropriate format. Even the young adult literature that is called into question is not "sexually explicit" in the same way that "pornography" is, but the people and organizations in favor of complicating access to young adult materials conflate the two to downplay the merit of having these materials readily accessible to young adults. ReadFreelyAlabama.org Fact Sheet: Proposed APLS Rules Changes 2024.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

It is always best to go to the source and see for yourself and not rely on someone else's opinion. Quite a bit of research has been done which you can use to locate information contained in some of the books in question. We choose not to reprint the content here because of the sexually explicit, graphic and vulgar nature of the material. A trusted website that is very helpful is Booklooks.org. This site contains a wealth of information. Booklooks grades books on a scale from 0-5 (see chart below). Books that are rated a "3" are considered 'Minor Restricted'; books rated a "4" are 'No Minors'; and books rated a "5" are 'Aberrant Content.' Many of the books reviewed have an actual count of profane words used within the book (usually located at end of review). They give actual excerpts of passages found to be questionable. Listed below are several books found in a local library. These same books and many more are found in some libraries all over the state of Alabama.

For Everyone Content is appropriate for all ages	Child Guidance Some content may not be appropriate for very young children	Teen Guidance Some content may not be appropriate for children under 13	Minor Restricted Under 16 requires guidance of parent or guardian	No Minors Adult content. No child under 18	Aberrant Content Adult only
0 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mild Inexplicit violenceNo HateNo NudityNo ProfanityNo References to Sexuality, Gender Ideologies, or Sexual ActivitiesNo Drug or Alcohol Use	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mild violenceMild/Infrequent HateMild/Infrequent ProfanityNon-Sexual Nudity excluding genitaliaNo References to Sexual ActivitiesNo Drug or Alcohol UseInexplicit SexualityInexplicit Gender Ideologies	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Moderate ViolenceModerate HateModerate ProfanityNon-Sexual Nudity involving genitaliaInexplicit Sexual Nudity/Sexual ActivitiesDrug or Alcohol UseExplicit SexualityExplicit Gender Ideologies	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Excessive/Explicit violenceExtreme/Frequent HateExcessive/Frequent ProfanityReferences to Sexual Activities (NOT involving penetration, cannibalism, fellatio, or ejaculation)Drug or Alcohol Abuse	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Explicit Sexual Nudity (descriptions of sexual organs in a state of arousal)"Obscene" References to Sexual Activities (Involving anal, oral, or vaginal intercourse, fingering, analingus, or ejaculation)	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">Explicit References to Aberrant Sexual Activities (sexual assault/battery, bestiality, or sadomasochistic abuse)

From Booklooks.org.

Flamer by Mike Curato, a Graphic Novel (Rated 3)

<https://booklooks.org/data/files/Book%20Looks%20Reports/F/Flamer.pdf>

Sex Is a Funny Word by Cory S. Iverberg and Fiona Smyth (Juvenile) (Rated 4)

<https://booklooks.org/data/files/Book%20Looks%20Reports/S/sex%20is%20a%20funny%20word.pdf>

House of Sky and Breath by Sarah J. Maas (Rated 4)

<https://booklooks.org/data/files/Book%20Looks%20Reports/H/House%20of%20Sky%20and%20Breath.pdf>

Go Ask Alice by Anonymous (Rated 3)

<https://booklooks.org/data/files/Book%20Looks%20Reports/G/Go%20Ask%20Alice.pdf>

Tricks by Ellen Hopkins (Rated 5)

<https://booklooks.org/data/files/Book%20Looks%20Reports/T/Tricks.pdf>

Call Me By Your Name by Andre Aciman (Rated 4)

<https://booklooks.org/data/files/Book%20Looks%20Reports/C/Call%20Me%20By%20Your%20Name%20Slick%20Sheet.pdf>

(Note: If links do not work, copy and paste the links into your browser.)

Warning: “Be careful little eyes what you see.”

Read Freely Alabama’s Opinion:

The second part makes library staff vulnerable to disciplinary action for failing to obtain "advance approval" before recommending, displaying, or perhaps even shelving certain titles. Such oversight is likely to result in higher rates of self-censorship as librarians either pass over ordering titles they fear may be contentious or are instructed outright not to order them — both of which are types of censorship that have plagued librarianship even before this current wave of animosity against libraries. At worst, this addition to the administrative code could also pave the way toward criminalizing library staff for recommending "inappropriate" material to youth, even if the youth request it. This is not a baseless concern. [ReadFreelyAlabama.org](https://www.readfreelyalabama.org) Fact Sheet: Proposed APLS Rules Changes 2024.

WHAT’S YOUR OPINION?

Do you think the second portion of this policy change, part 1.(B) above, is needed? Certain libraries in Alabama have made a concerted effort to further the America Library Association’s agenda. The president of the American Library Association for 2023, Emily Drabinski, states that our libraries need to be a place of social organizing. Do you want our libraries to be a safe place for our children and youth to read, study and learn without being exposed to this social agenda of the ALA? Some of the programs promoted by our Alabama libraries include, among others, Magic: The Gathering (see link below); Trans punk rockers (see link below), pride month displays, and drag shows. These programs, and others, are already being presented in some of our libraries. The proposed changes require libraries to obtain advance approval before promoting programs that could be confusing or harmful to minors.

<https://1819news.com/news/item/trans-punk-rockers-inside-the-birmingham-public-librarys-loud-at-the-library-program>

<https://www.trussvillelibrary.com/event/10180273> (Game where teens cast spells, summon creatures, etc.)

2. “The public library must not deny service to anyone on the basis of age, race, sex or creed. Exercising discretion in the location of sexually explicit material or other material deemed by the public library board to be inappropriate for children or youth does not constitute denial of service on the basis of age. Taking age into account when recommending, displaying, or otherwise actively promoting library materials does not constitute a denial of service on the basis of age.”

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Restricting access to materials or services based on a patron’s age, specifically status as a minor, should not be considered an unjust denial of service.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Read Freely Alabama’s Opinion:

Again, this addition assumes that there is such a thing as sexually explicit materials in youth and young adult collections, while also stating an obvious recommendation that library staff should take a patron’s age into account when recommending materials. Library staff on the whole are trained to ask patrons about their interests and to take factors such as reading level and development appropriateness into account. However, librarians are also trained to respect patrons’ privacy and right to freely access information, including the privacy and rights of minors and young adults. Library staff are not qualified to (nor do we want to!) make reading decisions for other people’s children, and so we leave that responsibility to parents and guardians. All we do is make the materials accessible to anyone and everyone who needs them.

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

The question is, should age be considered when choosing books to be purchased and shelved in the children's and teen section of the local library? Should age also be considered when considering the location of books containing sexually explicit and/or harmful material? Should the library, as a community service, help parents protect their children from inappropriate content? Should the comments from parents be considered that say they do not take their children to the library because they cannot always watch everything that their children pull off the shelves? Children cannot 'unsee' the sexually explicit and/or harmful material. Should this be considered? If your answer is yes to these questions, then we need policy changes.

The American Library Association teaches our librarians that 'age' should never be considered when purchasing, shelving and promoting "controversial" and "offensive" material, and that it is the parents' responsibility to protect their children. The American Library Association (ALA) Library's Bill of Rights is used by almost all of Alabama's public libraries. The link below is the portion of the ALA Bill of Rights that concerns materials for minors and how librarians should address it.

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/minors>

3. "Any expenditure of public funds to the American Library Association must be approved by the governing board of the public library or public library system in an open, public meeting following advance public notice."

WHAT THIS MEANS:

Library boards must provide advance public notice of any intention to direct public funds to the American Library Association (ALA), then approve those plans in a public meeting.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Read Freely Alabama's Opinion:

This is how library boards should operate anyway, but codifying expenditures to the ALA specifically is intended to discourage public libraries from utilizing ALA resources. Already at least one public library in Alabama has refused to reimburse two early-career librarians who requested financial assistance to attend an ALA-adjacent conference, citing the political ruckus around the ALA as the reason. Other such expenditures may include professional development resources, programming resources, or physical resources for patrons (such as informational materials).

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Have you ever heard of the American Library Association? What is their purpose? Should our libraries continue to use the ALA for services such as continuing education, webinars, book suggestions, policy suggestions? Do you need more information before you make your decision?

Check out their website: ALA.org.

The articles below have a lot of interesting information concerning the ALA:

<https://alabamaeagle.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/EF-Report-Nov23.pdf>

<https://arlenequaratiello.substack.com/p/have-yourself-a-marxist-little-library>

According to their website, the ALA was formed to “To provide leadership for the development, promotion, and improvement of library and information services and the profession of librarianship in order to enhance learning and ensure access to information for all.”

Additionally, the Priorities of the ALA are “In 1998 the ALA Council voted commitment to five Key Action Areas as guiding principles for directing the Association’s energies and resources: Diversity, Equity of Access, Education and Continuous Learning, Intellectual Freedom, and 21st Century Literacy.”

The 2023 President of the ALA is Emily Drabinski.

- She is a self-described Marxist Lesbian.
- She teaches librarians how to “queer the library” and “about a radical catalog”.
- She states that “queerness includes subversion of those kinds of normal family types”. (Produce children)
- Teaches that librarians can shape students to be agents of change in society.
- She sees “queer theory as the rejection of the existence of truth”.

See Pullman, Joy, “Sex in the Stacks.” EAGLE FORUM REPORT at p.1, Vol. 7, No. 11 (November 2023).

How is the ALA achieving its priorities or agenda?

The ALA gives Stonewall Awards for LGBT themed Books. Once a book receives an award, the book essentially becomes a priority on a “buy list”. This ensures major taxpayer subsidies are spent on obscene and what would otherwise be obscure books. (FYI ...other organizations are doing this too)

With respect to book challenges, the ALA has promoted an ‘us-against-them’ viewpoint”.

It promotes LGBTQIA+ agenda instead of teaching, for example, how to rekindle a love for reading in Middle School. Two of the sessions in a recent ALA conference were 1) “Beyond the Middle School Rainbow: Intersectionality in LGBTQIA+ Middle Grade Books”, and 2) “Promoting Diverse LGBTQIA+ Narratives in Picture Book Collections.”

It teaches that the librarian has no role in protecting a child from harmful content.

Its position is that a small group should not dictate what other people’s children read, but that only the librarian chooses what should be on the shelf of the library. [Ironically, however, the small group at the American Library Association which selects the books to be endorsed by ALA appears to be the de facto determinant of what books the local library chooses to purchase. They choose, they demand and they try to intimidate those who disagree with their choices.]

Librarians who are members of the ALA are instructed that no book challenge is legitimate, and are given strategies as to how to deal with book challenges, with individuals, in meetings and with the media.

See Metrock, Jim, “The Library is not a Safe Space,” EAGLE FORUM REPORT at p.3, Vol. 7, No. 11 (November 2023).

What is the Amendment Process?

The APLS will accept public comments by postal mail or hand-delivery only. They must be received by 4:30 PM on April 29, 2024, at the following address:

Vanessa Carr, Executive Secretary
Alabama Public Library Service
6030 Monticello Drive
Montgomery, Alabama 36117

There will be a public hearing at 10:00 AM on April 30, 2024, at APLS. Members of the public can sign up to speak by emailing Vanessa Carr at vcarr@apls.state.al.us by 4:30 PM on April 29, 2024. Speakers will be heard in the order their emails are received.

WHAT CAN I DO ?

- SEND A LETTER TO APLS! Express your thoughts, concerns and opinions to APLS. Make your voice heard. If you agree with Governor Ivey's proposed changes to the administrative code, a quick and easy way to write to express your support for the proposed changes is to use the Eagle Forum link to send a letter. You may also write your own letter and mail to the address provided. You must state in your first sentence, "Yes, we need policy changes to protect our children."
- Plan to attend the public hearing at the APLS at 10:00 AM on Tuesday, April 30, 2024. If you want to speak, you must be an Alabama resident, and you must send your request to do so to Vanessa Carr at vcarr@apls.state.al.us by 4:30 PM of April 29, 2024. Comments will be limited to 3 minutes.
- Share this information with a friend, family member, church, classmate, etc.
- Post information to your social media: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X).