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A Statement from the Rutherford County Library System Board of Directors Policy 400 and 401 New Children's and Teen's Collection at RCLS September 8, 2026

Rutherford County Library System (RCLS) staff recently published information through social media and RCLS website to Library Patrons and the public regarding implementation of recently adopted updates to Policies 400 and 401 by the Board of Directors. The information is provided by RCLS staff to prepare RCLS Patrons for the upcoming adjustments in our collections and borrowing practices and policies related to age classifications of children, teen, and young adult categories.

At the regular Board meeting on May 18, 2026, the Board of Directors approved changes to policies PM-400 and PM-401 to clarify the age limits and usage of terms and titles associated with these age limits for our collections. Additionally, the new policies clarified how materials classified for age groups would be catalogued and made available considering the age categories to be used by RCLS in the future.

At the Board Work Session on May 11, 2026, Board members voiced concern over the term "young adult" related to references to teens and materials available to this group. The Board clarified the usage of the term "adult" to mean someone 18 years of age and older and consistent with generally accepted definitions in society, rights, privileges, legal, and other arenas. The term "young adult" was also clarified to mean someone between the ages of 18 and 25. The Board also discussed that the various age group terms used by authors, publishers, and others to describe target audiences, age appropriateness of materials, and/or reading and comprehension levels are not consistently applied as an industry or library standard requiring more consideration by RCLS staff for age appropriateness other than an age classification provided with a title.

The Board made it clear that teenagers between the ages of 13 to 17 are not young adults in reference to the collections and cataloguing policies and practices of RCLS. The RCLS teens age group includes younger individuals who at 13 may be in 7th or 8th grade and should not be considered "young adults" for RCLS collections policies. The RCLS teens age group also includes high school juniors or seniors, high school graduates, or freshmen in college who are approaching adulthood. Considering the wide age range for Teens, the Board determined that materials appropriate for all ages in the teen range including the very youngest requires restricting "young adult" materials from the teens category. Similarly, for the children's age range of 0-12, RCLS collections policies and practices consider the age appropriateness of all materials available in the collection to all children in this age range requiring that some materials to be reclassified to teens.

For library cards that are issued to children (0-12), only items in the Children's collection are available for borrowing with that card. For library cards that are issued to teens or upon reaching age 13, books in the Children and Teen collections can be borrowed with a Teen card. Adult cards have all access to all collections for borrowing. RCLS policies allow parents and guardians to "opt in" to allow their children and teens to have access to other collections. Children's cards can be "opted in" to allow borrowing from Teen or Adult collections, and Teen cards can be opted in to allow access to Adult collections. The "opt in" selection allows borrowing of any items in a collection regardless of age description or content appropriateness and should be done by a parent or guardian after consideration of the access policies and practices at RCLS.

The Board adopted these policies to provide consistent, age-appropriate materials to all member of the age group categories used by RCLS for its collections and by clarifying these terms, policies, and practices, Library Patrons can be knowledgeable of the materials in each collection and how to select and/or restrict access to materials based on them.