

Library Patron Conduct

I. Purpose:

The establishment of a set of guidelines for conduct in the Ocean City Free Public Library building is necessary to ensure a safe and comfortable environment that promotes the use of the library's resources and at the same time protects the public, the staff, the materials, and equipment.

In order to allow each patron of the Ocean City Free Public Library to use its facilities to the fullest extent, the Library Board of Trustees has adopted the following rules and regulations regarding patron conduct.

II. Procedures:

Acceptable patron conduct may include:

1. Engaging in activities associated with the use of a public library, which include reading, studying, attending library programs, or using library materials and/or computers.
2. Respecting the rights of other patrons.
3. Respecting library property and treating the materials, equipment, furnishings, building, and grounds with care.
4. Reporting criminal conduct or vandalism of any kind to staff immediately so that they can respond appropriately, including, but not limited to, notifying the police.
5. Having a responsible person accompanying children 8 years old and younger or a child of any age who is unable to care for himself or herself. At the discretion of a parent, a child aged 9 years old or older who is able to care for himself or herself may be left unattended for the period of time needed to select materials, complete a homework assignment, or attend a program. The child must know how to reach the parent in case the need should arise. Children should not be left for more than one-half hour periods of time; the library does not provide daycare services. Adults accompanying young children who cry for more than 15 minutes may be asked to leave with children until they have quieted down.
6. Asking permission to use the library telephone to make personal calls in times of urgent need.

Unacceptable patron conduct includes:

1. Bringing food or beverages into the building, the exception being food served in meeting rooms.

2. Damaging or defacing Library real or personal property or engaging in vandalism, including graffiti.
3. Violation of the library's computer use policy.
4. Harassing or annoying others through noisy or boisterous activities such as running in the building, singing, rearranging library furniture, playing audio equipment so that others can hear it, or talking or behaving in a manner which reasonably can be expected to disturb others.
5. Any talking in quiet areas of the library, which shall not include the children's area, the meeting rooms, and the atrium. The entire second floor is considered a quiet area.
6. Interfering with the use of the library by other patrons, or interfering with library employees' performance of their duties.
7. Leaving a child 8 years old or younger unattended in the library or outside the library (on library property) at any time. (See Policy on Unattended and/or Disruptive Children)
8. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the library and/or selling, using or possessing alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs in the Library.
9. Smoking in the Library.
10. Using cell phones in the library. Cell phones should be turned off or set on "vibrate" in the library. If a call comes in, the patron should answer the phone and go to the atrium before continuing the conversation. Outgoing calls should be made in the atrium so as not to disturb others.
11. Not wearing shoes or other footwear or a shirt or other covering of their upper body while in the Library premises.
12. Utilizing sports equipment, skates, roller blades and bicycles inside the library. Bicycles are to be stored outside on bike racks while owners are using library facilities. Bicycles shall not be left on the handicapped ramp or sidewalk because they could make the entrance inaccessible or dangerous for other patrons.
13. Bringing pets or animals into the library, other than service animals aiding individuals with disabilities.
14. Having bodily hygiene that is offensive so as to constitute a nuisance to other persons.
15. Selling, soliciting, surveying, distributing written materials, panhandling or canvassing for any political, charitable or religious purposes inside the Library, or Library doorways or vestibule without prior written authorization from the Library Director.

16. Engaging in sexual activity, contact or any act of lewdness or exposure prohibited by New Jersey Statutes 2C:14-1 through 14-8 or any other sexual activity that is inappropriate in a public place.
17. Using Library restrooms for bathing, doing laundry, changing clothes, washing hair or any similar activity.
18. Littering.
19. Carrying firearms and dangerous weapons of any type is prohibited. This provision shall not apply to law enforcement officers or security personnel authorized by the Library to carry firearms or weapons.
20. Engaging in any activity in violation of Federal, State, local or other applicable law, or Library policy.
21. Continuing to exit the Library after the alarm at any security point has sounded. If the alarm has sounded as you exit, you must return to the circulation desk to verify that all Library materials have been properly checked out.
22. Loitering on, in, or adjacent to, or otherwise blocking or impeding access to any staircases entrances, or doorways.
23. Sleeping in the Library.
24. Entering restricted areas, including Library offices, areas behind circulation or reference desks, or other areas designated as restricted to Library personnel.
24. Failing to comply with a reasonable staff request.

The final determination as to what constitutes a violation of the code of conduct rests with the Library Director and in her absence with the senior staff member on duty at the time of the incident.

Consequences

Any violations of this Library Conduct Policy will be handled in a professional and courteous manner by staff but the degree of violation will determine the response. The response may include any of the following actions, depending on the severity of the misconduct, which will be determined by staff:

1. In most cases, patrons who are behaving inappropriately will be given one warning and asked to behave in an appropriate manner. Staff will point out observed behavior, explain the policy and ask the offender to stop. In the case of children under the age of eighteen (18) years of age, the Library's Policy on Unattended or Disruptive Children will be followed.

2. Patrons who continue to engage in disruptive behavior and disregard a request by the person in charge to change their behavior will be asked to leave the library premises for the rest of the day. If the person disobeys the request to leave, staff may call the police for assistance to remove the person from the library.
3. Patrons who continue to engage in disruptive behavior on more than one instance will be warned by the library director or designee that they shall be banned from the library for one month. If the patron is 17 years old or younger, a written notice will be sent to the parents. If the patron returns to the library during the ban period, staff may call the police for assistance in removing the patron from the library.
4. The police will be called when illegal activities (eg. indecent exposure, theft, use of explosives, drug use or smoking, consumption of alcoholic beverages, or destruction of library property) are committed by an individual. This patron may be banned for an amount of time determined by the library director or designee. If the patron is 17 years old or younger, a written notice will be sent to the parents. If the ban is for one year, the patron will be reviewed at the end of the year. The ban may extend, or be extended, past the first year, but must be reviewed at least annually. After the period of being banned has expired, the patron may return to the building.
5. Staff is instructed to call 911 immediately in response to any behavior that is deemed to constitute a dangerous situation.