

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.

Policy on Unattended and/or Disruptive Children:

1. Purpose: To establish a policy and set of procedures for library personnel to follow when encountering an unattended and/or disruptive child in the library. For the purpose of this policy, an unattended child is defined as a child of any age who is unable to care for himself or herself left in the Library without a parent or responsible adult within sight or sound range or a child 8 years old and younger left in the library without adult supervision. It is up to the discretion of the Library Supervisor (Librarian in charge at any particular time) to determine whether the child is to be considered as unattended.

Under this policy, children under the age of 8 years old or younger must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult, which means that the child must remain within sight of the parent or adult at all times while in the Library. The Library recommends that all children, regardless of age, be accompanied by an adult who can take responsibility if an emergency occurs.

2. Policy: The staff of the Ocean City Free Public Library desires to create and maintain an environment that is welcoming to children and that encourages their use and enjoyment of the various programs offered by the library, with the goal of encouraging children to develop a love of reading and learning. While pursuing these goals, the Library remains concerned about the safety and well-being of children visiting the library and enjoying its programs and services.

Children, as all Library customers, are expected to behave appropriately. Parents, guardians, teachers, and caregivers, not Library staff, are responsible for the behavior and supervision of their children in the Library.

In addition, a child's safety cannot be guaranteed if he or she is left unattended in the Library. Parents and caregivers are advised that libraries are public places and that Library staff cannot prevent children from interacting with or leaving the Library with persons who are not appropriate caregivers. This policy has been established for the protection and well-being of children who visit our Library.

3. Procedures:

- a) If an unattended child is found in the library, a supervisor will be notified.
- b) The Supervisor (or designee) should try to calm the child if necessary and locate the child's parent or adult responsible for the child while in the library by walking through the library with the child, and by paging the parent or responsible adult on the Circulation desk telephone.
- c) If the parent or responsible adult cannot be located in the building, a supervisor or designee shall stay with the child in the children's section or another public area of

the Library until the parent or responsible adult is located. When the parent or responsible adult has been located, the supervisor shall explain the Policy on Unattended and/or Disruptive Children and shall give a copy to the parent or responsible adult. If the parent or responsible adult has been reached by phone, the supervisor shall request that the parent or responsible adult immediately come to the library to escort the child home. If the parent or responsible adult is unable to come immediately, he or she will be told that the police will be called upon to take responsibility for the child.

- d) If the parent or responsible adult cannot be located after a reasonable amount of time or if the library is closing, the supervisor may call the police to take charge of the child.
- e) Under no circumstances shall a staff member take the child out of the building or provide transportation elsewhere.

4. Conduct of Children: If any child violates the Library Patron Conduct policy, the child and the parent/responsible adult will be provided with a copy of that policy. If the child continues to violate the policy, the parent or responsible adult may be asked to leave the Library with the child. If necessary, the library may contact the child's parent or responsible adult or the police for assistance.

Although children aged 9 or older who are able to care for themselves may use the library without a parent or other adult present, parents are still responsible for the actions of their children and for their well-being. Even though children aged 9 and older are permitted to use the library without a parent or responsible adult present, parents should make sure that their children are sufficiently mature and able to care for themselves before allowing them to visit the library unaccompanied by a parent or responsible adult. Children utilizing the library without a parent or other responsible adult present should have a telephone number in their possession that the library can call if there is a need to contact the parent or responsible adult in the event of an emergency or in the event the child violates this policy or the Patron Conduct policy.

The Library is not responsible for children of any age outside the building who are waiting for transportation or are socializing. Parents of children, and adults responsible for children, in the Library should be aware of the Library's hours of operation and make arrangements for their children to have transportation at or before closing. If the library is closing and the parent or responsible adult of a child cannot be located, Library staff may contact police and remain with the child in the children's section or another public area of the Library until the police arrive.

Disruptive behavior is considered to be behavior that constitutes a danger to the child or other users of the library or that interferes with the use of the library by other library patrons

or that interferes with the ability of library employees to perform their job responsibilities. Examples of disruptive behavior include, but are not limited to:

- running in the library
- screaming, shouting, yelling, loud laughing
- Use of Profanity or Abusive or Threatening Language
- eating or drinking except as permitted in certain locations or for special events
- loud talking in quiet areas
- fighting, hitting or engaging in other physically aggressive behavior
- throwing books or other objects
- bothering other patrons
- Failing to comply with reasonable staff requests

5. Consequences

Library staff may warn children engaging in disruptive behavior that the conduct is unacceptable. In cases of serious infractions, in the judgment of library personnel, a child may be required to leave the library after a single incident.

- a) If the disruptive patron is a child 8 years old or younger who came to the library WITHOUT adult supervision, staff will explain to them that they must stop the disruptive behavior (running, loudness, destruction, etc.) and the parent or other adult responsible for the child will be called. If disruptive behavior does not stop, the staff will attempt to contact the parent or responsible adult and will require that the child leave the building with the parent or responsible adult. If a parent or responsible adult cannot be reached, the child will remain in the library under supervision in a public area of the library until such time as a parent or guardian arrives. If necessary, law enforcement officers may be called to come to the library. If behavior is repeated, they may be asked to not return to the library for an amount of time to be determined by the Library Director or designee.
- b) If the disruptive patron is a child who came to the library with a parent or responsible adult, staff will tell the parent or responsible adult that the disruptive behavior must stop or they will be required to leave the library. If disruptive behavior continues, the

person in charge may require the parent or responsible adult to remove the child from the library.

- c) Librarians and authorized staff members will call the authorities (police/sheriff, etc.) if the need arises or if they feel threatened by behavior in any way.
- d) Parents shall remain responsible, in accordance with applicable law, for damage to library property or the property of other individuals using the Library caused by their children under the age of eighteen (18) years.