

Patron Behavior Policy

Reviewed & Approved: 5-20-24

I. Introduction

The Portage District Library (the “Library”) is open for specific and designated civic, educational and cultural uses, including reading, studying, writing, participating in scheduled Library programs, and using Library materials. In order to provide resources and services to all people who visit the Library facilities in an atmosphere of courtesy, respect, and excellent service, the Library Board of Trustees has adopted this Patron Behavior Policy. The purpose of the Patron Behavior Policy is to assist the Library in fulfilling its mission as a community resource enriching life, stimulating intellectual curiosity, fostering literacy, and encouraging an informed citizenry.

II. Rules for a Safe Environment

The following rules of conduct shall apply to all buildings – interior and exterior – and all grounds controlled and operated by the Library (“Library property”) and to all persons entering in or on the premises, unless otherwise specified.

A. Violations of Law.

Committing or attempting to commit an activity in violation of federal, state, or local law, ordinance or regulation (including but not limited to assault, larceny, removing library material from the property without authorization through the approved lending procedures or vandalism) is prohibited.

B. Weapons.

Carrying guns, pistols or other weapons, except as specifically permitted and exempt from local regulation by law, is prohibited.

C. Alcohol/Drugs.

Possessing, selling, distributing, or consuming any alcoholic or intoxicating beverage, illegal drug, or drug paraphernalia is prohibited; provided that alcohol may be permitted at certain Library-sponsored events if specifically approved by the Library Board.

D. Under the Influence.

Persons noticeably under the influence of any controlled substance or alcoholic or intoxicating liquor are not allowed on Library property.

E. Safety of Patrons on Library Property.

1. Use of skateboards, roller blades, roller skates, or other wheeled form of recreational equipment is not allowed in the Library or on Library property.
2. Library patrons must park bicycles or other vehicles only in authorized areas.
3. All doors, aisles and entrances must remain obstacle-free. This includes a prohibition of running power cords across aisles or other areas that are used for walking.
4. Animals or personal transport vehicles are not permitted in the Library other than service animals, those required by persons with disabilities, those used in law enforcement or for Library programming.
5. Smoking, using e-cigarettes or vaporizers, rolling cigarettes, or chewing tobacco is prohibited in the Library and on Library property within 25 feet of any entrance.

6. Shirts and shoes are required for health reasons and must be worn at all times inside the Library and on Library property.
7. The use of incendiary devices, such as candles, matches, and lighters, is prohibited inside the Library.
8. Patrons shall not be permitted in any areas designated as "staff only" unless otherwise permitted by the Library Director.
9. Patrons may not use the Library's telephone unless approved by Library staff.

III. Rules for Personal Behavior.

A. Personal Property.

Personal property brought on Library property is subject to the following:

1. The Library personnel may limit the number of parcels carried into the Library. The Library may also limit the size of items brought into the Library, for example, large items such as large plastic garbage bags are prohibited.
2. The Library is not responsible for personal belongings left unattended.
3. The Library does not guarantee storage for personal property.
4. Personal possessions must not be left unattended or take up seating or space needed by others.

B. Food and Beverages.

Snacks and beverages are permitted inside of the Library. Patrons are expected to clean-up and dispose of waste appropriately and notify staff of any spills. Other food is only allowed in designated areas approved by the Library Director.

C. Unauthorized Use.

Patrons must leave the Library promptly at closing time and may not be in the Library when it is not open to the public. Further, any patron whose privileges to use the Library have been denied may not enter the Library. Any patron whose privileges have been limited may not use the Library in any manner that conflicts with those limits placed on the patron by the Director, his or her designee, or the Library Board.

D. Engaging in Proper Library Activities.

Patrons shall be engaged in activities associated with the use of the Library while in the building or on Library property. Patrons not engaged in reading, studying, writing, participating in scheduled Library programs, using Library materials or using the Library in a manner that is consistent with the Library's mission shall be required to leave the building and shall not remain on Library property. This includes, but is not limited to, a prohibition of extensive periods of sleeping in the library or on benches, tables or grounds outside.

E. Considerate Use.

The following behavior is prohibited in the Library and in the Library building.

1. Spitting;
2. Running, pushing, shoving or other unsafe physical behavior;
3. Putting feet or legs on or climbing furniture;
4. Using obscene or threatening language or gestures.

F. Panhandling or Soliciting.

Panhandling or soliciting Library staff or patrons for money, products, or services inside the Library or on Library property is prohibited. Sales of products or services that are incidental to Library programming may be permitted if approved in advance by the Library Director.

G. Interference with Staff.

Patrons may not interfere with the staff's performance of duties in the Library or on Library property. This includes engaging in conversation or behavior that monopolizes or forces the attention of staff for an inappropriate period of time, inappropriate personal comments, sexual advances, or physical and/or verbal harassment.

H. Campaigning, Petitioning, Interviewing and Similar Activities.

As a limited public forum, the Library reserves the right to regulate the time, place, and manner for campaigning, petitioning, interviewing, survey-taking, pamphleteering, canvassing and soliciting on Library grounds as follows:

1. Campaigning, petitioning, interviewing, survey-taking, pamphleteering, canvassing and soliciting are prohibited inside the Library building.
2. Campaigning, petitioning, interviewing, survey-taking, pamphleteering, canvassing and soliciting outside the Library building but on Library property are subject to the following requirements:
 - a. Persons or groups are requested to sign in at the Checkout Desk in advance.
 - b. Use of the Library property does not indicate the Library's opposition or endorsement of the candidate or issue that is the subject of the petition, interview, campaign or discussion.
 - c. Permitted areas for campaigning, petitioning, interviewing, survey-taking, pamphleteering, canvassing and soliciting outside of the Library building shall be limited to the areas 15 feet from all entrances.
 - d. No person shall block ingress or egress from the Library building.
 - e. Permitted times will be limited to the operating hours of the Library.
 - f. Campaign material, literature or petitions may not be brought into the Library, posted at the Library or left on Library property.

I. Sales.

Selling merchandise on Library property without prior permission from the Director is prohibited.

J. Distributions/ Postings.

Distributing or posting printed materials/literature on Library property not in accordance with Library policy is prohibited.

K. Restrooms.

Misuse of restrooms, including laundering, sleeping, shaving, hair cutting or trimming, bathing, and sexual activity is prohibited. Library materials may not be taken into restrooms.

L. Harassment.

Staring, photographing, video recording, audio recording, following, stalking, harassing, arguing with, threatening, or behaving in a manner (1) which can reasonably be expected to disturb Library users or staff while such staff or patrons are in the Library or on Library property; and (2) that interferes with the Library patrons' use of the Library or the ability of the staff person to do his or her job is prohibited.

M. Loud Noise.

Producing or allowing any loud, unreasonable, or disturbing noises that interfere with other patrons' use of the Library or which can be reasonably expected to disturb other persons or have the intent of annoying other persons, including yelling, cheering, talking (with others or in monologues) or noises from electronic, entertainment, and communication devices, such as cell phones, tablets, headphones, and radio, is prohibited. Adults may read aloud to children in the Youth Area, provided that they are reading in a voice that would not reasonably disturb others.

N. Odor.

Offensive odor, including but not limited to body odor due to poor personal hygiene, overpowering perfume, or cologne that causes a nuisance is prohibited.

O. Phones.

Those patrons desiring to use phones to place or receive calls must use the phones in a manner that would not reasonably disturb others.

P. Library Policies.

Patrons must adhere to all Library Policies.

Q. Identification.

Patrons must provide identification to Library staff when requested.

R. Tables or Structures on Library Property.

No person may use or set up a table, stand, sign or similar structure on Library property. This does not apply to Library-sponsored or co-sponsored events.

IV. Rules for the Use and Preservation of Library Materials and Property.

A. Care of Library Property.

Patrons must not deface, vandalize, damage or improperly remove Library materials, equipment, furniture, or buildings. Patrons shall be responsible to reimburse the Library for costs incurred by the Library for violating this provision.

B. Internet Use.

Patrons must abide by established time limitations and all other provisions of the Library Internet Use Policy.

C. Equipment.

Library phones and staff computers are for staff use only.

D. Authorized Lending.

Library materials may only be removed from the premises with authorization through established lending procedures.

V. Children in the Library

A. Children are welcome and encouraged to use the Library at all times.

The Library desires to make each visit an important one for the child. A "Child" means a minor under the age of 18.

B. Rules and Regulations Regarding Children.

1. All patrons, including children, are expected to comply with the Library's policies. Parents, guardians or responsible caregivers shall review and be fully aware of all Library policies governing children, particularly the Internet Use Policy.

2. Parents, guardians and caregivers are responsible for the behavior and supervision of their children regardless of age while in the Library or on Library property.
3. Library staff will not be expected to supervise or monitor children's behavior.
4. Children under the age of 10 must be attended by a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver. The parent, guardian or responsible caregiver (who must be at least 14 years old) shall remain in the Library at all times. If a child under the age of 10 is attending a Library-sponsored program on the premises, the parent, a guardian, or responsible caregiver is to remain on the premises for the duration of the program.
5. Children of any age who, because of developmental disability, mental illness, or physical disability, require supervision or personal care shall be attended by a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver at all times.
6. Children ages 7 and under must be within the visual contact of a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver at all times, including during programs and visits to the restroom. Children ages 7 and under may not be left in the Youth Services Department alone.
7. Staff will not be responsible if unattended children of any age leave the Library premises alone or with other persons. Further, staff will not be responsible for children 10 years or older who may be asked to leave the Library if the child is in violation of Library policy.
8. We request that all unattended children be picked up at least ten minutes before closing time. Parents, guardians and responsible caregivers need to be aware of when the Library closes.
9. Children 10 years or older must know their telephone number and other contact information if they are unattended at the Library. It is a violation of Library policy not to come immediately and pick up your unattended child if the Library calls.

C. Library staff will attempt to contact a parent, legal guardian, custodian or caregiver when:

1. The health or safety of an unattended child is in doubt.
2. A child is frightened while alone at the Library.
3. The behavior of an unattended child violates Library policy.
4. A child under age 10 is unattended at the Library.
5. An unattended child has not been met by a parent, legal guardian, custodian or responsible caregiver at closing time or the child needs assistance procuring transportation.

D. If a parent, legal guardian, custodian or caregiver cannot be reached by closing time

or fails to arrive within a reasonable time after being contacted, Library staff will contact law enforcement officials to take charge of the situation involving that unattended child. This applies to all unattended children, even those over the age of 15 who cannot safely walk, ride, or drive home at closing. Library employees are not permitted to transport an unattended child or vulnerable adult under any circumstances.

E. If the parent, legal guardian, custodian or caregiver can be reached by closing time,

the staff member shall explain the Library's policy and provide a copy of this Policy.

VI. Disciplinary Process for Library Facilities.

The Library Director or the Director's designee may restrict access to Library facilities with immediate dismissal of the patron from the premises, by suspending the patron's access to Library facilities for a set period of time, or by denying access to specific services and/or programs pursuant to this Policy. If necessary, the local police may be called to intervene.

A. Incident Reports.

Library staff shall record in writing in the form of an Incident Report any violation of this Policy that resulted in a verbal warning or a suspension of Library privileges. By the end of the day on which the incident occurred, an Incident Report shall be written and forwarded to the Library Director for logging and review. The report should include physical descriptions in addition to the name of the patron. A copy of the suspension of privileges letter should be attached, if applicable.

B. Violation of the Policy – Suspension of Privileges.

Unless otherwise provided in this Policy, (see Section C below), the Library shall handle violations as follows:

1. Initial Violation: Library patrons observed violating this Policy will be asked to cease the violation with a verbal request. If the patron does not comply with the request, he or she will be asked to leave the building for the day. If he or she refuses, the police may be called.
2. Subsequent Violations: The Director or the Director's authorized designee may further limit or suspend the patron's Library privileges if infractions continue. Such limitation or revocation shall be in writing specifying the nature of the violation. Subsequent violations of the same rule shall result in additional suspensions of increasing length.

C. Violations that Affect Safety and Security

Violations involving verbal abuse, violence, threatening behaviors, sexual harassment, vandalism, drug sale or use or attempted drug sale or use, intoxication, theft or attempted theft, physical harassment, sexual misconduct or any behavior that threatens the safety and security of staff and/or patrons shall be handled as follows:

1. Initial Violation: The police will be called immediately. If the conduct constitutes a violation of local, state, or federal law, arrest or criminal prosecution may ensue. Violations of this nature will result in an immediate minimum two-week suspension of Library privileges in order to give the Library sufficient time to investigate the incident. After the investigation is completed, the Library Director or his/her designee may add additional time to the initial limitation or suspension period.
2. Subsequent Violations: The police will be called immediately. If the conduct constitutes a violation of local, state, or federal law, arrest or criminal prosecution may ensue. The Director or the Director's authorized designee, may further limit or suspend the patron's Library privileges in escalating responses, which will be documented in writing. Subsequent violations of the same rule will result in additional suspensions of increasing length.

D. Reinstatement.

The patron whose privileges have been limited or suspended shall attend a meeting with the Director or the Director's designee to review the Library Patron Behavior Policy before their privileges may be reinstated.

VII. Right of Appeal.

Patrons may appeal a decision to limit or suspend privileges by sending a written appeal to the Library Board within 10 business days of the date the privileges were suspended or limited. The appeal should be sent to the President of the Library Board. The decision of the Library Board is final.