

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

All patrons are expected to use the library for the services it provides as detailed in the Policy Handbook. Responsibility for insuring a harmonious, safe, and secure library atmosphere for patrons and staff is delegated to each Library Manager. The library staff has the responsibility to maintain order in the library. Occasionally, the staff may have to deal with patrons who violate the rights of others or who create disorder in the library. When and if such incidents occur, the following policy and procedures will apply. All incidents will be documented by management.

These are to be considered general guidelines for the library staff. The library staff is expected to use its judgment in dealing with problem behavior consistent with these policies if practical. In some cases, management may need to take steps, including banning individuals from the library, in situations that are not specifically covered in policy. Reasonable action, which may or may not include engaging law enforcement agencies and the courts for the protection of the library staff and patrons, shall be taken.

1 - EMERGENCY

An emergency situation can be defined as any situation in which a patron's actions present an imminent danger to the life or safety of himself or others. Such incidents include assault and other crimes of violence, or the threat or attempt to commit such crimes. Any staff member who observes or receives a report of such behavior should immediately call the appropriate agency and inform the supervisor.

2 - THEFT, VANDALISM, OR ILLEGAL ACTS

When a staff member observes or receives a report of a patron attempting to steal, maliciously destroy library property, or commit an illegal act, the staff member should approach the patron or report the incident to the affiliated library manager or the senior staff member present. If it is determined that the patron has stolen or vandalized library property or committed any illegal act, the police should be called. The library will prosecute anyone who steals or maliciously destroys library property.

3 - DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

When a patron (adult or child) willfully and purposefully disturbs other patrons, a staff member or supervisor should approach the patron and ask him/her to stop the behavior. If disruptive behavior continues, the patron should be informed that she/he must stop the behavior or leave the library. If the person refuses to stop the behavior or leave the library, the police should be called. A staff member should never attempt to evict a patron by him/herself, as the patron could become dangerous or abusive and a threat to the staff member.

4 - VERBAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE OF STAFF OR PATRON (Harassment)

If a patron speaks to a staff member or another patron in an offensive manner or acts inappropriately, the staff member should call a supervisor. The patron will be told that the behavior is not appropriate and must stop. If the behavior continues, the police should be called and a formal complaint lodged.

5 - MISUSE OF STAFF TIME

If a patron demands that a staff member perform functions which are inappropriate, the staff member should inform the patron in a calm and reasonable manner that it is impossible to perform that function/request. If the patron insists, he/she should be referred to a supervisor.

6 - LEAVING UNATTENDED CHILDREN AT THE LIBRARY

No person under eight (8) years of age shall be allowed to use or remain in the library without parental or guardian supervision. The exception to this rule will be that children under eight may, at the discretion of the library staff, attend planned, supervised activities of the library without parental or guardian supervision. However, the library is not equipped either as a facility or through staffing to provide ongoing child care services. Parents will be asked not to leave young children unattended in the library. If a parent persists in leaving children under eight years of age unattended in the library, the police shall be called to pick up the children.

When legal action is required in regard to the above categories 1 – 4, the following policy and procedure will be followed:

When a patron's behavior results in a police report, that patron shall be prohibited from returning to the library for a period of one year from the date of the filed report, or until the county Library Board reinstates the patron's library privileges.

When a patron's behavior results in a police report and a finding or plea of guilty or plea of nolo contendere, that patron shall be prohibited from returning to the library for a period of one year from the date of the court hearing, or the duration of the court action if it is longer than one year, and until the County Library Board reinstates the patron's library privileges.

The patron shall be barred from Internet, computer use, and other library privileges. He/she shall be informed by the system director in writing that

- 1 - The library is a member of PINES;
- 2 - That one of the PINES rules is that a patron may only be reinstated by the library where the bar was placed;
- 3 - And that any loss of PINES privileges will include all PINES member libraries statewide.

When a patron is barred from the library for other reasons

The offending patron must submit a written request to the county library board and request that his/her library privileges be reinstated.

Procedure –

1 – When any action occurs that disturbs the peace of the library, or in which a staff member or another patron is threatened, the Library Manager or the senior public service staff member must ask the individual(s) to leave the library premises. The request should be witnessed by others and documented with written reports by all witnesses insofar as is possible.

2 – If the request is ignored, and/or if the Library Manager or senior public services staff member believes the situation is volatile, law enforcement should be called. Only the necessary factual information pertaining to the incident will be reported to law enforcement authorities.

3 – Staff members shall document the incident by recording the names of patrons who witness the event; however, patron witnesses will not be revealed unless permission is sought and granted from each witness.

4 – An offending patron who has left the premises shall be notified through legal means such as arrest warrants, court orders, or written notification by the Library Manager delivered by certified mail.

5 – In the absence of the Library Manager, the senior public services staff member is responsible for the safety of patrons and staff. Advice and assistance shall be sought through the office of Director of the Northeast Georgia Regional Library System Services Office.

Each library, with the approval of the affiliated library board, may adopt a list of basic rules based on this policy. This list may be posted in the library and will be filed with the Regional Services Office.