

PROBLEM PATRON PROCEDURES

PROBLEM BEHAVIOR:

The library staff has the responsibility to protect the safety of all library patrons and to maintain order in the library. From time to time, 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 staff should take the actions listed below. An Incident Report Form should be completed for all situations and forwarded to the Director's office immediately. The Library Director will, when appropriate, keep police and Town Counsel informed of situations and request their advice. Under no circumstances should library staff touch a patron as part of a disciplinary procedure.

EMERGENCY SITUATION:

An emergency can be defined as any situation in which a patron's actions present an imminent danger to the life or safety of him/herself or others. Such incidents include assault, or 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 call the police immediately and notify the Director's office or person in charge of the library at the time.

THEFT AND VANDALISM:

When a staff member observes or receives a report of a theft or a patron attempting to steal or to maliciously destroy library property, the staff member should call the police immediately and notify the Director's office or person in charge of the library at the time.

OTHER ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES:

When a staff member observes or receives a report of a patron committing an illegal act (e.g., indecent exposure), the staff member should call the police immediately and report the incident to the Director's office or to the person in charge of the library.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR:

When a patron willfully and purposefully disturbs other patrons, a staff member or supervisor should approach the patron and ask him or her to stop the disruptive behavior. If a staff member suspects that a person may be mentally ill, impaired or combative, s/he should approach that person with another staff member whenever possible. If the disruptive behavior continues, a supervisor or Reference Desk personnel should, in a calm and controlled manner, tell the patron to stop the disruptive behavior or to leave the library. If the patron continues to act disruptively and refuses to leave the library, the staff member should call the police. If at any time during this process, the patron becomes dangerous or threatening, the police should be called immediately, and measures should be taken to protect other patrons and the library staff.

INAPPROPRIATE USE OF THE LIBRARY:

When a patron appears to be using the library primarily for inappropriate purposes (e.g. gathering signatures for ballot initiatives, using the facility for running a business), a supervisor or Reference Desk personnel should approach the patron and tell the patron in a reasonable manner to use the library for its intended purpose or to leave. If the person refuses to comply, the same procedure as for disruptive behavior should be used.

VERBAL ABUSE OF THE STAFF:

If a patron speaks to a staff member in an abusive or obscene manner, the staff member should refer to the Staff Protection Policy.

MISUSE OF STAFF TIME:

If a patron demands that a staff member perform functions that are outside the scope of regular library duties, the staff member should inform the patron in a calm and reasonable manner that fulfilling the request is not possible. If the patron has objections, he/she should be referred to the staff member's supervisor or person in charge of the library at the time.

CONSEQUENCES OF MISCONDUCT:

Patrons who engage in misconduct may receive, by certified or registered mail or hand delivery, written notice by the Director of suspension or revocation of library privileges, including prohibition against entering the library for any period of time up to and including permanently, depending on the nature of the misconduct, the extent of damage or disruption caused by policy infractions and other relevant circumstances.

QUESTIONS ABOUT POLICY AND CIRCULATION RECORDS:

All library patrons have a right to question library policies and circulation records as long as it is done in a reasonable way. Staff members who deal with these patrons should carefully explain policies and take necessary steps to ensure that the patron's circulation records are accurate. If after doing these things, the patron still has questions or objections, he or she should be referred to the staff member's supervisor.

ECCENTRIC BEHAVIOR:

Some library patrons may act strangely, but they do not disturb other patrons and they use the library in an appropriate manner. These people should not be considered problem patrons. If there is a question about whether a patron is behaving eccentrically or problematically, consultation with supervisors or administration should be made to determine what, if any, action should be taken.

REFERRALS:

From time to time, the library staff may believe that a particular patron needs the help of a mental health or social service agency. Depending on the situation, one of the following three procedures can be followed.

A PATRON ASKS FOR HELP:

If in talking to a staff member, a patron acknowledges a problem and asks for help, the staff member may inform the patron about the services of a local agency and allow the patron to use the telephone to call the agency.

A PATRON APPEARS TO HAVE A SERIOUS PROBLEM BUT DOES NOT ASK FOR HELP:

If a staff member believes that a patron needs the services of a local mental health or social service agency, but the patron has not asked for help, the staff member should consult with his or her supervisor before taking any action. If the supervisor agrees that the patron may need this kind of help, either the staff member or the supervisor will contact the Board of Health or the Community Safety Department for advice and to inform the department about the patron.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH CHILDREN

The staff of the Robbins Library strives to create a warm, inviting and fun place for children to visit. We offer many programs that encourage children to develop a love of books, reading and learning. However, the safety and well being of children at the library is of serious concern. It is the intention of this policy to enlist the cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Robbins Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

POLICY

Parents/guardians are responsible for their children's behavior in the library. Children under the age of ten must be attended by a parent or other adult. If possible, the library will notify parents/guardians if their children are left in a vulnerable situation or require supervision due to disruptive behavior. Staff members involved will record incidents of a child being left unattended.

PROCEDURES

Disruptive Behavior

A disruptive child* (whether attended or not) will be told his/her actions are inappropriate and will be asked to stop. The librarian will make every attempt to engage the child with one of the library's resources, such as books, puzzles, games, homework assistance, etc. (Parents/guardians are expected to do this for attended children.)

If disruptive behavior persists, the child or adult may be asked to leave. If a vulnerable child* persists in being disruptive, a staff member will try to reach the child's parent/guardian. The parent/guardian will be informed of the library's policy and will be

asked to pick up the child. At the Main Library, if the parent cannot/ does not come for the child, staff will bring the child to the Administrative office. At the Branch library or after 5:00 PM and on weekends, staff will notify police. Incident reports should be completed for recurring problems or when a parent or police need to be summoned

*See Definitions in Appendix

Vulnerable or Unattended Children

If it is determined that a child is vulnerable* or left unattended*, a staff member should try to identify and locate the parent/guardian or responsible adult according to the following procedures:

1. Walk around the immediate area with the child, looking for the parent/guardian. If this is unsuccessful, a staff member should remain in the immediate area with the child while another staff member checks other areas of the library. If the child is frightened or crying, staff member should try to comfort and reassure him/her. If the child wishes to accompany the staff member to locate the parent/guardian, this is permissible.
2. Page the child's parent/guardian using the name of the adult if known. The child's name should not be given. If no name is available, announce that a child is missing. If any one claims to have lost a child, ascertain that the child really belongs to that adult. Ask him/her to describe the child.
3. If there is any question of whether the child belongs with the adult, ask for identification with a photo id or call the police.
4. When an adult is located, staff should explain the library policy on unattended children.
5. If the parent/guardian cannot be located, or if the library is closing, staff should call the police.
6. Staff members should never take children out of the building.

Unattended Child after Library Hours

1. Staff member should call the Police.
2. All incidents of a child being left should be recorded on an incident report.

Child Reported Missing or Lost

If a parent/guardian reports a child missing, staff will follow this procedure:

1. Obtain the name, age, and description of the child. Ask parent/guardian how extensively they have searched. Check outside the library immediately. Check Children's area thoroughly, including bathrooms and offices. Station one staff member in Children's room, if open.
2. Check elevator, all floors, rooms and areas of the library. Start on fourth floor and work back down to Children's room.
3. Describe child to and request assistance from library staff in other departments.
4. Call the police if unable to locate the child within 5 minutes.

Unaccompanied Adults in Children's Room

See separate policy.

Child Abuse by Parent or Caregiver

1. If a staff member observes an incident of child abuse, or suspects one is occurring in a restroom, staff should intervene to try to distract the adult, if he or she can do so safely.
2. Staff should not place themselves between the child and adult.
3. Staff should use language that refers to library policy and does not in any way accuse the adult. Say, "Hitting is not allowed in the library" rather than "You're abusing that child and you must stop immediately".
4. If the adult does not cease, and the behavior is abusive, the staff member should call the Police and notify the Director's office or person in charge of the library at that time.
5. Staff should try to obtain the name and address of the adult.
6. Staff should complete an incident report.

APPENDIX

DEFINITIONS:

Unattended child: A young person under the age of 8 using public library resources and facilities unaccompanied by an adult.

Vulnerable child: An unattended child or adolescent who's safety or well being would be endangered if s/he were sent out of the building. Examples of vulnerability include the child being too young to be on his/her own, the child being sent to any area outside the children's room and not under the direct supervision of a staff member, or the child being left alone in the dark outside the library building after business hours.

Disruptive Child: Any noisy, boisterous, or acting-out behavior that is inappropriate in the library setting. This includes behavior that presents physical danger to the child or others, or interferes with the legitimate library business, other patrons or the library staff.

Abuse: Physical act that may injure a child including repetitive slapping, excessive spanking, and arm- twisting.

4/97 Problem Patron Policy

5/98 Problem Patron Policy amendeded

1/06 Problem Patron Procedure

1/06 Procedures for DealingWith Problems Regarding Children

11/08/11 Problem Patron Procedures Amended

