

Patron Behavior Policy

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 has adopted this Patron Behavior Policy. The purpose of the Patron Behavior Policy (“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.

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

II. Rules for a Safe Environment

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, indecent exposure, larceny, removing Library material from Library Property without authorization through the approved lending procedures, vandalism, or copyright infringement) is prohibited.

B. Weapons

Carrying guns, pistols, or other weapons, except as specifically permitted and exempt from local regulation by law, on Library Property 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. Persons noticeably under the influence of any controlled substance or alcoholic or intoxicating liquor are not allowed on Library property.

D. Recreational Equipment and Personal Transport Devices

Use of skateboards, Rollerblades, roller skates, or other wheeled forms of recreational equipment (including toys that can be ridden) is not allowed in the Library or on Library Property. Library patrons must park bicycles or other recreational vehicles only in authorized areas. Wheelchairs, scooters, and other power-driven mobility devices are permitted in by those individuals with disabilities in accordance with Library rules, unless a particular type of device cannot be accommodated because of legitimate safety requirements.

E. No Blocking of Doors, Aisles or Entrances

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.

F. Animals

Animals are not permitted in the Library other than service animals (as defined by law) for those individuals with disabilities, those used in law enforcement or for Library programming. Animals may not be left unattended or be off-leash on Library Property.

G. Incendiary Devices

The use of incendiary devices, such as candles, matches, and lighters, is prohibited inside the Library.

H. Staff Only Areas

Patrons shall not be permitted in any areas designated as "staff only" unless otherwise permitted by the Library Director.

I. Library Phones

Patrons may not use the Library's telephone unless approved by Library staff.

III. Rules for Personal Behavior

A. Personal Property

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

1. The Library staff may limit the number of parcels carried into the Library. The Library may also limit the size of items, for example, the Library prohibits large items such as large plastic garbage bags, wagons and carts. Items must be small enough to fit under a chair at the Library.
2. The Library is not responsible for personal belongings left unattended and Library staff is not permitted to guard or watch personal belongings.
3. The Library does not guarantee storage for personal property.
4. Personal possessions must not be left unattended or take up seating or space if needed by others.

B. Food and Beverages

Food and beverages are permitted inside of the Library, but only in areas approved by the Library Director.

C. Unauthorized Use

Patrons must leave the Library Property promptly at closing time and may not be in the Library when it is not open to the public. The Library does not permit overnight parking in the Library's parking lot. Further, any patron whose privileges to use the Library have been denied may not enter the Library or be on Library Property. 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 Library 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, or using Library materials shall be required to leave the Library and shall not remain on Library Property. This includes sleeping on Library furniture, the floor, or outside on Library Property.

E. Considerate Use

The following behavior is prohibited in the Library or on Library Property:

1. Spitting;
2. Running, pushing, shoving, fighting, throwing items, provoking a fight or other unsafe physical behavior;
3. Climbing on furniture;
4. Using obscene or threatening language or gestures;
5. Engaging in sexual behavior (1) that is a violation of the law, (2) which can reasonably be expected to disturb Library users or staff while such staff or patrons are in the Library or on Library property, or (3) that interferes with the Library patrons' use of the Library or the ability of the staff person to do his or her job.

F. Panhandling or Soliciting for Money, Products, and Services

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, inappropriate personal comments, sexual advances, or physical and/or verbal harassment.

H. Campaigning, Petitioning, Interviewing, Protesting and Similar Activities

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

1. Campaigning, petitioning, interviewing, survey-taking, pamphleteering, canvassing, protesting, and soliciting are prohibited inside the Library building.
2. Campaigning, petitioning, interviewing, protesting, 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, protesting, pamphleteering, canvassing and soliciting outside of the Library building shall be limited to areas 30 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 Library 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 is prohibited, including but not limited to any of the following activities:

1. Laundering or changing clothes
2. Sleeping
3. Excessive personal grooming, such as shaving, hair cutting or trimming, bathing, shampooing or brushing teeth
4. Any sexual activity
5. Entering the restrooms when the "Do Not Enter" sign is posted.
6. Entering the restrooms with library material or any item that the Library staff have asked that you not take into the restroom.

7. Causing any damage to the restroom including but not limited to graffiti, vandalism, or other malicious behavior, such as clogging toilets or drains.
8. Intentionally or deliberately failing to flush the toilet so that Library staff are required to intervene or clean the restroom as a result of the failure.

Unless a parent or guardian is assisting a child or a patron is assisting a person with a disability, there shall only be one person to a stall. Library materials may not be taken into restrooms.

L. Harassment

Staring, photographing, video recording, audio recording, following, stalking, harassing, arguing with, threatening, talking 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; (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; (3) would create or may result in a hostile work environment for Library staff; and/or (4) that violates Michigan or federal law.

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. Patrons may use headphones or earbuds but at a volume that cannot be heard by other Library patrons or staff.

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, or odors from items brought into the Library, that causes a nuisance is prohibited. (For example, if the patron's odor interferes with staff or other patrons' use of the Library, the patron violates this Policy).

O. Phones

Patrons who wish to use phones to place or receive calls must do so quietly to avoid disturbing other patrons.

P. Library Policies

Patrons must adhere to all Library Policies.

Q. Identification; Masks

Patrons must provide identification to Library staff when requested for library purposes. A mask, hood, or device by which any portion of the face is so hidden, concealed, or covered as to conceal the identity of the wearer is prohibited on Library Property, except for persons wearing head covering or veils pursuant to religious beliefs or customs or for medical purposes.

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.

S. Smoking; Tobacco or Marijuana Use

Smoking, using e-cigarettes, vaping, electronic nicotine delivery systems or chewing tobacco is prohibited on Library Property. Using, smoking or possessing marijuana on Library property is also prohibited.

T. Attire

All patrons are expected to be fully dressed, including shoes and shirt, at all times while on Library property. No one with uncovered undergarments will be permitted on Library property.

U. Patron Use of Children’s Area and Computers

The Youth area of the Library is intended for use by children (high school age or younger) and the parent, guardian or caregiver who accompanies them. Computers located in the Youth area are for children and adults who are accompanying a child. Adults who are not accompanied by a child may browse the collection but may not remain or be seated in the Youth area. In the interests of protecting children, any patron may be asked to leave the area if they are not using the Youth area for its intended purpose.

V. Interactions with Other Patrons

Patrons are expected to alert Library staff if they are concerned about the behavior of another patron. Patrons must not approach and confront other patrons regarding the enforcement of Library rules and policies. Further, patrons are not permitted to direct other individuals regarding use of the Library’s public spaces.

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 use or improperly remove Library materials, equipment, displays and announcements, furniture, or buildings. Patron shall not load or install any programs or software on Library computers. Patrons shall be responsible to reimburse the Library for costs incurred by the Library for violating this provision. Patrons shall not cause damage by returning books containing bedbugs, cockroaches or other pests or bringing such pests into the Library.

B. Internet Use

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

C. Equipment

Library staff computers and phones 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 have a parent, guardian or responsible caregiver (who must be at least 14 years old) 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 under 8 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 under 8 may not be left in the Youth Services Department alone.
6. 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.
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. The unattended child has not been met by a parent, legal guardian, custodian or responsible caregiver at closing time. A child is considered unattended at closing time if the child is under the age of 10 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 the unattended child. 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.

F. 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.

G. 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.

H. 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.

I. 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.

J. 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.

VI. 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.