

# Dorchester County Library Patron Behavior Policy

1. The Dorchester County Library assumes that all persons have a legitimate reason for being in the library. To insure that patrons of all ages find using the library a positive experience, the Library has outlined basic rules of courtesy and responsibility that patrons are to follow. Completing a library application constitutes an individual's consent to abide by the Library's Rules of Conduct and to be searched in the event that the theft detection alarm activates upon exit. Warnings are at the discretion of library staff. Ejections and loss of privileges are possible. Dorchester County Library expects everyone to cooperate with its guidelines.

## a. Respect Materials and Equipment

- (1) Damaging, destroying or stealing any property of the library, library staff or customers is prohibited.
- (2) Patrons may not take library property or materials outside buildings without following established loan procedures or other authorization.
- (3) Patrons may not violate library procedures or policies.

## b. Respect Staff and Customers

- (1) Patrons may not leave personal possessions unattended on library property or ask staff to watch their personal possessions.
- (2) Patrons must wear shoes and shirts in the library at all times.
- (3) Patrons may not exhibit behavior that is disruptive, disturbing or potentially harmful to others, including but not limited to:
  - (a) Fighting, challenging or provoking violence;
  - (b) Loud talking and other noisy activities, including use of cell phones or other electronic devices;
  - (c) Blocking or interfering with the free movement of individuals; or
  - (d) Offensive personal hygiene.
- (4) Sleeping, loitering or remaining at the library for no obvious reason is prohibited. Users must be engaged in a library activity such as reading, studying, doing research or participating in a library program.

- (5) Patrons may not violate federal, state or local laws, ordinances or regulations, including but not limited to:
  - (a) Disorderly conduct;
  - (b) Sexual activity;
  - (c) Possession of illegal weapons of any type;
  - (d) Possession, consumption or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs; or
  - (e) Use of tobacco or electronic smoking devices in library buildings.
- (6) Soliciting, surveying, political campaigning, selling of any kind, or distributing or posting materials not specifically authorized by the Library Director or the Director's authorized designee is prohibited.
- (7) Patrons may not use libraries as child-care services. To insure a child's safety, the library has established the following guidelines:
  - (a) Children 5 years old and younger must always be accompanied by a parent or responsible caregivers who is 16 years of age or older who remains within arm's reach of the child;
  - (b) Children 6 - 9 years old must have a parent or responsible caregiver who is at least 16 years of age or older in the building at all times ;
  - (c) Children 10 years of age or older are responsible for their own behavior in the library and must follow all library rules and regulations and must be able to contact a parent or guardian, if needed;
  - (d) If a child is left at the library after closing, the local police will be contacted. Library staff are authorized to remain with the child until the police arrive to assume responsibility for the child.
  - (e) If a child is left unattended, the parent or guardian will be informed and given a copy of these guidelines entitled "Unattended Child Policy." [Appendix J]
- (6) Cell phone use is permitted inside the library as long as it is not disruptive to other patrons.**

**c. Respect Buildings and Property**

- (1)** Furniture, equipment and materials must be used properly for their intended purposes.
- (2)** Patrons may not act in a manner that is potentially harmful to library buildings, property, users or staff, such as unauthorized use of another person's library card for any purpose.
- (3)** Patrons may not bring in any items, backpacks or other personal baggage that:
  - (a)** Take up an excessive amount of space;
  - (b)** Restrict the movement of individuals;
  - (c)** Present a potential harm, danger or distraction; or
  - (d)** Have no usefulness in the library.
  - (e)** Luggage, bedrolls, musical instruments, sports equipment, skateboards, skates (including hee-ies), scooters and bicycles are examples of items that are prohibited.
- (4)** Patrons are not allowed to bring food or drink inside the library unless it is under the direction of library staff.
- (5)** Improperly using restrooms, including solicitation, meetings, bathing or shaving, is prohibited.
- (6)** Patrons may not use or monopolize library equipment, materials or facilities in an unauthorized manner that prevents others from using them, including but not limited to:
  - (a)** Computers;
  - (b)** Telephones;
  - (c)** Printers;
  - (d)** Copiers; or
  - (e)** Fax machines.
- (7)** Patrons may not use non-public doors or any other non-public areas in an unauthorized manner.
- (8)** Patrons may not use parking areas or other property in an unauthorized, improper or unsafe manner, including but not limited to using skates, skateboards, bicycles and scooters. Vehicles parked improperly are subject to being towed at the owner's expense.
- (9)** Animals, except service animals, are not allowed in library facilities.

**Any of these actions may result in the customer being asked to leave the library. Those who persist and refuse to leave the buildings and grounds when requested will be subject to their behavior being reported to local police. Repeat violators are subject to loss of library privileges.**

**2. 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.**

**(1)** Library Staff shall use an Incident Report to record any patron accidents that occur on library premises and to document persistent violations of library policy of which the patron has been informed by staff that may result in a written warning or a suspension of library privileges. [Appendix I-C]

**(2)** 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. Violations of the Policy/ Suspension of Privileges.** General violations unless otherwise provided in the Problem Behavior Manual or in Subsection 3 below, shall be handled as follows:

**(1)** Initial Violation:

**(a)** Library users observed violating library policy will be asked to cease the violation with a verbal warning.

**(b)** If the patron does not comply with the request, a second verbal warning will be issued.

**(c)** If the patron refuses to comply, they will be asked to leave the building for the day and an incident report will be filed.

**(d)** If they refuse, police may be called.

**(2)** Subsequent Violations:

- (a) The Director or the Director's authorized designee may further limit or revoke the patron's library privileges in escalating responses if the infraction continues.
  - (b) Such limitation or revocation shall be in writing specifying the nature of the violation.
  - (c) Any future violation of this same rule shall result in a minimum two-week suspension of library privileges.
  - (d) Subsequent violations of the same rule will result in additional suspensions of increasing length.
- (3) Violations that Affect Safety and Security:** Violation involving verbal abuse, violence, threatening behaviors, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, vandalism, drug sale or use or attempted drug sale or use, intoxication, theft or attempted theft, physical harassment, or any behavior that threatens the safety and security of staff and/or patrons shall be handled as outlined in the Problem Behavior Manual or may be addressed as follows, if needed:
- (a) Initial Violation:
    - i. The police will be called immediately if the conduct constitutes a violation of local, state, or federal law, arrest or criminal prosecution may ensue.
    - ii. Violations of this nature will result in an immediate minimum two-week suspension of library privileges.
    - iii. The initial suspension may be longer if the Library Director determines that the patron significantly threatens the safety and security of staff and/or patrons.
    - iv. The Incident Report shall specify the nature of the violation.
  - (b) Subsequent Violations:
    - i. The police will be called immediately if the conduct constitutes a violation of local, state, or federal law, arrest or criminal prosecution may ensue.
    - ii. The Director or the Director's authorized designee may further limit or revoke the patron's library privileges in escalating responses, which will be documented in writing.

iii. Subsequent violations of the same rule will result in additional suspensions of increasing length.

c. **Reinstatement.** A patron whose privileges have been limited or revoked shall attend a meeting with the Director or the Director's designee and a Library Trustee to review the Library Rules of Conduct Policy before their privileges may be reinstated.

d. **Right of Appeal.** Patrons have the right to appeal a decision which results in suspension of any library privileges.

(1) Patron appeals must be made in writing and sent to the Library Director within 10 working days of the date posted on the suspension letter stating why library privileges should be restored.

(2) The Library Director or a designee will respond to the appeal in writing within 10 working days of the date the appeal was received.

(3) Patrons may appeal the Library Director's decision by sending an appeal in writing to the Chairman of the Library Board within 10 business days.

(4) The appeal will be discussed at the next regular meeting of the Library Board.

(5) The decision of the Library Board is final.

3. **Dorchester County Library Problem Behavior Manual**, (Appendix I) outlines library and staff guidelines for dealing with problem behavior. The Library Director will ensure all library staff members are trained to deal with problem behavior situations.