

# **WELLS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS OF PATRON BEHAVIOR MANUAL**

## **Library Policy Statement**

The Wells County Public Library provides the communities it serves with access, knowledge, and growth supporting research, popular interests and lifelong learning. The extent of that support includes a well-maintained and reasonably comfortable building; knowledgeable, responsive, and pleasant staff; programs, services, and materials relevant to the community; and a general sense of order.

Creating and maintaining a sense of order within the building obligates the library to establish standards of acceptable patron behavior which staff can reasonably enforce. The following Standards of Behavior are to be used by staff as general guidelines in maintaining order within the library.

## **Expectations of Library Patrons**

Library patrons are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that enables all patrons and staff to accomplish their intended library tasks in a safe, pleasant, and orderly atmosphere. Library patrons are expected to:

- Behave in a non-disruptive manner. Disruptive or unsafe behavior includes, but is not limited to, loud talking, loud audio equipment, use of inappropriate language, running, throwing things, hitting, pushing or shoving.
- Refrain from touching that is threatening, unwelcome, or inappropriate for a family-friendly setting.
- Avoid unlawful possession of firearms, fireworks, or other weapons on library property.
- Refrain from the use of all tobacco products on library property. This includes electronic cigarettes.
- Supervise behavior and safety of minors or dependent adults for which they are responsible.
- Attend to personal belongings.
- Use the library, furniture, equipment, **computers, Internet** and materials for their intended function.
- Keep passageways and access to the library or any parts of the library open.
- Wear appropriate clothing.
- Use covered containers when bringing beverages into the library and comply with posted "No Food or Drink" zones. Food must be confined to individually

consumed snacks and must not be distracting to other patrons or damaging to library materials. Patrons must properly dispose of their food and drink trash.

- Use restrooms only for their intended purpose.
- Refrain from solicitation of any kind for any purpose without prior approval of the library director.
- With the permission of the librarian in charge use library telephones for local calls only.
- Avoid bringing animals, except for service animals, into the library without prior permission of the library director.
- Use library parking areas and sidewalks safely.
- Leave the library at the designated closing time.

## **General Guidelines and Procedures**

### **Emergency Telephone Numbers**

POLICE (Emergency)	911
POLICE (Administrative Calls)	824-3320
AMBULANCE	911
FIRE (Emergency)	911
FIRE (Administrative Calls)	824-2442
SHERIFF (Emergency)	911
SHERIFF (Administrative Calls)	824-3436
OSSIAN FIRE (Emergency)	911
OSSIAN FIRE (Administrative Calls)	622-4625
OSSIAN POLICE (Emergency)	911
OSSIAN POLICE (Administrative Calls)	622-7519

## General Guidelines to Problem Situations

Assess each situation. Patrons will generally provide clues about their likely course of behavior. Take time to evaluate a situation so that you don't over-react. Be an active listener and be sure to manage your own thoughts, feelings, and actions. In all cases, it is important to assess the seriousness of the situation as quickly as possible.

Take immediate action when and only when you understand the problem. Ignoring a problem does not make it go away. On the contrary, it will often become greater.

Maintain a calm, nonjudgmental manner. Remember that the problem behavior is not directed at you personally. Staying calm will often help defuse an unpleasant situation and will allow you to exercise better judgment. Avoid a loud tone of voice or phrases that might be considered demoralizing or condescending.

Explain your position in clear, firm language. It is important that patrons see you take charge of difficult situations. Do not argue or bargain as that may lead to confrontation. Do not be hesitant or appear unsure of yourself. Do not allow yourself to be sidetracked. Simply state your position firmly.

Present suitable alternatives, if possible.

Explain expectations. Let the patron know clearly what will happen if the behavior persists. Example: "You will have to leave the library." **NEVER** touch a patron, such as taking his arm to escort him from the library.

Use teamwork. No one should feel alone on the front line. Call on another staff member to back you up or go to the aid of a staff member when necessary. Support is especially important if you suspect that the person may become violent or if you believe a witness will be important.

Call outside help if necessary. If you have warned a patron with no result, call the librarian in charge. Generally, the librarian in charge will be the one to call the police department or other agency when necessary. In case of an emergency, you should call the police department.

**ALWAYS** Fill out an **INCIDENT REPORT**. Whenever you have a problem situation, **you should always** fill out an incident report and make a copy for the library director or branch manager when applicable. Incident forms are available at all service desks.

## Specific Problem Situations

### Patrons who are Angry or Irrate

No staff member should be subjected to verbal abuse, whether or not obscenity is involved. Interrupt the patron and say, "Your language and behavior are inappropriate. You must either stop or come back when you are calmer." As a staff member:

- Remain calm.
- Listen attentively and elicit all information about the complaint.
- Be aware of how you are speaking.
- Empathize with the patron and try to understand how ~~he~~ **they** feels.
- Do not react emotionally.
- Repeat what the patron has said (paraphrase) and ask the patron if your paraphrase was an accurate restatement of what ~~he~~ **they** said.
- When you understand the situation, take immediate action:
  - If the patron's complaint is legitimate, do something immediately to alleviate the situation.
  - If the patron's complaint is not legitimate and ~~he~~ **they** wants you to alter established policy, be firm. Explain the library's policy. Show the patron a written copy if necessary.
  - Do not argue with the patron; simply restate the library's policy.
  - If the patron is still not satisfied, refer the person to the librarian in charge.
  - If the patron persists, notify the librarian in charge who will ask the patron to leave the library.
  - **Always** file an INCIDENT REPORT.

### **Chatty Patrons**

We sometimes have people whose need for attention is great. We should be patient with these people but at the same time should not allow them to take up large amounts of our time. Politely but firmly discourage long, irrelevant conversations. If the patron persists, remind them politely that you have to return to work or help another patron.

### **Disruptive Conduct**

Disruptive conduct is any behavior that disrupts the normal functioning of the library. This would include, but not be limited to:

- Loud talking and laughing
- Throwing objects
- Boisterous behavior including running, horseplay, and disrupting other patrons
- Fighting
- Inappropriate display of affection
- Threats to others
- Inappropriate language
- Any other such behavior as defined in the library policy

Patrons committing such behavior should be warned to stop and asked to leave the library property if they persist in disruptive activity. Following any problem situation, an incident report should be filled out and a copy made for the library director-or branch manager when applicable. Incident forms are available at all service desks.

### **Appropriate Touch Policy**

Patrons should demonstrate appropriate touch in the library. Refrain from touching others in a way that is threatening, unwelcome, or inappropriate for a family-friendly setting.

### **Patron Policy for Young Children and Parents**

Out of concern for the safety and security of children and dependent adults, the Wells County Public Library abides by the following policy:

- Children under 6 years of age must be accompanied by a parent or adult caregiver at all times while in the library. Parents may not leave their young children unattended while using other areas of the library or attending meetings.
- Children ages 6 and older may use the library unattended as long as they are engaged in activities associated with the use of a public library. Adult caregivers are encouraged not to leave children age 6 to 10 more than an hour unattended, as their attention spans are limited and they may become bored or disruptive after extended periods of time.

Those responsible for minor children or dependent adults should know:

- A child or dependent adult who is disruptive or who is not reading, studying, using library equipment, or playing quietly may be asked to leave the library.
- If necessary, a library staff member will contact the police department to report cases of unattended children.
- In all situations, the parent or adult caregiver who has brought minor children or dependent adults onto the library premises or who has otherwise directed or allowed minor children or dependent adults onto the library premises shall be responsible for the care and safety of those individuals.
- The library is not responsible for the care and safety of minor children or dependent adults traveling to and from the library premises.
- The library staff does not take the place of the parent, act as caregiver, nor assumes responsibility for the unattended children.
- Parents are encouraged to talk to the children's librarian if they have questions or want additional information regarding these policies.

### **Personal Belongings**

The library is not responsible for belongings left in or on library property. Patrons are also encouraged to refrain from monopolizing library space with excessive personal belongings.

### **Loitering**

~~Loitering is not permitted in the library. Anyone who sits doing nothing or wanders around for 15 minutes or more without apparent purpose is considered to be loitering. They may be questioned and asked to leave if deemed loitering.~~

### **Sleeping**

Sleeping in or on library property, lying down, and blocking walkways, exits, or entrances is prohibited. A patron may become drowsy and doze off momentarily while studying. This regulation refers to the habitual sleepers or those who are generally disturbing other patrons. The patron should be awoken (do NOT touch or shake them). They should be asked to stay awake or leave.

### **Feet on Tables ~~or Chairs~~**

Placing feet on tables ~~and chairs~~ is prohibited in the library. Staff should remind the patron of the rule. If this problem becomes habitual, the patron may be asked to leave.

### **Appropriate Clothing**

Patrons must wear appropriate clothing for a family-friendly setting. Shoes and shirts must be worn. They must leave the building at once if they have no shoes or shirt with them.

### **Food and Drink in the Library**

Specified food and non-alcoholic drink items are allowed in some public areas of the library as long as these items are consumed responsibly.

- The Indiana Room and the vicinity of any library computer are “No Food or Drink” zones.
- All drinks must be in securely lidded cups or in capped bottles.
- Food must be confined to individually consumed snacks and must not be distracting to other patrons or damaging to library materials.
- Library users must immediately report spills to staff.
- Food and drink containers should be disposed of properly.
- Food and drink are permitted at the sole discretion of the library staff. They have the authority to deny the consumption of certain types of beverages and food. Library staff may also revoke privileges of patrons who continually abuse the policy.

### **Solicitation**

Solicitation includes selling anything, such as raffle tickets or candy, for personal gain or for a charitable cause or circulation of petitions. Solicitors should be asked to leave the building.

### **Electronic Communication**

The library telephone may be used for local calls in emergency or hardship cases or at the discretion of the library staff. The following guidelines should be followed when using electronic devices:

- Set electronic device to vibrate or silent while in the library.
- Step away from other patrons and staff when using electronic communication.
- Use the lobby or step outside the building for extended conversations.
- Keep the volume of your voice low and refrain from abusive language.

### **Animals in the Building**

Anyone entering the library with an animal without prior permission of the library director should be asked to leave. The only exception is for service animals.

### **Smoking**

Library policy prohibits the use of tobacco and electronic cigarettes in the library or on library property. The patron should be asked to stop immediately or leave the library property.

### **Other Behaviors / Incidents**

Some behavior should be handled more urgently. If a patron exhibits the following behaviors, report it immediately to the **police and then notify the** library director or the librarian in charge ~~who will notify the police.~~

- **Emergency:** Immediately call 911 for all medical emergencies
- **Assault:** Intentional or reckless conduct causing injury to another person.
- **Criminal Mischief:** Intentionally damaging the property of the library or others (including vandalism and mutilating library materials).
- **Drunk or disorderly conduct:** Fighting, unreasonable noises, abusive or obscene language or gestures, threatening behavior, hazardous or physically offensive conduct.
- **Harassment:** Threatening or annoying another person by physical contact, abusive or obscene language, or following another person in or about a public place.
- **Public lewdness:** Intentional exposing the private or intimate parts of the body in a lewd manner in a public place.
- **Theft (larceny):** Wrongfully taking, obtaining, or withholding the property of another.
- **Trespass:** Knowingly entering or remaining unlawfully in or upon a premise.
- **Unlawful weapon possession:** The unlawful display of any knife, firearm, or other such weapon on library property.

### **Main Entranceway Guidelines**

The entranceway is the first place our patrons see. Appropriate behavior is expected, including:

- One person is allowed per seat.
- Unless involving children and parent, no one should sit in another's lap.
- Furniture should not be rearranged.
- Do not block doors.
- No horseplay or running is allowed.
- Noise level should be at the same level of that inside the library.
- Do not sit on the floor.

# Disciplinary Procedures

## Tracking Misbehavior

Incident Reports. The binder of incident reports is found in the Director's Office. It is indexed, and there is a list of suspended patrons. This information can be found on the Intranet in the Suspended Patron List file.

Patron Record. Suspensions are noted in the patron record and PINs are changed to "SEE NOTE" on suspended individuals that have cards.

Letters. The director sends letters to suspended individuals or their "parent of record" if they are a minor.

## Order of Procedure for each offense

If immediate action is warranted, deal with the patron. The discipline can always be adjusted later. If time allows, check the Suspended Patron List file on the Intranet to see if the patron has a previous offense.

Handing the offender, a copy of the "Expectations of Library Patrons" policy is always a good idea and often a deterrent of future misbehavior.

- First offense – give patron a warning.
- Second offense - ask patron to leave for the day. If it is late in the day, another day may be added.
- Third offense - suspend patron from library property for 1 month.
- Fourth offense - suspend patron from library property for 3 months.
- **Fifth offense – suspend patron from library property for 6 months.**  
At the end of a 3 6-month suspension, the patron and parent or guardian (if under age 18) must schedule an appointment with the director or young adult librarian before the patron is allowed back in the library.
- ~~Fifth~~ **Sixth** offense – suspend patron from library property for 1 year.  
**At the end of a year suspension, the patron and parent or guardian (if under age 18) must schedule an appointment with the director or young adult librarian before the patron is allowed back in the library.**
- ~~Sixth~~ **Seventh** offense – if patron is under 18, patron is suspended until age 18. Adult patrons are permanently banned from library property.

**Patrons may be forgiven for past offenses after an offense free period at the discretion of the library.**

## Exceptions to Procedures



Destructive, threatening behavior to property or people automatically steps up the disciplinary procedure to at least a one or three-month ban, assuming it is a first offense. If it is not a first offense, discipline may be escalated.

A patron's inappropriate response to discipline may count as a subsequent offense, escalating the discipline.

### **Procedure when Suspended Patron Enters Library**

It is a good idea to ask the patron if ~~he~~ **they** realize that ~~he~~ **they are** is suspended and ask ~~him~~ **them** to leave. A patron serving a long suspension may ~~be coming~~ **come** in to check the their **expiration** date **of their suspension**.

- A patron who knowingly violates a suspension is suspended for an increased amount of time. A 1-month suspension becomes 3 months; a 3-month suspension becomes **6 months** ~~1 year~~; **a 6-month suspension becomes 1 year**; a 1-year suspension becomes 2 years; the next step is to call police and issue a trespass warning.
- Additional time is added from the date of the original suspension.

### **Involving the Police**

~~Unless there is immediate danger, contact the library director or librarian in charge before contacting the police.~~ Call the police for the following:

- To report an unlawful act.
- If there is physical danger to you or a patron.
- If a patron refuses to leave at your request, even after you have advised the patron that you will call the police.
- If you need to issue a trespass warning. Let the dispatcher know why you are calling and who is being issued a trespass warning.
- To escort you to your car, if you feel unsafe.

If the police find someone causing a problem on our property, the police may bring the person in to the library to be dealt with according to our disciplinary procedures. If the police bring the person in to the library, it is an automatic 1-month suspension or a 2-step jump if the person has been in trouble previously.

## **Incident Reports**

Incident reports need to be completed every time there is an accident or a confrontation with a patron. A first warning may not warrant completing an incident report, but if you need to warn a patron again, complete the form and let the patron know what the consequence will be the next time the person acts inappropriately. (This is often a deterrent of future misbehavior.) Completing the report signifies a "first offense" and begins the disciplinary cycle for the patron. Ask the offender(s) for ~~his~~ **their** name, but complete the form even if you do not have a name. The patron may be identified later.

### **LOCATION OF FORM**

Incident report forms are located at every public service desk, in the policy handbook located at the public service desk and online (U:\staff handbook\Appendix B: Forms)

### **HOW TO COMPLETE FORM**

- Complete as much of the form as is applicable or is known.
- Physical descriptions need to include more than just clothes.
- Please make clear what action you took.
- Make a note if you think additional action is necessary.
- Sign and get a witness signature if applicable.
- Give the incident report to the director to be put in the incident report binder.  
The Suspended Patron List file will then be updated as needed.