

PATRON BEHAVIOR POLICY KIMBALL PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION

As a vital community resource agency and the only public library in Kimball County, the Kimball Public Library's purpose is to provide informational services and resources to our patrons in a pleasant and safe environment.

Any behavior that disrupts or interferes with the pleasant and safe environment for the public and/or the staff is considered "difficult" behavior. Our patrons are a diverse group of people with widely varying expectations, needs, backgrounds, ages and levels of expertise. It should be remembered that the most effective means to conflict resolution are good manners, common sense and a calm approach.

This manual is intended to assist library staff in coping competently and courteously with all of our patrons, including the few whose behavior may be labeled "difficult". It presents staff with techniques for handling patron relations in situations ranging from routine to those of an emergency nature, and establishes the criteria which will enable staff to distinguish when to handle the situation themselves and when to call for outside help.

Most importantly, the manual provides procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of library patrons and staff. The goal is not only to make the library a safe and pleasant facility for our patrons, but also to familiarize the staff with relevant portions of the law and to outline steps to take in difficult situations. Difficult situations may involve verbal and/or physical abuse or other instances that may present a dangerous or unpleasant atmosphere in which to work or visit.

Each and every staff member is expected to become familiar with the contents of this manual and is authorized to take action by following the procedures as outlined. When in doubt, never hesitate to call for assistance - up to and including the police.

Remember, patrons will follow the behavior they see modeled. If existing patrons are well-behaved, new patrons are more likely to be. It is very important to act quickly and to notify patrons as soon as they start violating library rules, even if they are long term library users. It is also important to make sure new patrons understand the rules, rather than just hoping that a first-time offender will not come back. It is equally as important the staff serve as role models by complying with the same rules we expect our patrons to follow.

PATRON BEHAVIOR POLICY

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PATRON BILL OF RIGHTS

PLEASE:

- *Do expect your privacy to be respected
- *Do expect courteous treatment
- *Do expect a welcoming, nonjudgmental atmosphere
- *Do ask a librarian for help
- *Do call or come in for Reference and Information Services
- *Do check-out circulating books and other materials
- *Do use the Interlibrary Loan Service
- *Do suggest new materials and services
- *Do expect to register for library cards and pay fines without undue red tape or delays
- *Do expect the library to buy current best sellers and popular materials
- *Do expect complaints/problems to be resolved within 48 hours, whenever possible
- *Do expect phone calls not to be left on “hold” unnecessarily
- *Do expect the staff to make the library system work for you
- *Do understand that library patrons who are children have the same rights and responsibilities as adult library patrons
- *Do expect a clean, safe, reasonably quiet building

**PATRON BEHAVIOR POLICY
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GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE USE OF THE LIBRARY

PLEASE:

- *Do not engage in any illegal activity or behavior
- *Do not vandalize library facilities, equipment, or materials
- *Do not enter without shoes or shirt
- *Do not bring in animals except guide dogs
 - *Do not harass other library users or library staff
(i.e. physical, sexual or verbal abuse)
 - *Do not use language considered inappropriate for public settings
- *Do not sell, solicit, panhandle or loiter
 - *Do not distribute leaflets or post notices not authorized by the library administration
- *Do not eat, drink, smoke or sleep (prolonged or chronic)
- *Do not leave children or adults who need supervision unattended
- *Do not talk loudly or make noise that other library users can hear
- *Do not bathe, shave or wash clothes in public library facilities
- *Do not remove library materials from the building without checking them out
- *Do not enter the library if you have neglected your bodily hygiene so that it gives offense & constitutes a nuisance to other patrons
 - *Do not bring bicycles, skateboards, roller blades or shoes with wheels into the library

**PERSONS WHO FAIL TO OBSERVE THESE GUIDELINES
MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE BUILDING OR BE
SUBJECT TO ARREST.**

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PATRON BEHAVIOR AND STAFF PROCEDURES

I. HANDLING A CRIME IN PROGRESS

A. STAFF PROCEDURE:

If you suspect that there is a potential danger, call 911 immediately and inform the person in charge at the library.

II. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

A. STAFF PROCEDURES:

1. Try to solve the problem if you can. Be aware that another staff member may be better able to handle particular kinds of patrons or problems. If you feel this is the case, ask that staff member for assistance, but try to avoid making the patron re-state the problem to an endless succession of staff members.
2. Remain calm and pleasant.
3. Give the patron your full attention. Listen carefully to his/her complaint. If the patron is hostile, allow him/her to talk it out. (This does not mean you should take abusive behavior.)
4. Pause, breathe deeply, and think before responding. Focus on the reason the patron is upset and not on the patron's behavior.
5. Do not argue with the patron. Be empathetic to the patron's feelings. Maintain eye contact. Eye contact helps make the patron feel important.
6. Respond in a relaxed, low tone. Repeat and paraphrase the patron's complaint.
7. If you can, try to think of alternative solutions. Empathize with the patron, noting that there may have been a misunderstanding, and state positively that you will try to resolve it. If you cannot solve the problem, refer it to your supervisor or someone at a higher level.
8. If the patron is not satisfied, she/he may fill out a complaint form. Assure the patron that you will follow through with the complaint.

III. HANDLING GENERAL DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

A. DESCRIPTION:

A patron who is upset or frustrated over library policies, broken machinery (i.e. photocopier), inability to locate library material, lack of staff, etc., may become loud and disruptive in his/her behavior. Disruptive behavior may also include aberrant or criminal behavior.

B. STAFF PROCEDURE:

1. Approach the patron calmly and pleasantly.
2. Focus on the reason for the behavior, not on the behavior itself.
3. Try to satisfy the patron and/or defuse the situation if possible. If possible, offer an alternative action.
4. If the disruptive behavior continues, politely but firmly explain the relevant policy and point out appropriate signs stating the policy. Ask the patron to refrain from the prohibited behavior. Give warning that if the behavior continues, he/she will be asked to leave the library.
5. If the patron persists, obtain the support of other staff and ask the patron to leave the library.
6. If the patron refuses to leave, call the Police at 911.
7. If the problem is unresolved or if you feel Administration should be made aware of the situation, fill out a Patron Incident Form.

C. DESCRIPTION:

A patron may also have a difficult time understanding the proper etiquette for a library. This could include loud talking, language considered inappropriate for public settings, making phone calls in the main part of the library, or other general disruptive behaviors.

D. STAFF PROCEDURE:

1. Approach the patron calmly and pleasantly.
2. Do not blame the patron but explain to them what this issue is and why it is a problem.
3. If the disruptive behavior continues, politely but firmly explain the relevant policy and point out appropriate signs stating the policy. Ask the patron to refrain from the prohibited behavior. Give warning that if the behavior continues, he/she will be asked to leave the library.
4. If the patron persists, obtain the support of other staff and ask the patron to leave the library.
5. If the patron refuses to leave, call the Police at 911.
6. If the problem is unresolved or if you feel Administration should be made aware of the situation, fill out a Patron Incident Form.

IV. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR – CHILDREN

A. DESCRIPTION:

Examples of disruptive behavior are: loud talking, playing or running in the stacks, screaming babies, annoying other patron and mistreating library property. Children under the age of 6 need to be accompanied by someone age 12 or older at all times. If a parent asks permission to leave a child in the library while he/she leaves the building, tell the parent that the library will not accept responsibility for the child.

**B. STAFF PROCEDURE - ATTENDED CHILDREN
(UNDER AGE 12)**

1. Identify the inappropriate behavior and tell the child to stop it.
2. If the disruptive behavior continues, tell the parent that the child must stop the behavior.
3. If the parent is unable or unwilling to control the child, ask the family to leave the library.

**C. STAFF PROCEDURE - UNATTENDED CHILDREN
(UNDER AGE 12)**

1. Tell the child that the behavior is unacceptable and locate the parent.
2. If the parent is not in the library, make an effort to determine the parent's location and phone number. (Patron records and phone books should be searched. The child should be interviewed if possible.)
3. Attempt to phone the parent. The parent should be told of the child's behavior.
4. If the parent cannot be reached, attempt to reach another relative or family friend to take responsibility for the child. If possible, ask the child for names of people to contact.
5. These attempts should be made until it is determined that the child requires further assistance to meet his/her physical need (e.g. hunger, soiled clothes) or peace of mind. Police may then be called.
6. Fill out a Patron Incident Form.

V. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR – HYGIENE

A. DESCRIPTION:

A patron with an extreme hygiene problem that could be a health hazard to others (e.g. someone who has soiled themselves, has an obvious case of head lice, etc.) should be asked to leave the library until he/she corrects the problem.

B. STAFF PROCEDURE:

Due to the sensitive nature of this problem, a male employee should confront a male patron and a female employee should confront a female patron whenever possible.

1. Inform a co-worker that you are going to talk to the patron about his/her hygiene.
2. Tell the patron, "I'm sorry, but I have to ask you to leave the library. It appears that you have a hygiene problem which is creating an unsanitary condition for other library patron and staff. After you have taken care of this problem, you are welcome to come back to use our library."
3. If the patron becomes abusive or refuses to leave after you have informed him/her about this problem, simply walk away and call the police.
4. Fill out a Patron Incident Form if the situation warrants.

VI. DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR - IRATE/ABUSIVE

A. DESCRIPTION:

No employee should tolerate hostile behavior or abusive language. The library has an obligation to protect employees from such abuse, just as it has an obligation to make sure employees do not insult or abuse patron.

In a tense situation, employees must be careful not to escalate the situation by becoming part of the problem. Your goal is to calm the patron down before the situation escalates.

B. STAFF PROCEDURE:

1. If you fear for the safety of yourself and/or others, immediately call **911**.
2. Take a deep breath, remain calm, positive and in control of the situation. Smile and keep eye contact. (Often keeping a pleasant demeanor will help calm the patron down. Do not show that you are intimidated or afraid.) Focus on the reason why the patron is upset, not on his/her behavior.
3. Do not touch the patron. If the patron is really hostile, get him/her to walk to a quiet (**but not isolated**) place and focus on calming him/her down. If he/she gets too close, ask him/her to sit down or to move back.
4. Respond in a low pleasant tone. Try to get the patron's attention by saying "I would like to hear what you have to say, let me get a piece of paper to write down the problem." (Staff may use this opportunity to alert back-up staff). If a patron is using abusive language, tell him/her, "I'm sorry, but I cannot help you if you continue to talk in this manner."
5. If the patron does not stop, call your supervisor or someone at a higher level.
6. Advise the patron that the Police will be called if the abuse does not stop. If the abuse continues, call **911** immediately.
7. Fill out a Patron Incident Form.

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