

Library Behavior and Banning Guidelines Policy

Customer Service

Policy Statement

Free Library of Northampton Township (FLNT) Behavior Policy is designed to protect the rights and safety of library users and staff members. It helps to ensure the security of library materials, facilities, and property. Copies of the policy are available at the Circulation Desk and on the library's website.

In establishing and enforcing the Behavior Policy and corresponding Banning Guidelines, the library seeks to ensure that no individual or group activity occurs that is unreasonably disturbing to others or inconsistent with library activities such as reading, studying, accessing materials and resources, and other similar conduct associated with a public library.

Patrons shall be engaged in normal activities associated with the use of a public library while in the building. Use of the library as an adult or child daycare center will not be tolerated. Patrons not engaged in active reading, studying, or use of library materials for extended periods of time will be asked to leave the building.

All library staff members are authorized to enforce the policy. Violators generally will be reminded of the policy, given a warning, and then asked to leave if the offending behavior does not cease. Serious or repeat behavior problems may result in immediate banning without warning. Those who are asked to leave will be banned within the framework of the FLNT Banning Guidelines.

At no time will physical force be used by any library staff member to remove someone. If a person refuses to leave, law enforcement will be called.

The expectations in this policy also apply to children. Additional expectations for children and parents are outlined in the Unattended Child Policy.

Members of the Bucks County Library District have reciprocity agreements regarding banning. Banning at any one member library applies to all member libraries.

Regulations

Toward enforcement of this policy, the library reserves the right to inspect all bags, purses, briefcases, backpacks or other containers.

Library users must:

- Keep their belongings with them at all times. The library is not responsible for loss or theft.
- Wear shirts and shoes at all times.

Library users may:

- Engage in quiet conversations throughout the library, including cell phone and in-person, as long as conversations are brief, three (3) minutes or less. Cell phone text and ring tones must be turned off at all times.
- Engage in quiet conversations for extended periods in children's areas and areas designated as tutoring or group study areas.
- Consume covered drinks and peanut-free, dry snacks, such as crackers or cookies as long as all trash is thrown away or removed from the library. Hot or dripping food such as pizza, hamburgers, and hoagies are not permitted. Seating areas may not be used for eating meals. Food and drinks are not permitted at public computers or any other areas the library designates as food-free.

Illegal activities are prohibited. Library staff will call law enforcement to handle violations of federal or state laws and local ordinances. This includes:

1. Visible impairment or possession and use of illegal substances and consumption of alcoholic beverages
2. Smoking and use of tobacco and vapor products in the library or areas outside where second-hand smoke or vapor can enter the building
3. Indecent exposure and sexual activity beyond non-sexual affection
4. Possession of offensive weapons per PA Title 18 CS 908*
5. Theft and vandalism of library, staff, and user property
6. Criminal trespass including entry into the library while banned

Harmful, disruptive, or destructive behavior is prohibited. This includes:

1. Harassment, defined as any behavior that disturbs, alarms, or intimidates another person, including:
 - a) Loud, abusive, threatening, or insulting language
 - b) Physical contact or attempts of threats of physical contact
 - c) Following another person around the building and grounds
 - d) Disruptive or unsafe behavior
 - e) Committing individual or repeated acts that serve no legitimate purpose
 - f) Communicating lewd and obscene words, language, or pictures either to or about another person
 - g) Conduct not described above but of a similarly serious nature
2. Use of library materials, equipment, furniture, fixtures, and the building for anything other than the intended purpose;
3. Damage to library materials, computers, equipment, furniture, fixtures, or the building;
4. Gambling;
5. Use of sound and viewing of images on computers in a way that reasonably disturbs others including but not limited to passersby;
6. Use of the parking lot, sidewalks, or grounds for recreational bicycling, skateboarding, or other playground or sports activities;
7. Use of skateboards, skates, and other sports equipment in the library;
8. Blocking or impeding access to interior or exterior walkways, entrances, and common areas, physically or with large items;
9. Trespassing in restricted staff areas or camping on library property;

10. Campaigning, petitioning, survey-taking, soliciting, sales, distributing leaflets, and any speech or conduct that interferes with another person's right to use the library or with staff performance of their duties;
11. Disregarding the reasonable direction of library staff members.

Inappropriate behavior is prohibited. This includes:

1. Bringing animals in the library other than service animals; leaving animals unattended outside the library;
2. Excessive displays of affection;
3. Rearranging furniture and seating areas in a way that it becomes disruptive to other library use;
4. Loud use of electronic devices with or without headphones/earbuds;
5. Ringing of cell phones;
6. Not conforming to generally acceptable standards of hygiene and cleanliness, such as body odor that is sufficiently foul to be a nuisance to other library users; and wearing infested clothing or carrying infested personal affects;
7. Use of restrooms for bathing, shaving, or laundering;
8. Sleeping;
9. Loitering. Library staff members exercise discretion in considering if loitering is unacceptable. Generally, a library user is asked to leave if library staff members determine the behavior or activity is disruptive to or prevents others from utilizing the library and its services;
10. Monopolizing staff time or library resources;
11. Any individual or group behavior that unreasonably disrupts or interferes with normal operations of use of the library.

* "Any bomb, grenade, machine gun, sawed-off shotgun with a barrel less than 18 inches, firearm specially made or specially adapted for concealment or silent discharge, any blackjack, sandbag, metal knuckles, dagger knife, razor or cutting instrument, the blade of which is exposed in an automatic way by switch, push-button, spring mechanism, or otherwise, or other implement for the infliction of serious bodily injury which serves no common lawful purpose." (PA Title 18 CS 908)

Procedures

Library staff members will approach library users with respect and discretion, delivering warnings as quietly, privately, and politely as possible, contingent upon circumstances.

All occurrences of suspicious or inappropriate behavior are documented using incident logs or incident report forms.

Library staff members will call 911 without hesitation in any circumstance that poses an immediate danger to health or safety or that may involve a willful violation of federal or state laws or local ordinances. Library staff members will use discretion in calling law enforcement, reserving the use of 911 for emergencies and using non-emergency numbers when appropriate.

Library users who violate the regulations are subject to banning. Any library staff member may ban someone from the library for the remainder of the day. Banning library users for a greater length of time may be handled by managers or the director. Repeat violations will be handled in consultation with a manager.

Notice of banning beyond the remainder of the day will be sent by certified mail to the person's last known address.

Parents or legal guardians will be notified of the banning from the library of anyone under age 18 or when law enforcement is contacted because of library behavior.

Appeal of the banning may be made, in writing, to the Library Director, 25 Upper Holland Road, Richboro, PA 18954. The patron, or in the case of a minor child, the parents or guardian, will be notified by the Director of the date and time of the appeal hearing by mail.

***Adopted by the FLNT Library Board
January 11, 2024***

Library Behavior Banning Guidelines

First Offense: **Warning**
Repeat Offense: **Rest of day**
Repeat Offense: **1 day**

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| Basic Regulations | Not wearing shirts and shoes |
| | Not using cell phone in designated area |
| | Food other than peanut-free, dry snacks and covered drinks |
| | Using seating areas to eat meals |
| | Similar conduct not described above |

First offense: **Warning**
Repeat offense: **Rest of day**
Repeat offense: **7 days**

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| Harmful, Disruptive, or Destructive Behavior | Harassment – Disruptive or unsafe behavior |
| | Harassment – Committing acts that serve no legitimate purpose |
| | Misuse of library materials, equipment, furniture, fixtures, building |
| Other Inappropriate Behavior | Disregarding the reasonable direction of staff |
| | Repeatedly enters building without mask/face covering, removes mask/face covering while in the building, or fails to wear mask correctly so that both the nose and mouth are covered |
| | Rearranging furniture and seating areas in a way that it becomes a disruption or obstacle to other library use |
| | Noise from electronic devices with or without headphones |
| | Ringing cell phones |
| | Restrooms – shaving, bathing, laundering |
| | Sleeping |
| | Loitering |
| | Monopolizing staff time or resources |
| | Behavior disruptive/interfering with normal operations |

First offense: **Warning**
Repeat offense: **7 days**

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| Harmful, Disruptive, or Destructive Behavior | Computer use (sound/images) disturbing others (pornography addressed in other section) |
| | Use of parking lot/sidewalks/grounds for recreation playground or sports activities |
| | Use of skateboards, skates, or other sports equipment in the building |
| | Blocking/impeding access to walkways, common areas, and entrances physically or with large items |
| | Campaigning, petitioning, survey-taking, soliciting, sales, etc. |
| Other Inappropriate Behavior | Animals other than service animals inside/unattended animals outside |
| | Excessive displays of affection |

First offense: 7 days
Repeat offense: 30 days

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| Harmful, Disruptive, or Destructive Behavior | Trespassing in restricted areas/no camping |
| | Harassment – Following another person around the building or grounds |

First offense: 30 days
Repeat offense: 90 days

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| Harmful, Disruptive, or Destructive Behavior | Harassment – Loud, abusive, threatening, insulting language |
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First offense: 6 months
Repeat offense: 1 year

**File police report*

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| Harmful, Disruptive, or Destructive Behavior | Damage to library materials, computer, equipment, furniture, fixtures, building |
| | Harassment – Attempts or threats of physical contact* |
| | Harassment – Lewd, obscene words, language or pictures |
| Illegal Activities | Smoking or vaping in building and near entrances |

First offense: 1 year
Repeat offense: 1 year

**File police report*

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| Harmful, Disruptive, or Destructive Behavior | Harassment – Computer tampering, cyberbullying and cyberstalking* |
| | Harassment – Physical contact* |
| Illegal Activities | Visible impairment/possession and use of illegal substances* |
| | Visible intoxication/consumption of alcohol* |
| | Indecent exposure, sexual activity* |
| | Offensive weapons* |
| | Theft, vandalism of library, staff, and user property* |
| | Criminal trespass, including entry while banned* |

Ban until issue is dealt with

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| Other Inappropriate Behavior | Body odor/hygiene |
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Patrons shall be engaged in normal activities associated with the use of a public library while in the building. Use of the library as an adult or child daycare center will not be tolerated. Patrons not engaged in active reading, studying, or use of library materials for an extended period of time will be asked to leave the building. An “extended period of time” shall be defined as 30 minutes. This definition will not be defeated by a person temporarily modifying his/her behavior thereby attempting to create another 30-minute period. Staff shall use the totality of the circumstances in deciding whether a library user is engaged in activities normally associated with the use of a public library.

Rev. 12.2023