

**MIDLOTHIAN PUBLIC LIBRARY  
PATRON BEHAVIOR POLICY**

**I. PURPOSE**

The Midlothian Public Library strives to provide a warm, welcoming, and safe environment conducive to lifelong learning and discovery for people of all ages. The Board sets forth this policy for the purpose of ensuring such an environment, in which:

- A. All library patrons have a fair and equitable opportunity to use library materials and services in a safe and pleasant environment, without unreasonable interference or disturbance from others.
- B. Library staff have a safe and secure workplace protected from disruptive, hostile, or unlawful behavior.
- C. Library facilities, property, and materials are secured from damage or theft.

**II. RULES OF CONDUCT**

Any behavior which unreasonably infringes on the safe and pleasant use of the library by others, interferes with library operations and the ability of staff to do their work, or endangers library property is prohibited. These specific behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- A. No conduct is permitted that endangers the health and safety of library users or employees. (Examples include threatening or harassing behavior, derogatory insults, fighting, unattended children and vulnerable adults.)
- B. No conduct is permitted that may cause damage or block access to library facilities, property, or materials. (Examples include obstructing walkways, vandalism, unattended belongings, play or loitering in the parking lot, tampering with equipment, littering, lying on furniture or the floor.)
- C. No conduct is permitted that may reasonably be expected to create a disturbance or interfere with the safe use and enjoyment of the library by others. (Examples include yelling, profanity, excessive noise, running, rowdy or aggressive behavior, offensive odors.)
- D. Patrons may not bring animals into the building, except for service animals or ones that are part of an authorized library program.
- E. Covered, non-alcoholic drinks are allowed in public areas. Food is authorized in the café area only, or for library sponsored events.
- F. Possession or use of alcohol, cannabis, or illegal drugs is prohibited on Library property, except at after-hours library-sponsored events for individuals age 21 and older, where alcohol may be permitted. Persons exhibiting signs of intoxication by alcohol or other substances will be asked to leave the library. For library-sponsored events where alcohol is permitted, library staff will check ID to verify age for entry and will announce “last call” 30

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minutes before the end of the event, after which no new alcoholic drinks may be opened or poured. Failure to comply with “last call” may result in a suspension of the attendee’s privilege to attend subsequent library events where alcohol is permitted.

- G. Smoking, vaping, and the use of tobacco products are only permitted outside the library building at a distance of 15 feet or more from any library entrance.
- H. Engaging in sexual conduct, sexual harassment, or lewd behavior is prohibited.
- I. Patrons are required to wear shoes and clothing that provides appropriate bodily coverage.
- J. Weapons such as explosives, firearms, knives, or look-alike weapons are prohibited.
- K. Adults age 18 and older are only permitted in the children’s and teen areas of the library if they are supervising a minor in their care or actively browsing a library collection housed in these areas. Exceptions may be made for youth who have recently turned 18 and are socializing with peers of a similar grade level in school.
- L. Commercial solicitation, fundraising, or panhandling in the Library or on its grounds is prohibited, with the exception of those cases expressly permitted by the Library Programming Policy.
- M. Organizations collecting goods for charitable purposes may place a receptacle in the Library for this purpose only with the permission of the Library Director.
- N. Circulation of petitions, distribution of leaflets or related materials, and campaign activities are not permitted within the library building. Noncommercial speech activities such as these are permitted outside the library on library sidewalks at a distance of 15 feet or more from any library entrance, as long as they do not block or interfere with the passage of library patrons or vehicles and do not otherwise conflict with this Patron Behavior Policy.
- O. No user may engage in any illegal acts or conduct in violation of federal, state, or local laws.

**III. ENFORCEMENT OF BEHAVIOR POLICIES**

- A. Illinois law authorizes the Library: "To exclude from use of the library any person who willfully violates an ordinance or regulation prescribed by the board." [75 ILCS 16/30-55.55]
- B. Any behavior that violates these policies may result in suspension of library privileges, exclusion from the library, cost recovery charges, and prosecution.
- C. Library staff are authorized to correct misbehavior, inspect bags, impose time or space limits, ask disruptive patrons to leave the library, issue a 24 hour ban, request ID, or call the police at their discretion.
- D. The Library Director is authorized to limit or suspend the library privileges of anyone whose unacceptable behavior is disruptive, dangerous, or becomes chronic in nature for up to 30

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days, or until the next regularly scheduled Board meeting, if the Director will be referring the individual to the Board for consideration of a longer suspension of privileges (see Section F below). The Library Director will follow the Suspension Length Guidelines (appended).

- E. The Person in Charge, designated by the Library Director, is authorized to issue a form letter signed by the Library Director suspending the privileges of a minor who repeatedly violates these behavior policies until such time as the minor's parent or guardian has had a conference (in person or phone) with the Library Director.
- F. With Board approval, library privileges may be denied for longer than 30 days. The Board will follow the Suspension Length Guidelines. The patron may appeal the decision in writing to the Board within one month of the exclusion date. The Board shall respond with a final decision in writing.

**IV. UNATTENDED CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS**

- A. Children and vulnerable adults may be at risk when they are left unattended. They could be approached by a stranger, become frightened or ill, become stranded during an unexpected closing, be asked to leave because of a behavior violation, or encounter a safety hazard or emergency situation.
- B. Children under the age of 8 and vulnerable adults who are unable or unwilling to care for themselves may not be left alone in the library and must have adequate supervision from a responsible caregiver.
- C. A vulnerable adult is an adult who is unable to reasonably care for themselves in an independent manner. This may include adults who, due to mental or physical disabilities, cannot respond appropriately in an emergency situation or need help beyond assistance with typical library services.
- D. A responsible caregiver is an adult or mature adolescent, 14 years or older, who assumes full responsibility for the safety and behavior of those in their care.
- E. The library is a busy public facility, and staff members do not function *in loco parentis* (in place of parents) or as substitute caregivers. They are not responsible for duties such as safety monitoring, behavior oversight, bathroom assistance, care of illness, or providing caregiving attention that prevents them from their work duties.
- F. Children age 8 and over and vulnerable adults who can understand and follow the Rules of Conduct and who can care for themselves without assistance, are allowed to be in the library unattended. They should have contact information for someone who can assist them in an emergency, and respect the rights and safety of others.
- G. Parents or caregivers must pick up their children or vulnerable adults prior to closing time. When the library is closing, in case of illness, or if the safety or behavior of an unattended child or vulnerable adult is in doubt, staff are authorized to call the police if they are unable to reach a caregiver.

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H. Violations of this policy are grounds for suspension of library privileges.

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**APPENDIX  
SUSPENSION LENGTH GUIDELINES**

The following are guidelines for suspension periods, which may vary based on the severity of a patron’s misconduct and on any past non-compliance by the patron with the Patron Behavior Policy.

<b>Length of Suspension</b>	<b>Misconduct Involved</b>
One Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ignoring repeated warnings about disruptive behavior</li> <li>• Refusing to follow the directions of library staff</li> </ul>
One Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trespassing on library property after having been asked to leave the library premises</li> <li>• Minor damage to library property</li> <li>• A repeat or escalation of any of the above misconduct</li> </ul>
One to Six Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimidating or harassing others with hostile or inappropriate remarks</li> <li>• Possession or use of intoxicating or controlled substance</li> <li>• A repeat or escalation of any of the above misconduct</li> </ul>
Six Months to One Year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stealing from another patron or the library</li> <li>• A repeat or escalation of any of the above misconduct</li> </ul>
One Year or Longer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serious damage to library property</li> <li>• Direct threat of physical violence</li> <li>• Physically assaulting or inappropriately making contact with other patrons or staff</li> <li>• Lewd conduct</li> <li>• A repeat or escalation of any of the above misconduct</li> </ul>