

Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy

Purpose of the Policy

Under the provisions of Chapter 43.52(1) of the Wisconsin State Statutes, the Altoona Public Library Board of Trustees may enact rules and regulations that serve to ensure the safety of all library staff and patrons, protect the physical condition of the library collection, and maintain order in the library.

The Appropriate Library Behavior Policy is enforced inside the library (including restrooms, activity rooms, and lobby), on outdoor library property, and in virtual spaces such as online meetings or discussion sessions hosted by the Altoona Public Library.

The guidelines listed below are not all-inclusive.

Safe Environment

Library patrons have the right to a safe and enjoyable environment when visiting the Altoona Public Library. Therefore, the behaviors outlined below are prohibited:

- Any act that constitutes a criminal offense under federal, state, or local law, including, but not limited to:
 - Engaging in prohibited activities that relate to material involving the sexual exploitation of minors.
 - Using the Internet for activities that violates Wisconsin law, including engaging in activities that are harmful to minors when children are present.
 - Theft.
 - Vandalizing library property or causing damage to any other person's property.
 - Indecent exposure, public sexual indecency, lewd acts, or any other sexual offense.
 - Gambling, other than the types exempted by Wisconsin law.
 - Disorderly conduct, including, but not limited to, fighting, engaging in violent or seriously disruptive behavior, or threatening or intimidating library staff or any library patron.
 - Harassing or stalking library staff or any library patron. This conduct includes, but is not limited to:
 - Filming or photographing any person after being asked to desist.
 - Engaging in conduct (such as persistent staring or gestures, or inappropriate questions or responses) that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their personal safety or feel distressed, alarmed, or harassed.

- Using profane, offensive, or abusive language that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their personal safety or feel distressed, alarmed, or harassed.
 - Trespassing, including knowingly entering the Library premises when access and use of the Library facilities has been suspended.
- Bringing guns, weapons, knives, or items designed or intended to injure or harm people, unless explicitly permitted by law.
- Possession, consumption, or selling of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances.
- Smoking, rolling, or using any tobacco product, marijuana, synthetic tobacco, synthetic marijuana, or electronic or other e-cigarettes (smokeless or the equivalent).
- Using wheeled devices inside the library or on library grounds, except in designated areas. This includes use of skateboards, roller-skates, bicycles, “wheelie” shoes, motorized or non-motorized scooters, and shopping carts. These restrictions do not apply to ADA assistive devices or baby strollers.
- Entering a library building with animals, except for bona fide service animals as defined by federal and state law. (See Policy pp.35-36)
- Creating tripping hazards, or blocking aisles, exits, or entrances.
- Bringing into the library, or attempting to place or store in the library, any item that:
 - Interferes with library operations.
 - Creates a safety hazard.
 - Denies space to other patrons.
 - Blocks aisles.
 - Blocks access to or exit from the building.
 - Is unsanitary or foul-smelling.
 - Has a total dimension in excess of 55-inches (excluding items necessary for medical purposes or childcare).
- Leaving packages, backpacks, luggage, or any other personal items unattended. Unattended items are subject to removal without notice.

Personal Behavior

The following actions or behaviors are not allowed on Library property:

- Failing to comply with:
 - A library staff member’s request to stop inappropriate behavior.
 - This Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy.
 - Any other library policy.

- Behaving in a manner that disrupts library operations, including, but not limited to:
 - Being under the influence of alcohol, any drug, or other intoxicant.
 - Loud talking or yelling.
 - Running or physical horseplay.
- Allowing a service animal to be disruptive, including, but not limited to, barking or other loud noises, not being under the control of the owner, exhibiting threatening postures, and approaching other patrons uninvited.
- Strong, pervasive odors, including body odor, clothing odor, and odors caused by food, perfume, or cologne that are injurious to health, indecent, offensive to the senses, or an obstruction to the free use or comfortable enjoyment of library premises by other library patrons or library staff.
- Inappropriate use of water fountains or restrooms, including, but not limited to, soliciting, engaging in sexual conduct, bathing, or washing clothes.
- Using the library as a place to sleep.
- Soliciting handouts, donations, or contributions.
- Conducting sales activities.
- Not wearing shoes or shirts, except for infants or toddlers.
- Disturbing or harassing other library patrons or library staff. This includes, but is not limited to, creating noise (including loud cell phone use or conversation). Verbal or physical abuse will not be tolerated.

Harassment / Sexual Harassment

The Board has established a strict policy prohibiting unlawful harassment of persons at the library, including implied or expressed forms of racial or sexual harassment. Further, it is the responsibility of all employees to assure that the workplace is free from all forms of harassment including racial and sexual harassment. In keeping with that policy, the Board will not tolerate any form of harassment by any of its employees.

As used here, sexual harassment means any verbal, written, visual, or physical acts that are offensive in nature, intimidating, unwelcome, or that reasonably could be taken as objectionable. This includes:

- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Request for sexual acts or favors.
- Any other written, visual, verbal, or physical conduct of a harassing nature.

Any employee who feels that he or she has been subjected to harassment of any type, whether by a coworker, supervisor, officer, agent of the library, or patron should promptly report the incident to the Library Director or to Management Staff. If the complaint involves the employee's manager or someone else in the employee's direct

line of command, the employee may go to another manager or to the Library Board President with the complaint.

All complaints will be handled promptly using appropriate measures, which may include disciplinary action. Appropriate measures to resolve or correct the situation in an expeditious manner will be taken. Special privacy safeguards and the utmost discretion will be employed in handling the complaint, and the privacy of the charging party and the person accused will be strictly honored.

The Board considers harassment a major offense which can result in the suspension or discharge of the offender from the library. Employees having any questions concerning this policy should contact the Director.

Use and Preservation of Library Materials and Property

The following actions or behaviors are not allowed on Library property:

- Manipulating or bypassing Library systems and procedures, such as those that regulate computer use.
- Unplugging library equipment to utilize an electrical outlet.
- Using furniture for anything other than its intended purpose (e.g., a table is not a foot stool).
- Deliberately damaging library materials.
- Engaging in activities not reasonably associated with the use of a public library.

Children and Vulnerable Adults in the Library

The Altoona Public Library welcomes all members of the public and hopes that visitors will come to know libraries as warm, inviting, and enriching places. Parents, guardians, and caregivers must realize that there can be risks associated with leaving children or vulnerable adults unattended at a library.

The library does not and cannot function as a caregiver, baby-sitter, or day care center and cannot continuously monitor children or vulnerable adults who are left unattended. Children and vulnerable adults are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that does not violate the Appropriate Behavior Policy or disrupt other patrons. The library is not responsible for any consequences of a parent's or guardian's failing in their responsibilities.

To enhance the library experience for, and minimize the risk to children and vulnerable adults, the following requirements apply:

- The responsibility for the safety and well-being of every child and vulnerable adult using the library rests with the parent, guardian, or caregiver, not with library personnel.

- Children under the age of eight (8) must be attended to at all times by a responsible adult or caregiver who is at least fourteen (14) years old.
- Children aged eight (8) **or more** and vulnerable adults who can understand and follow the Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy, are welcome to be in the library unattended if they have contact information for a responsible adult or teen who will be available to assist if needed.
- Children are not to remain at the library after closing. If a child under the age of eighteen (18), or a vulnerable adult is left alone at the library at closing, or if the library closes because of an emergency situation, library staff will attempt to contact a parent, guardian, or caregiver. If a parent, guardian, or caregiver cannot be contacted, or the child or vulnerable adult is not picked up within ten (10) minutes after closing, library staff will call law enforcement who will assume responsibility for the individual.
- Additionally, the following actions or behaviors are not allowed on library property:
 - Disciplining a child in a manner that injures the child or disrupts other patrons.
 - Leaving young children unsupervised or ignoring their disruptive behaviors.
 - Adults loitering in the children's areas for no legitimate purpose.
- Definition: For purposes of this policy, 'vulnerable adult' means an individual who is eighteen (18) years of age or older and who is, because of a mental or physical impairment, unable to:
 - Protect themselves from abuse or exploitation by others.
 - Comprehend or comply with the Library's Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy.

Consequences of Non-Compliance

The Altoona Public Library will follow the principles below in enforcing the Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy in a fair and reasonable manner:

- Anyone who observes violations of this policy may report it to any staff member who will take appropriate action.
- Anyone not complying with this Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy, or any reasonable request of the staff will normally first be warned by an authorized representative of the library and will be advised of the next course of action to be taken by the library if the unacceptable behavior continues.
- A patron who engages in conduct inconsistent with the purpose of the Library, who refuses to comply with Library Staff directions, or who fails to follow the Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy may be asked to leave the Library premises,

may have Library privileges suspended or restricted, and may be barred from all Library premises for a specified period of time.

- Following review of the circumstances of the violation, the Library Director or designee will issue a written notice to the individual informing them of the nature of his or her violation, any history of prior infractions of the Library's Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy, the duration of any suspension, restriction, and/or eviction that is imposed, and any requirements that must be met before the suspension is lifted.
- Any person whose Library privileges are suspended or restricted or who is evicted from Library premises has the right to appeal by requesting a hearing before the Altoona Public Library Board of Trustees, provided such hearing is requested by written notice addressed to:

**Library Director
Altoona Public Library
1303 Lynn Avenue
Altoona, WI, 54720**

The letter must be mailed not later than ten calendar days after the date on which the library's notification was mailed to the individual. Any person requesting a hearing shall have the right to appear in person and to be represented by counsel if he or she chooses.

Suspension of Library Privileges

The Library Director, Youth Services Librarian, or Circulation Manager may immediately suspend a patron's Library privileges or access to activities, services, and/or facilities if the situation is a serious offense and constitutes a violation of Altoona Public Library's policies. If no member of the management team is on duty, Library Clerk Staff may suspend a patron's library privileges for one (1) day or until the next day the Library Director is on duty. At that time, the Director will review the incident report and decide to either extend the suspension of library privileges or to end the suspension. Examples of serious offenses include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal abuse.
- Violence.
- Threatening behaviors.
- Sexual harassment.
- Vandalism.
- Drug sale.
- Intoxication.

- Theft or attempted theft.
- Physical harassment.
- Sexual misconduct; or
- Any behaviors that threaten the safety and security of patrons or staff.

The Library Director or Librarian may also issue suspensions for repeated violations of library policies.

Appropriate Patron Behavior Policy approved by the Altoona Public Library Board of Trustees on September 19th, 2023.