

## Staff Behavior Policies

The Mattoon Public Library aims to insure high quality, professional service to all its patrons. We wish to encourage an environment that allows patrons to read, use computers, and make use of our facilities to become active users of our library and the information and entertainment contained within. We affirm the rights of all users to be safe and comfortable within the library, and have set up these policies to ensure these rights.

These policies recommend procedures to insure the safety and well-being of patrons and staff alike. Our goal in creating this document is to make the library a safe and pleasant facility and to outline the steps staff should take in different situations. It must be emphasized, however, that some situations that may make staff or patrons uncomfortable, involve no violation of law or regulation. These situations must be tolerated with good humor and courtesy. Staff should deal with problem behaviors in the same manner that they would like to be approached: with courtesy, tact, calmness and common sense.

The overriding theme of these policies is to ensure good patron service to **all** patrons.

### DEFINITION OF PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Problem behavior is any behavior that either restricts the rights of others to use the library or makes it difficult or impossible for staff to effectively perform their job duties. It may include acts or verbal situations.

### Emergency Situations

There are two types of emergencies due to patrons that can occur in the library.

One type is the serious, physical emergency to either a patron or staff, e.g. heart attack, seizure, etc. In this instance:

- **Immediately** call 911 and report the problem as clearly as you can to the operator. Try to ensure that the EMTs come to the handicapped entrance; it will be easier for them and their equipment.
- Make the person as comfortable as you can and stay with him or her. If you are alone on the desk, the **sick person has priority. It will not be long until the EMTs arrive – do not leave the person to check out books, etc.** Ask the person (if conscious) if there is anybody they would like us to contact, once the EMTs arrive.
- **Do not** attempt any type of CPR or life-saving intervention, unless you are licensed to perform these procedures.
- Clear other patrons from the ill person; respect the person's right to privacy.
- If blood is present, **do not** attempt to clean up the blood, staunch the blood, or come in contact with the blood without necessary precautions (latex gloves, etc.)

- Once the crisis has passed, immediately inform the Director of the circumstances, and the name of person that was ill (if known). If the director is out of the building, give the same information to the Assistant Director.

The other type of emergency is the more serious emergency: the threat of physical violence or the actual occurrence of physical violence in the library.

- While your safety is paramount, if you believe that you can, clear the floor of patrons.
- Once you have done so, go to the back room (on both floors), and call 911 immediately. Then call both the director and the operations director's office, and then call the other floor, so that staff can clear out the floor. If you cannot get to the backroom, try to dial 911 discreetly. Even if there is no one at the other end, they should still send out a squad car to check the situation.
- If you could get to the back room, stay there until you know the situation is secure.
- Try to get information about witnesses.
- Inform the director and operations director of the instances.
- At no time, should you argue or attack the person threatening or causing violence. Remain as calm as possible.

## **GENERAL PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES FOR STAFF**

- Have a good public service attitude. Staff in public service positions should greet or acknowledge everyone as they enter the library or the different floors.
- All staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy. The first employee to see the infraction should address problem behaviors. If the director is available, he or she can be called up to the desk to take care of problems.
- Problems should be addressed in the initial stage. Don't let things escalate to a critical.
- Calmly explain the library policy that is being violated. Assume the patron does not know the rules. Suggest alternatives to the behavior.
- If the person does not rectify the behavior, he or she can be asked to leave. Call up the Director to handle this, if necessary.
- Under no circumstances should library personnel touch or try to restrain a patron as part of a disciplinary action.
- Alert the director and fellow workers, whenever you've had to deal with a problem patron.
- At the Mattoon Public Library, rules are not made, nor should they be enforced, based on age, gender, race, or social/economic status. Library staff should rule on conduct that is harmful or disruptive to others, and staff should make it clear to the offending patron that it is the **behavior** that is causing the eviction and that he/she is welcome in the library when his/her behavior conforms to this policy.

- The safety of both library patrons and staff is our overriding concern. In the event of an emergency and the situation warrants it, clear everyone from the immediate area.
- We do not expect or encourage staff to try to deal with a problem situation single-handedly. If you are uncomfortable or uncertain about approaching a problem situation take a co-worker or call the Director.
- These procedures are suggested guidelines. If you have a problem, bring it to the attention of the director. If she/he is not available, then ask the assistant director for advice.

If you ask a patron to leave the library for any reason, inform the staff on the other floor.

If a patron wishes to register a complaint about policies, procedures, or materials contained within the library:

- Listen to the person calmly and do not argue with him or her. You may try to explain the procedure, calmly. Restate the complaint to the person, so that he or she knows that the complaint is being heard, and that you fully understand the nature of the complaint.
- Ask the person if he or she would wish to fill out a formal complaint form. If so, please give the person a form. Ask if the patron wishes to speak to the director; if the answer is yes, call the director up to the desk immediately. If the director is not in the building, assure the person that the complaint is important to the director, and take the patron's contact information. Explain to the person that the director will be in contact with the individual as soon as possible.

## **DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

Disruptive behavior may include excessive noise, physical altercations, pranks, foul language, excessive chattiness, running, and individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and other behaviors that disturb patrons.

- As noted in the General Procedural Guidelines section above, patrons creating a disturbance are first advised of library policy. They are given a subsequent warning, told of the expected behavior and the consequences of continued misbehavior. If the undesired behavior continues, the patron should be asked to leave the building.
- If an individual does not stop the improper behavior, or does not leave the building when asked to do so, staff should call the police. Tell the police you are calling from the library, give your name, and briefly describe the incident. Emphasize that help is needed.
- If a staff member judges a disturbance too serious to handle alone, they should call for a supervisor or a coworker.

## **ABERRANT BEHAVIOR / MENTALLY DISTURBED**

This type of behavior typically results from psychological problems, illness, or substance abuse. If it is not disruptive to library operations or to other patrons, then it should be tolerated so long as no violations of law and policies occur.

- Always look for a medical alert tag on the wrist or around the neck.
- If these persons are able to use the library and do not require assistance, do not treat them any differently than other patrons.
- Persons who are mentally ill experience a different reality. Their judgment is different - sometimes slower to kick in, and often their boundaries are blurred.
- Staff should expect persons with mental illness to conform to library policy, and the library needs to establish boundaries. Mental illness is not an excuse for unacceptable behavior in the library. When limits are set, be sure to follow through.
- If it appears that these persons need personal assistance, ask if you can be of help. If they appear to be ill, offer to call the paramedics, or a family member.
- If you suspect a patron is disturbed, ask for help from a co-worker if necessary and practical before approaching the patron.
- Do not laugh at, point at, humiliate or be critical/judgmental. Be polite, empathetic and firm.
- Never argue with the individual.
- Offer choices (i.e. "You may speak loudly elsewhere, but if you wish to remain in the library, you must observe our rules.")
- Be discreet and maintain a nonjudgmental attitude. Do not make the person feel watched or cornered. Keep a safe distance, allowing her/him space to easily leave the building.
- Library employees should not act in roles they are not trained for or which are inappropriate for the setting (i.e. as a personal counselor, social worker, substance abuse counselor).
- If the person cannot function effectively, ask if they need help. If the person refuses medical help, and he or she cannot control their disruptive behavior, the patron should be asked to leave. At the first sign of dangerous behavior, call the police, using standard emergency reporting procedures.

## **SEXUAL DEVIANTS**

- If someone is suspiciously watching or following a staff member or a patron, try to get a general description.
- Alert other staff to the situation.
- Be assertive. Ask if the person needs assistance. In many cases just approaching the individual will discourage him or her from engaging in the unacceptable behavior. "Do you need help finding something?" or "Is there anything I can help you with?" are examples of what you might ask.

- A supervisor or the Director should then warn the individual that the behavior is offensive and must be stopped, or they will be asked to leave the building.
- If the behavior continues and the person will not leave, call the police.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

- Patrons may be required to leave the library if their personal hygiene interferes with the ability of other patrons to use and/or enjoy the facility.
- Staff should proceed with caution on this issue. In many cases it is difficult to distinguish between body odor that is a result of poor hygiene and odor resulting from a medical problem.
- The director can be called up to the desk to deal with this issue.