

Customer Behavior, Safety, and Security Policy

Franklin County Library System

1. The safety and security of Franklin County Library System customers and staff is of utmost importance to the organization. A team effort is necessary to make every library facility safe and secure.

Knowing and developing safe library practices and habits is a core competency of every employee of the Franklin County Library System.

These practices and habits include:

- Knowing the location of all alarms, fire extinguishers, emergency exits, phones, and panic buttons and becoming familiar with proper procedures for using them.
- Making sure that nonpublic areas are secure (locked). If you are the last shift to leave make sure that all entrances are properly locked and secured and join forces to make sure that all public areas are empty of customers before closing. Turn off electrical equipment, as instructed, and make sure all monies collected during the day are stored and locked in the appropriate place.
- Making sure you store personal belongings in a secure nonpublic area.
- Following any additional beginning and ending procedures for each shift and opening and closing of the library facility each day.
- Follow all basic safety precautions when operating equipment.

Policies Regarding Customer Behavior:

It is the policy and central mission of the Library to maintain a safe and welcoming library setting, which is conducive to research, reading, and meeting with other customers and staff. In addition the Franklin County Library System upholds the principles of intellectual freedom and inquiry as set forth in the American Library Association document known as the Library Bill of Rights (adopted June 18, 1948, and reaffirmed January 23, 1996).

However, as much as we are in existence to serve the public, it is also required of us to maintain a degree of order and safety for all of the customers and staff who use the facility. For that reason “disorderly acts” by customers will not be tolerated.

Disorderly acts are those, which create inconvenience, annoyance, or alarm on the part of other customers or staff members. The staff is to enforce as far a practicable the following general rules.

Customers are to refrain from:

1. Excessive loitering or sleeping on library property.
2. Eating and drinking in library facilities in specific areas as indicated.
3. Gambling, soliciting, or campaigning on library property.
4. Fighting, running, jumping, climbing, or other horseplay.
5. Using loud, obscene, or abusive language to either library staff or other customers.

6. Using audio equipment (radios, tape players, CD players, MP3 players, cell phones, etc.) at a level that disturbs other customers.
7. Leaving children under age 5 unattended by an adult.
8. Leaving children between ages 5 and 10 unattended by an adult for more than one hour.
9. Entering the library on outdoor recreational devices (roller blades, skateboards, bicycles etc).
10. The use of roller blades, scooters, skateboards and related items on library property. Bicycles are permitted only on the sidewalk up to the bike rack, if available. Customers are responsible for the security of their bike(s). Bikes are not permitted to be locked at the rack when the library is closed.
11. **Misuse**, abuse or neglect of library materials, equipment, furniture and **facilities**, including theft.
12. Violating the acceptable use policy for Internet access.
13. Inappropriate dress. You must wear a shirt and shoes.
14. Smoking **or vaping in the building and within 15 feet of the building**.
15. Bringing in animals other than service dogs.
16. Carrying of weapons or **any** dangerous object (guns, knives/sharp objects, aerosols).
17. Public drunkenness/belligerence or use of alcohol/illegal drugs.
18. All sexual acts and sexually harassing conduct.
19. Leaving bags and containers of any type unattended on library property. If found, the items are subject to search or seizure.
20. **Disruption of library service to other library customers.**

The Franklin County Library System strictly enforces the Library Theft Act of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If a staff member observes a customer engaging in activities against the rules, it is the responsibility of the staff member to inform the customer that they are violating the library rules of conduct. This is sometimes easier said than done and at no time should any library staff place themselves or others in a dangerous situation. If a staff member feels that they cannot handle a problem customer on their own then it is imperative to summon other staff for assistance. It is advisable to always have at least one other staff member in the vicinity to act at least as a witness, and to intercede when necessary.

Staff should be assertive (that is clear, professional, and concise) when addressing customers who are violating the rules of conduct. By taking action in a professional manner, other customers will observe and understand that we intend to enforce the posted rules. Staff should use their own good judgment, the assistance of others with whom they work and the guidelines listed below.

Guidelines for Handling Disorderly Conduct:

1. Ideally, two members should approach customers that are disruptive (not necessarily together as to avoid giving the impression of “ganging up” on a customer and aggravating the situation) to let the disruptive person know that at least one other staff member is in the immediate vicinity and will respond to any aggressive behavior. Obviously it is important to decide in advance who will take the lead when speaking to the disruptive customer. Volunteers and pages should never attempt interaction with disruptive customers but rather report disorderly acts to their supervisor.
2. If you need assistance in handling a situation, do not hesitate to contact another staff member or work area. If available, it may be advisable to contact another librarian or department and simply say, “I need help at (your location) now”. Some library desks are equipped with panic buttons for such situations. Some other libraries have phone systems that allow you to page help. Make sure you know what help is available at all times.
3. Upon approaching the customer avoid cornering him/her and never touch the individual. Keep a safe distance from the individual while maintaining eye contact. If possible, guide the

customer to the desk area. This is not to make a spectacle of the situation but to alleviate any temptation by an aggressive customer to corner a staff member. One possibility is to suggest that a disgruntled customer see the library director or acting supervisor about his/her problem. This may diffuse the situation by subtly redirecting the customer to a more public space.

4. If the incident is minor, such as non-aggressive disorderly conduct, you may give the person a verbal warning that his/her behavior is disruptive and that he/she must cease the disruptive behavior if they want to remain on the premises.
 - a. Let the customer know that if they violate the rules of conduct again, they will be banned from the library for a specified period of time and will receive a letter to that effect. The period of time should be established by the local library director based on the particular offense, and should be no less than 1 week and no greater than 3 months. Such a letter must be mailed within 10 business days from the time the report is received by the business office. This situation (among others) requires completion of an incident report to be filed with the local library director or librarian and the system business office.
 - b. The library system recognizes that some incidents are dangerous without being illegal. If an incident is evaluated at the business office as being potentially dangerous to customers and staff, the customer exhibiting the behavior may be banned and have borrowers' privileges revoked at all local libraries for 3 to 12 months. Such action will be taken within 10 days of receipt of the incident report in the business office.
 - c. If the offense seems imminently threatening or is illegal, it is a matter for the police. Call 911. This includes vocal threats of physical harm to anyone in a library.
 - d. If the parent of a disruptive child is present, address the parent first to give them an opportunity to use his/her own corrective techniques with the child. Approach the child directly only if the parent is unavailable or unsuccessful in correcting the disruptive behavior.
5. If a customer approached becomes unreasonable or belligerent, tell the customer to, "Please leave the library, now". If the customer does not leave immediately call 911. By an agreed upon signal, notify other staff that there is a serious problem. Each library should develop a system of signals to be used among its own personnel during such emergencies, such as code words or gestures.
6. If the customer is threatening, violent, using obscene language, has a weapon (real or implied), or is attempting to steal materials, call 911 immediately. After calling the police, make certain that the desk is aware of this, so that the police can be directed to your location. If the situation warrants, such as if you suspect a weapon, and the customer refuses to leave, make an attempt (subtly if possible) to get the other customers, staff, and yourself out of harm's way until the police arrive.

Note: Every situation is different and it is not wise to try to "predict" what some people will do or say. Pay attention to your instincts and your best judgment when dealing with any of these situations. While it is important to preserve the property materials of the library, your absolute highest priority is your safety and wellbeing as well as the safety of the other customers and staff members that are present.

7. When the police arrive:
 - a. Describe the incident to the officer.
 - b. Request the incident report number.
 - c. Request that the incident report be withheld from the media.
 - d. If an arrest is made, request a copy of the official police report.

- e. As soon as practicable, notify the library director (if not present), and the executive director of the system. Unless you need urgent action on their parts, the Incident Report will suffice. However, do not delay calling them in an emergency.
 - o Please note that in connection with offenses against the library, no subpoena or search warrant is necessary to release information from library records or to give eye witness accounts to police officers.
- 8. Individuals that have completed their ban from the library and want to return must submit a request in writing to the facility director or librarian. The director will meet with the individual and his/her parents (if applicable) and render a decision. In the case of facilities without a current librarian, this duty defaults to the executive director. The staff will then be informed of the decision.

To request exceptions or modification of this policy; contact the executive director of Franklin County Library System. The System is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as Franklin County Library System Headquarters, Coyle Free Library, Grove Family Library, Lilian Besore Memorial Library, St. Thomas Library, Fort Loudon Community Library, and Franklin County Bookmobile.