LIBRARY BEHAVIOR POLICY
(Adopted on Oct. 1, 1990.
Revised on Nov. 4, 1991,
July 7, 1997, Dec 3 2012, 2019.)

A. INTRODUCTION

Every staff member has the responsibility of keeping the library as pleasant an environment for the public as possible. This includes discouraging disruptive behavior on library premises. Problems arise because, ironically, our efforts to create a pleasant atmosphere sometimes attract people who jeopardize that pleasant atmosphere. Because of social trends, libraries and other public institutions will be facing more, not fewer, incidents with problem patrons. It is important that the staff learn to deal with these incidents in a firm but fair manner. This part of the library policy is designed to provide guidelines for the staff in deciding when a patron is creating a problem and in dealing with problem patrons.

B. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1.   Assess each situation. Problem patrons will generally provide clues about their likely course of behavior. Take time to evaluate a situation before reacting, so that you don't overreact. In all cases, it is important to assess the seriousness of the situation as quickly as possible. The course you pursue will depend on the accuracy of your assessment.

2.   Take immediate action when you understand the problem. Ignoring a problem does not make it go away. On the contrary, it will become greater.

3.   Maintain a calm, nonjudgmental manner. Remember that the problem behavior is not directed at you personally. Staying calm will often help defuse an unpleasant situation and will allow you to exercise better judgment. Avoid a loud tone of voice or phrases that might be considered moralizing or condescending.

4.   Explain your position in clear, firm language. It is important that those causing problems see you taking charge. Don't argue or bargain with them; it may lead to a confrontation. Don't be hesitant or appear unsure of yourself. Don't allow yourself to be sidetracked. Simply repeat your position firmly, if necessary.

5.   Present alternatives, if possible.

6.   Give sanctions. Let the problem patron know clearly what will happen if the behavior persists. Example: "You will have to leave the library." Never touch problem patrons, such as taking their arm to escort them from the library.

7.   Use teamwork. No one should feel alone on the front line. Call another staff member to back you up, and go to the aid of a staff member when necessary. Two staff members often will be enough to persuade a problem patron to change or leave. Support is especially important if you have any suspicion that the person may become violent.

8.   Call outside help if necessary. If you have warned a problem patron with no result, call the librarian in charge (evenings and weekends) and relate the situation. Generally, the librarian in charge will be the one to call the police or other agency when necessary. In case of an obvious emergency, you should call the police.

9. Fill out an Incident Report. Whenever you have a problem, complete an Incident Report and give it to the librarian in charge.

C. VARIOUS BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Public Phone
As a courtesy to others, calls on the public pay phone in the lobby will be limited to 10 minutes.

Cell Phone Usage
As a courtesy to other, please activate your cell phone to a silent setting. If you make or receive a call, please go to the outer lobby area. (Adopted Nov. 5, 2001, Revised August 4, 2003).

Chatty Patrons
There are persons who, for a variety of reasons, have a great need for attention. We should be patient with these people, but at the same time should not allow them to take up large amounts of our time.

Politely but firmly discourage long, irrelevant conversations. If a patron persists, remind the person politely that you have to return to work or to help another patron.

Disruptive Conduct
Disruptive conduct is any behavior that disrupts the normal functioning of the library. This would include, but is not limited to, loud talking and laughing, fighting, throwing objects and boisterous behavior.
Loud talking and laughing: Because it is difficult to maintain a consistent noise or quiet level, and because sensitivity to noise varies from one person or group to another, the focus will be on whether one person or group is heard above the general noise level in the library at the particular time. People talking in louder tones than the general noise level should be requested to lower their voices. TWO WARNINGS AND OUT.
Fighting: Whether real or pretend, NO WARNING – OUT.
Throwing objects: This would include wadded-up papers, paper airplanes and other small objects. ONE WARNING AND OUT. With larger objects or anything that could cause injury, such as dropping a book over a shelf, NO WARNING – OUT>
Boisterous behavior: This would include running in and out, running up and down aisles, wandering from group to group making noise and annoying other patrons. ONE WARNING AND OUT.

Obscene Language
This is a hard one to pin down, because "obscene" is defined as anything "grossly repugnant to the generally accepted notions of what is appropriate." A word may be obscene to one staff member and not to another. For purposes of our policy, obscenity may be defined as language or gestures that convey a sexually explicit message or describe intimate bodily functions in a coarse or crude manner. ONE WARNING AND OUT.
No staff member should be subjected to verbal abuse, whether obscenity is involved or not. Interrupt the patron and say, "Your language and behavior are inappropriate. You must stop or

come back when you are calmer." If the patron persists, notify the librarian in charge, who will ask the patron to leave the library.

Solicitation

This includes selling anything, such as raffle tickets or candy, for personal gain or for a charitable cause, begging, panhandling or circulating petitions. ONE WARNING AND OUT.

Eating and Drinking

These activities may be carried out in designated areas only and are not appropriate to the library as a whole. We require that all beverages have lids or tops to prevent accidents. Food and beverages are not allowed in children's department, Indiana Room, and the computer lab. If patrons violate this rule, it may be that they are unaware of it. Remind the patron of the policy. If the patron does not comply, ask the person to leave. ONE WARNING AND OUT. Revised December 2005.

Tobacco-Free Library Policy

May 1997

Mooresville Public Library is a tobacco-free campus. Tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, or similar synthetic smoking or tobacco substitutes may not be used on library premises.

Sleeping

Sleeping is not allowed in the library. However, a patron may become drowsy and doze off momentarily while studying. This regulation pertains to the habitual sleepers or those who are noisy, sprawled out on furniture or generally disturbing other patrons. Awaken them by speaking to them; do not touch or shake them. They should be told to stay awake. ONE WARNING AND OUT.

Loitering

Loitering is defined as remaining or wandering in a public place without any apparent legitimate reason. Anyone who mills about or sits doing nothing for 10 or 15 minutes should be considered to be loitering. ONE WARNING AND OUT

Running and Playing

This is not only distracting to other patrons, but it can be hazardous, because accidents are more likely to occur. The degree to which this should be tolerated will depend on the age of the patron. Small children are the most apt to be running and playing; they need to be guided into more appropriate use of the library. If their behavior is creating a problem, parents should be told. Older children who seem to view the library as a playground should be reminded that running and playing are not allowed. ONE WARNING AND OUT. Adolescents and teenagers, particularly in gangs, pose a special problem. Their "running and playing" generally consists of charging up and down the aisles and moving from group to group, joking and laughing. If it is obvious that no attempt is being made to use library materials, they should be asked to do so or leave. ONE WARNING AND OUT.

Pets

Animals of any kind are not allowed in the library. The only exceptions are library pets, seeing-eye dogs or animals used by physically or emotionally handicapped individuals or pre-approved programs which include animal presentations. Anyone entering the library with a pet should be asked to leave. ONE WARNING AND OUT. Of course, a patron who returns without the pet will be allowed to use the library (Revised August 4, 2003).

Safe Child Policy

The Library Board and staff of the Mooresville Public Library encourage children and young adults to come to the Library and explore all the resources available to them. However, the Library staff is also concerned about the welfare and safety of children in the library. Staff cannot assume the responsibility of *unattended, unsupervised, or unaccompanied* children when they are in the library. No public place, including the library, can guarantee the safety of children. A child could be approached by a stranger, become ill, wander outside, or become lost or injured. We are primarily concerned with *children's* safety, and we believe that our policy helps assure their well-being.

- The Mooresville Public Library assumes no responsibility for children left at library prior to opening.
- All children ages 8 and younger must be continuously supervised (within sight) by an adult or responsible caregiver, age 16 or over, unless the child is participating in a supervised library activity. Parents/ caregivers must remain in the building during library programs and pick children up on time at the conclusion of the program. Parents/caregivers may not leave young children unattended in the children's department while using other areas of the library.
- All children ages 9-12 must have a parent/caregiver of age 18 or over in the building. This includes children participating in a library programs. Parents/ caregivers must remain in the building during library programs and pick children up on time at the conclusion of the program.
- Children who are 13 years of age and older may use the library independently, subject to the rules and policies concerning library behavior. Caregivers/parents remain responsible for their children even when the parent is not present in the building.
- The Mooresville Public Library assumes no responsibility for children left at the library at closing time. Children will be permitted to call home prior to closing. A parent/caregiver must pick up children within 15 minutes of closing or the Mooresville Police Department will be notified. Two library staff members will remain with children until the police arrive. Under no circumstances will a staff member give a child a ride home.

COVID-19 Modifications

Due to the current public health COVID19 pandemic, the library has made modifications to our Safe Child Policy to ensure a healthy and safe environment for our staff and all library users, which includes:

- A mask or face covering that securely covers the nose and mouth is required.
- Visitors ages 13 years or older are limited to 1 hour unless accompanied by a parent or caregiver over the age of 18. All visitors are expected to follow the Library rules and policies concerning library behavior as well as CDC guidelines.
- No food or drinks.
- The YAZ [teen room] capacity is limited to 5 and visitors must practice social distancing.
- During this unprecedented time and for the unforeseeable future, social gathering is not encouraged in the library or its grounds for any age. We look forward to the day when we can safely welcome everyone back without these modifications.

The Mooresville Public Library has modified our services and spaces which might impact students and parents who normally use the library as an after-school pick-up location.

Amended February 7, 2005
Amended August 3, 2020