

Meridian-Lauderdale County Public Library

Patron Behavior Policy

Purpose

The Meridian-Lauderdale County Public Library (MLCPL) welcomes children and families and strives to provide a safe, welcoming and respectful environment that supports the informational, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the community. Patrons are expected to use Library facilities and services in a manner that respects the rights of others and preserves Library property and operations.

This policy applies to all persons on Library property, including buildings, grounds, parking areas, and vehicles operated by the Library. For purposes of this policy, all non-employees on Library property are considered patrons.

Patrons are expected to comply with all MLCPL policies, as well as applicable federal, state, and local laws. Conduct that interferes with the use and enjoyment of the Library by others, disrupts Library operations, threatens safety, or damages Library property is prohibited.

Library staff may address inappropriate behavior by providing a warning, directing a patron to stop the behavior, requiring a patron to leave the premises, suspending Library privileges, or involving law enforcement when necessary.

General Rules of Conduct

Patrons shall:

- Respect the rights of other patrons and Library staff
- Use Library facilities, materials, and equipment appropriately
- Follow all policies, posted rules and staff instructions
- Maintain appropriate personal behavior and hygiene
- Refrain from conduct that disrupts Library operations or interferes with others' use of the Library

The following behaviors are prohibited on Library property. This list is intended as a guide and is not all-inclusive:

- Abandoning or leaving children unattended
- Excessive noise, loud talking, yelling, or disruptive behavior
- Running, horseplay, or unsafe conduct
- Harassment, intimidation, threats, stalking, or abusive language or gestures
- Physical altercations or fighting
- Obscene language, gestures, or conduct
- Indecent exposure or sexual misconduct
- Viewing pornography or obscene materials in public areas
- Possessing, using, selling, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs
- Smoking, vaping, or use of nicotine products
- Bringing animals into the Library other than service animals as permitted by law
- Entering the Library without appropriate clothing, including shoes and shirts
- Offensive body odor or unhygienic conditions that unreasonably interfere with others' use of the Library
- Sleeping in the Library
- Soliciting, panhandling, or unauthorized sales activities
- Trespassing in staff-only or restricted areas
- Refusal to follow reasonable instructions from Library staff
- Loitering or remaining on Library property after closing or after being directed to leave
- Damage, theft, vandalism, or misuse of Library property, equipment, furnishings, or materials
- Tampering with Library equipment, locks, or facilities
- Littering, spitting, or creating unsanitary conditions
- Unauthorized use of wheeled devices, except ADA assistive devices and strollers
- Illegal activity on Library property
- Carrying weapons in violation of applicable law
- Any conduct that threatens the safety, health, or rights of patrons, volunteers, or staff

Enforcement Procedures

Library staff are authorized to interpret and enforce this policy. Depending on the severity of the behavior, staff may:

- Issue a verbal warning
- Require the patron to leave the premises for the remainder of the day
- Suspend Library privileges for a specified period
- Issue a longer-term or permanent ban from Library property
- Contact law enforcement when appropriate
- Serious misconduct, illegal activity, threats of violence, harassment, physical assault, theft, vandalism, or conduct that places others at risk may result in immediate removal from the Library without prior warning.

Failure to comply with a suspension or ban may result in trespassing charges.

Behavior Violations and Consequences

The Library recognizes that each incident is unique. Staff and administration will consider the severity, frequency, intent, and impact of the behavior when determining consequences.

Minor Violations

Examples may include:

- Excessive noise
- Loud phone conversations
- Sleeping
- Minor disruptive behavior
- Failure to follow policies, posted rules or staff instructions
- Minor dress code violations

Consequences may include:

- Verbal warning
- Removal from the Library for the remainder of the day
- Suspension of Library privileges from one day up to one week for repeated violations
- Library staff and supervisors may issue suspensions of up to one day.

Serious Violations

Examples may include:

- Repeated disruptive behavior
- Harassment or abusive language
- Refusal to comply with staff instructions
- Minor vandalism or misuse of Library property
- Intoxication
- Trespassing in non-public areas
- Viewing pornography in the Library
- Repeated violations after prior suspension
- Consequences may include:
 - Immediate removal from the premises
 - Suspension of Library privileges from one week up to thirty days
 - Referral to Library Director for additional review.

The Library Director or designated administrator may issue suspensions longer than one week.

Severe Violations

Examples may include:

- Threats of violence
- Physical assault or fighting
- Theft or major vandalism
- Illegal drug activity
- Possession of weapons in violation of law
- Sexual misconduct or indecent exposure
- Criminal activity requiring law enforcement response
- Attempted break-ins or tampering with Library security
- Remaining in the building after closing after being directed to leave

Consequences may include:

- Immediate removal from Library property
- Involvement of law enforcement
- Suspension of Library privileges for thirty days or longer
- Permanent banning from all MLCPL properties

The Library Director may impose bans longer than thirty (30) days or permanent bans.

Youth Conduct

Children and teens are expected to follow this policy and all Library rules. Age and maturity level may be considered when addressing behavior issues involving minors.

Parents and caregivers are responsible for supervising children in accordance with the Library's unattended child policy.

Library staff should make reasonable efforts to redirect and warn youth patrons before removal when appropriate and safe to do so.

Repeated disruptive behavior by minors may result in suspension of Library privileges and communication with parents or guardians.

Youth Violations and Consequences

Minor Youth Violations

Examples may include:

- Running or horseplay
- Loud or disruptive behavior
- Failure to follow staff instructions

Consequences may include:

- Verbal warning
- Removal from the Library for the remainder of the day
- Short-term suspension for repeated behavior

Serious or Severe Youth Violations

Examples may include:

- Vandalism
- Theft
- Fighting or threats
- Possession of prohibited substances or weapons
- Harassment or abusive conduct

Consequences may include:

- Immediate removal from the Library
- Notification of parent or guardian when appropriate
- Suspension or banning from all MLCPL properties
- Referral to law enforcement when necessary
- Suspension and Ban Procedures

Meridian-Lauderdale
County Public Library

Patrons who are suspended or banned will be notified of:

- The reason for the action
- The duration of the suspension or ban
- The effective date of the action
- Appeal procedures, if applicable

Suspensions and bans may apply to all Library properties and services.

Library administration may maintain records of behavior incidents and suspensions in accordance with Library procedures and applicable privacy laws.

Patrons who enter Library property while suspended or banned may be treated as trespassers.

Appeals

Patrons, or parents/guardians on behalf of minors under the age of 16, may appeal suspensions or bans longer than thirty (30) days by submitting a written request to the Library Director within ten (10) business days of notification.

The appeal should include:

- Patron's name and contact information
- Date of the incident
- Reason the patron believes the action should be reconsidered

The Library Board of Trustees or designated authority will review the appeal at the next regularly scheduled meeting or administrative review session. The decision of the Board shall be final.

Written notice of the decision will be provided to the patron or parent/guardian following the review.

Staff Authority and Safety

Library staff should make reasonable efforts to enforce this policy consistently and professionally while maintaining the safety of patrons, volunteers, and employees. Staff members are not required to place themselves at risk when addressing disruptive or dangerous behavior.

Law enforcement may be contacted whenever staff determine that assistance is necessary or when criminal activity is suspected.

Adopted: _____

Revised: _____

Reviewed: _____