

## **BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY APPROPRIATE LIBRARY BEHAVIOR POLICY**

The Bethlehem Public Library Board of Trustees and staff are responsible for determining the rules of behavior necessary to afford all library users access to the building and its materials as well as to ensure the safety of library users and staff, and to protect the Library's resources and facility from damage. This policy for appropriate behavior at the Library and on library property has been established for this reason. The policy will be courteously, but firmly, enforced by library staff.

It is the patron's responsibility to maintain necessary and proper behavior.

Appropriate library activities include:

- browsing for materials
- reading
- quiet conversation
- homework, writing reports and researching
- using computers without disturbing others
- enjoying the outdoor areas of the library without disturbing others

Inappropriate activities include:

- any illegal act
- disruptive behavior such as running or rough physical playing
- any form of bullying
- smoking, including vaping, in the library building or outdoor seating areas
- loud or abusive talking, swearing or using foul language
- being drunk or disorderly or disruptive in any way
- possession of alcohol or controlled substances
- soliciting, selling, distributing leaflets, or proselytizing
- staring, leering, stalking, voyeurism, indecent or lewd behavior, or any actions that make patrons or staff uncomfortable
- viewing obscene material, per NH Criminal Code Title LXII Chapter 650 -Obscene Matter. This applies to both library devices and patron devices accessing our Wi-Fi, both in the library and outside premises
- harassing patrons or library staff
- vandalism of library property, library computers, or another patron's property
- littering, failure to pick up one's trash within the building and on library grounds
- long or overly loud cell phone calls
- eating or drinking, including water, unless in approved areas
- placing feet on tables or chairs, misusing furniture
- entering with bare feet
- sleeping

- wet bathing suits, wet towels, or shoes with cleats
- disruptive behavior on exterior grounds, such as injuring landscaping
- personal hygiene that interferes with others' ability to use the library
- inappropriate displays of affection
- behaving in any manner which restricts the rights of others to use the library

“Disruptive behavior” will be defined as any noisy, boisterous or acting-out behavior that is inappropriate in a setting where business is being conducted. This behavior may represent a physical danger to people or property, or may serve to interfere with the legitimate library business of other patrons or staff.

Any inappropriate behavior may subject the individual(s) involved to eviction from the library premises.

### Children in the Library

The Bethlehem Public Library staff welcomes children to use the facilities and services. However, responsibility for children using the library rests with the parent or guardian, not with library personnel. The Bethlehem Public Library and its staff do not assume responsibility for any child left unattended in the library.

The parent/guardian or assigned chaperone will be responsible for the behavior of their children while in the library and may not leave children under the age of eight unattended. A child is unattended if a parent, guardian, or responsible person over the age of fourteen is not present with the child at all times while in the library.

If the child is attending a program, the chaperone must remain on the library premises for the duration of the program, unless prior arrangements have been approved by library staff.

Children are also expected to behave appropriately, as outlined above. A disruptive child may be asked to leave the library premises, regardless of whether an adult can be contacted for pickup.

If a child is left at the library without a way home at closing time, two library staff must stay with the child in the library. Staff must contact a parent to pick up the child. If a parent is reached, staff will wait with the child for one half hour. If a parent cannot be reached, or library staff have waited more than one half hour for a parent to pick up a child, staff must call the Bethlehem Police Department to take custody of the child. Under no circumstances is one staff member to ever be alone in the library or on library property with a child after closing. Staff are not allowed to transport any patron in their personal vehicle.

Children at the library at closing time, but with a way home (such as parent is on the way), may wait outside the building after staff leave.

## Bullying

The library should be a safe and comfortable place for patrons of all ages. Any disruption including intimidation, coercion, or seeking to harm others will not be tolerated.

## Adults in the Children's or Young Adult Areas

If an adult without accompanying children wishes to select materials from the children's or young adult areas of the library, they may do so as quickly as possible, and then bring the materials to the adult area of the library. They may not sit and work or loiter in this area.

## Animals at the Library

The Library allows service animals in the building. "Service animal" is defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as any animal that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability.

If it is not obvious, staff may ask:

1. Is the animal a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What specific work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Staff may not ask the nature of the disability.

A service animal must be leashed, harnessed or otherwise under the control of the handler. If a service animal behaves in a manner incompatible with the essential purposes of the library, the library will immediately require the animal be brought into conformity or leave the library. Incompatible behavior includes urinating, defecating, excessive barking, aggressive behavior, and damaging property belonging to the library or others.

Other animals may be allowed in the library, for purposes of programming or other reasons, at the discretion of the Library Director.

## Weapons in the Library

The Library wishes to ensure a safe and inviting atmosphere for everyone. Using, or threatening to use, any dangerous weapon is extremely damaging to the atmosphere we wish to promote. Any person who engages in this behavior will be asked to leave the library premises.

"Weapon" includes, but is not limited to, firearms, explosives, knives, any sharp stabbing tool, any bludgeoning weapon capable of inflicting grievous bodily harm, any "taser" or similar electronic immobilizer.

## Procedures

Anyone behaving inappropriately will be given a verbal warning from staff that the behavior must cease. If the behavior continues, the next action taken will result in the person being evicted from the library for the remainder of the day.

Being asked to “leave the library” includes leaving the library premises. The person may not loiter in the parking lot or library grounds.

No warning is required, if, in the judgement of staff, the behavior in question violated federal, state, county or municipal laws, or poses an immediate threat to the safety or well-being of other library users or staff.

In the case where voluntary compliance does not occur, the police may be called for assistance.

Under extreme circumstances, should disruptive patrons be barred from the library for an amount of time to be determined by the librarian, and that patron is a child under the age of eighteen, the parent will be informed of this action in writing.

Violators’ suspension or expulsion periods will be commensurate with the severity of the offense and determined at the discretion of the Library Director, and communicated to the Bethlehem Public Library Board of Trustees. Communication will also be made with the Bethlehem Police Department as needed.

Revised September 14, 2005 (as Code of Ethics)

Revised March 21, 2007 (as Code of Ethics)

Revised and Approved November 8, 2021

Reaffirmed August 14, 2023