

Bucks County Free Library

Customer Service

LIBRARY BEHAVIOR AND BANNING GUIDELINES

Policy Statement

The Bucks County Free Library (BCFL) Behavior Policy is designed to protect the rights and safety of library users and staff members. It helps ensure the security of library materials, facilities, and property. The policy is posted in each facility and on the library's website. Copies are available at service desks.

In establishing and enforcing the Behavior Policy and corresponding Banning Guidelines, the library seeks to ensure that no individual or group activity occurs that is unreasonably disturbing to others or inconsistent with library activities such as reading, studying, accessing materials and resources, and other similar conduct associated with a public library.

Patrons shall be engaged in normal activities associated with the use of a public library while in the building. Use of the library as an adult or child daycare center will not be tolerated. Patrons not engaged in active reading, studying, or use of library materials for extended periods of time will be asked to leave the building.

All library staff members are authorized to enforce the policy. Violators generally will be reminded of the policy, given a warning, and then asked to leave if a behavior does not stop. Serious or repeat behavior problems may result in immediate banning without warning. Those who are asked to leave will be banned within the framework of the BCFL Banning Guidelines.

At no time will physical force be used by any library staff member to remove someone. If a person refuses to leave, law enforcement will be called.

The expectations in this policy also apply to children. Additional expectations for children and parents are outlined in the Unattended Child Policy.

Banning applies to all BCFL branch locations. Members of the Bucks County Free Library District have reciprocity agreements regarding banning. Banning at a member library also applies to all BCFL locations.

Regulations

Toward enforcement of this policy, the library reserves the right to inspect all bags, purses, briefcases, backpacks or other containers.

Library users must:

- Keep their belongings with them at all times. The library is not responsible for loss or theft.
- Wear shirts and shoes at all times

Library users may:

- Engage in quiet conversations throughout the library, including cell phone and in person, as long as conversations are short, three minutes or less. Cell phone text and ring tones must be turned off at all times.
- Engage in quiet conversations for extended periods in children's areas and areas designated as tutoring or group study areas.
- Consume covered drinks and peanut-free, dry snacks, such as crackers or cookies as long as all trash is thrown away or removed from the library. Hot or dripping food such as pizza, hamburgers, and hoagies are not permitted. Seating areas may not be used for eating meals. Food and drinks are not allowed at public computers or any other areas the library designates as food-free. A table in the adult area and a table in the children's area will be designated as food-free in every branch.

Illegal activities are prohibited. Library staff will call law enforcement to handle violations of federal or state laws and local ordinances. This includes:

1. Visible impairment, or possession and use of illegal substances and consumption of alcoholic beverages
2. Smoking and use of tobacco and vapor products in library buildings or areas outside buildings where second-hand smoke or vapor can enter
3. Indecent exposure and sexual activity beyond non-sexual affection
4. Possession of offensive weapons per PA Title 18 CS 908*
5. Theft and vandalism of library, staff, and user property
6. Criminal trespass, including entry into the library while banned

Harmful, disruptive, or destructive behavior is prohibited. This includes:

1. Harassment, defined as any behavior that disturbs, alarms, or intimidates another person, including:
 - a) Loud, abusive, threatening, or insulting language

- b) Physical contact or attempts or threats of physical contact
 - c) Following another person around the building and grounds
 - d) Disruptive or unsafe behavior
 - e) Committing individual or repeated acts that serve no legitimate purpose
 - f) Communicating lewd and obscene words, language, or pictures either to or about another person
 - g) Conduct not described above, but of a similarly serious nature
2. Use of library materials, equipment, furniture, fixtures, and the building for anything other than the intended purpose
 3. Damage to library materials, computers, equipment, furniture, fixtures, or the building
 4. Gambling
 5. Use of sound and viewing of images on computers in a way that reasonably disturbs others, including but not limited to passers by
 6. Use of the parking lot, sidewalks, or grounds for recreational bicycling, skateboarding, or other playground or sports activities
 7. Use of skateboards, skates, and other sports equipment in the library
 8. Blocking or impeding access to interior or exterior walkways, entrances, and common areas, physically or with large items
 9. Trespassing in restricted staff areas or camping on library property
 10. Campaigning, petitioning, survey-taking, soliciting, sales, distributing leaflets, and any speech or conduct that interferes with another person's right to use the library or with staff performance of their duties
 11. Disregarding the reasonable direction of library staff members

Inappropriate behavior is prohibited. This includes:

1. Bringing animals in the library, other than service animals; leaving animals unattended outside the library
2. Excessive displays of affection
3. Rearranging furniture and seating areas in a way that it becomes disruptive to other library use

4. Loud use of electronic devices with or without headphones
5. Ringing cell phones
6. Not conforming to generally acceptable standards of hygiene and cleanliness, such as body odor that is sufficiently foul to be a nuisance to other library users; and wearing infested clothing or carrying infested personal effects
7. Use of restrooms for bathing, shaving, or laundering
8. Sleeping
9. Loitering. Library staff members exercise discretion in considering if loitering is unacceptable. Generally, a library user is asked to leave if library staff members determine the behavior or activity is disruptive to or prevents others from utilizing the library and its services.
10. Monopolizing staff time or library resources
11. Any individual or group behavior that unreasonably disrupts or interferes with normal operations or use of the library

*“Any bomb, grenade, machine gun, sawed-off shotgun with a barrel less than 18 inches, firearm specially made or specially adapted for concealment or silent discharge, any blackjack, sandbag, metal knuckles, dagger knife, razor or cutting instrument, the blade of which is exposed in an automatic way by switch, push-button, spring mechanism, or otherwise, or other implement for the infliction of serious bodily injury which serves no common lawful purpose.”
(PA Title 18 CS 908)

Procedures

Library staff members will approach library users with respect and discretion, delivering warnings as quietly, privately, and politely as possible, contingent upon circumstances.

All occurrences of suspicious or inappropriate behavior are documented using incident logs or incident report forms.

Library staff members will call 911 without hesitation in any circumstance that poses an immediate danger to health or safety or that may involve a willful violation of federal or state laws or local ordinances. Library staff members will use discretion in calling law enforcement, reserving the use of 911 for emergencies and using non-emergency numbers when appropriate.

Library users who violate the regulations are subject to banning. Any library staff member may ban someone from the library for the remainder of a day. Banning library users for a greater length of time is handled by a manager. Repeat violations will be handled in consultation with a manager.

Notice of banning beyond the remainder of the day will be sent by certified mail to the person's last known address.

Parents or legal guardians will be notified of the banning from the library of anyone under age 18 or when law enforcement is contacted because of library behavior.

Appeal of the banning may be made, in writing, to the Board of Directors of the Bucks County Free Library, 150 South Pine Street, Doylestown, PA 18901. The patron, or in the case of a minor child, the parents or guardian, will be notified by the Board of the date and time of the appeal hearing by overnight mail via UPS or Fed-Ex.

Adopted by the Board of Directors January 18, 1994
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