

FORT BEND COUNTY LIBRARIES

LIBRARY RULES OF CONDUCT POLICY

It is the goal of Fort Bend County Libraries (FBCL) for all patrons to expect and receive quality library service from a friendly and helpful staff. Every patron of FBCL should receive service in an atmosphere that is safe and with minimal disturbances from other patrons. In return, the staff of FBCL should be able to provide services without fear of abuse or threatening behavior from patrons.

The purpose of this policy is to provide the highest level of service and safety to library patrons, to provide a pleasant and safe environment for FBCL staff, and to protect library materials and property. This policy applies to all FBCL buildings, interior and exterior; to all grounds controlled and operated by FBCL; and to all persons of any age entering into or onto FBCL premises.

FBCL has adopted the following rules for patron rules of conduct. FBCL staff are authorized to enforce these rules and may ask a patron to leave FBCL premises for failing to comply with them. **Non-compliance with these rules may lead to a request for assistance from the local police department, to legal action, or to criminal prosecution.**

The following actions by any FBCL patron are not permitted:

1. The violation of any federal, state, or local laws;
2. Displaying or concealing stun guns, Tasers, knives, explosive devices, dangerous substances or materials, or other weapons, including prohibited weapons under Texas Penal Code Section 46.05. No weapons may be presented or displayed in a threatening manner;
3. Any threats of violence (whether an imminent threat or a threat of future violence) and/or any action endangering library staff, patrons or others; any actions that may appear to be a danger to life or to the safety of one's self or others, including any acts of violence or the threat or attempt to commit such crimes;
4. Physical or verbal harassment, or harassment of any other kind, of patrons or staff, or other harassing behaviors such as, but not limited to spitting, staring at or following another person, or using offensive, vulgar or abusive language or gestures. Harassment may also include any deliberate and/or repeated behavior that makes another person uncomfortable;
5. Failing to wear shirts and shoes or other footwear; poor personal hygiene; bathing, washing hair, shaving, or washing clothes in library restrooms;
6. Smoking of any kind (including E-Cigarettes) and the use of tobacco products in the library or within 25 feet of public entrances;
7. Eating or drinking on FBCL premises, except covered drinks and vending machine type snacks, or as part of a pre-approved program or reception;

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8. Disorderly conduct or disruptive behavior that interferes with the normal operation of the library or that disturbs patrons or staff, including but not limited to the following: running, horseplay, throwing books or other items, climbing on furniture or shelving, moving furniture, dialing 911, or pulling fire alarms when no emergency exists;
9. Possession of alcohol, illegal drugs, drug paraphernalia, or appearing to be intoxicated or under the influence of illegal drugs;
10. Exhibitionism (indecent exposure), voyeurism (peeping), and crimes of obscenity, sexual activity, or excessive displays of affection, including any physical contact deemed inappropriate for a public setting;
11. Theft and vandalism, including graffiti; FBCL reserves the right to inspect all bags, purses, briefcases, backpacks, etc., when there is a reasonable suspicion that they might contain library material that has not been properly checked out;
12. Littering, loitering, selling, soliciting, panhandling, exchanging funds or fees (cash, checks, etc.) for services or products, proselytizing, or gambling;
13. Loud talking, the creation of other loud noises, cellular telephone use, the audible use of music or other electronic devices, constant and incessant crying;
14. Refusing to comply with a request of FBCL staff;
15. Entering non-public work areas or public areas that have been temporarily restricted, using library business telephones without permission, or remaining in the library after closing time;
16. Refusing to return to the circulation desk when the library security gates sound an alarm;
17. Bringing in shopping or other carts, bedrolls, blankets, excessively large bags or items; placing personal belongings so that they interfere with the free passage of library patrons or staff, or leaving personal belongings in the library;
18. Operating skates, skateboards, scooters, or other similar devices in buildings or on walkways; bringing bicycles into the library, or parking bicycles in a manner that interferes with the free passage of others;
19. Polling, campaigning, or petitioning, except during elections when voting takes place at the library, and only then with prior approval by the Library Director;
20. Conducting surveys, interviewing, photographing or filming on library premises without prior permission from the Library Director or the Marketing Communications Office;
21. Bringing animals into the library, except animals trained to assist individuals with disabilities and animals allowed at a library-approved event or program;

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22. Sitting on tables, rocking or tilting back in chairs, putting feet on tables or chairs, or moving furniture;
23. Sleeping in the library;
24. Violating FBCL's Public Internet Access Policy or other library regulations.

Persons who are not otherwise prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a firearm may carry a handgun that is either concealed or carried openly in a holster in compliance with Texas Penal Code Chapter 46. Violation of Texas Penal Code Chapter 46 may result in immediate suspension of service and/or removal from the facility or in additional legal action. All open-carry handguns must be in a holster.

FBCL does not act *in loco parentis* (in the place of a parent). The parent, guardian or caregiver is responsible for the behavior and supervision of any child under age 12 in their care while at the library and, therefore, must be in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child during the length of the library visit. **Disruptive children are subject to the rules listed in this policy, and may also be asked to leave the premises for any violations.** (See also Unattended Children Policy.)

FBCL staff may restrict adult use of children's or young adult areas within the library.

Any person violating these rules will be given a warning, in most cases. If violating actions continue, the patron will be asked to leave the FBCL premises. FBCL staff may, at their sole discretion and without warning, expel any patron whose violation of this policy results in situations that create a threatening atmosphere or an emergency.

The library privileges of frequent offenders of these rules may be suspended. Any patron who has been asked to leave the premises for violating this policy and who refuses to do so, or anyone whose library privileges have been suspended but who returns to the library, shall be considered to be trespassing. FBCL staff will contact the local authorities in all such cases.

Approved by Commissioners Court:

May 24, 2016

November 26, 2024 (revised)