

TITLE: Library Use Policy
POLICY NUMBER: 110
EFFECTIVE DATE: 5/15/2024
REVIEW DATE: May 2026
SUPERSEDES: None



Article 1: Purpose

The Waukegan Public Library Board of Trustees is responsible for determining the rules of behavior in the building and surrounding grounds as a limited public forum. The Board believes that patrons have the right to free and easy access to Waukegan Public Library public spaces, materials, and services in a safe and comfortable environment; that materials are accessible and in good condition; and that library users should not disrupt or hinder other users' access to public library spaces, materials, and/or services.

The library is committed to reducing barriers that hinder or restrict access and prioritizing actions that support full and equitable access to all, especially those who most need our services and resources. This includes those experiencing homelessness, those with health or income challenges, and other vulnerable or marginalized community members.

The library wants everyone who visits the Waukegan Public Library to have an enjoyable experience and asks all library users to be considerate of others while visiting the library, interacting with staff or others, or attending off-site programs. In return, library users can expect the following:

- A welcoming and inclusive environment for all people of all backgrounds
- Helpful, prompt, and knowledgeable service
- Fair enforcement and assistance to ensure a safe environment.

Article 2: Conduct at the Library

Please help us to ensure that the library remains a valuable resource for everyone in the community by following these guidelines.

Section 2.01 - General Guidelines

- Act in a safe and legal manner. Avoid disorderly or disruptive conduct.
- Please keep your personal property with you at all times. Keep aisles, exits, and entrances open and safe for others to pass.
- Keep shoes and shirt on at all times and wear appropriate clothes.
- Service animals, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, are permitted in the library. Animals should be attended at all times and not cause a disturbance or danger to other patrons.

- Sleeping is acceptable if it does not limit access to library entrances, exits, resources, or staff.
- Please do not follow staff into staff-only areas of the building unless invited.
- At closing or in an emergency, please follow staff directions for exiting the building in a timely and safe manner.

Section 2.02 - In Public Spaces and at Computers

- Please keep your voice at a normal speaking level and use polite language.
- To reduce unintended noise, limit the use of speaker phones. Library users are also encouraged to use headphones.
- Do not view content that causes disturbance, offense, or creates a hostile environment for others.
- Covered beverages are allowed.
- Eating food is encouraged in Pat's Cafe on the first floor and the vending machine area on the lower level. Respect others' use of the library and clean up after yourself – cleaning wipe dispensers are located throughout the library for your convenience.
- While breastfeeding may take place in any area of the library, the study rooms in Children's Services may be used for privacy at the request of a parent.

Section 2.03 - In the Restroom

- Use our restrooms courteously, with the safety and comfort of others in mind.
- Please do not shave, bathe, or wash personal items in multi-stall restrooms, which are for use by many people at once. Staff may provide access to all genders, single-use restrooms by request. Staff may also provide care kits (toiletries, period products) or fresh clothing if supplies are available.

Section 2.04 - On Library Grounds

- In the front of the building, we have racks for bikes, skateboards, scooters, etc. If you need a lock, they can be checked out at the front desk.
- Solicitations (seeking support for political, charitable, or other causes) are acceptable on public sidewalks, if they do not limit access to library entrances and exits, resources, and staff. When such activities require a permit, the individuals involved must take personal responsibility to ensure they are in compliance with City ordinances.
- Solicitations are not permitted indoors, except for the Library Foundation and Friends of the Library.
- Smoking, vaping, or using other tobacco/marijuana products is not allowed in the library or within 30 feet of entrances, exits, or outdoor seating areas.

Section 2.05 - Supervision, Safety and Behavior of Youth in the Library

The library is a public space, and parents, guardians, and caregivers should be aware of and educate their children and teens (minors under age 18) about stranger education, safe computer behaviors, and other parenting concerns. Staff members do not and cannot assume the responsibility for the supervision, safety, and entertainment of children and teens, except at defined library programs, services, and activities. This responsibility must be borne by the child's parent, guardian, or designated caregiver, as long as that caregiver is able to comply with this policy and ensure that the child complies as well.

The police will be notified if unsupervised children and other patrons who require care are unable to tell staff their full name; parent, guardian, or caregiver's name; and phone number upon request, or if a guardian cannot be reached.

Section 2.06 - Third Party Photography & Filming

While filming in the library for commercial purposes must be approved in advance, general library users may film library staff in public service areas as part of their First Amendment rights and staff do not have a presumption of privacy unless in staff only areas. Library staff may redirect any photography, filming, or recording away from service desks to avoid anyone with identifiable library materials in their possession.

Section 2.07 Public Health and Safety Needs

Library users exhibiting signs of illness and/or infection such as coughing, vomiting, bleeding, fainting, and fever, are encouraged to stay home until the issue is resolved.

While anyone who is exhibiting signs of illness is encouraged to stay home, if a library user needs medical attention while on library property, staff are instructed to call 911.

The library reserves the right to require patrons and/or staff to wear provided masks while in the building.

Section 2.08 - No Tolerance Situations

The Library does not tolerate illegal behavior. Conduct must never endanger the health and safety of others, or cause or threaten to cause damage to library property. People participating in the following behaviors will be asked to leave the premises immediately, and 911 will be called as needed, especially in response to illegal conduct.

- Theft or intentional damage to library property.
- Fighting or threatening the safety of others.
- Harassing or inappropriate language or behavior, such as intimidation, or physical, sexual, or verbal abuse.

- Consumption, or being under the influence of alcohol, [marijuana,] or controlled substances, or the illegal consumption, selling, or solicitation of such substances.
- Possession or use of a weapon. The only exception may be for sworn law enforcement officers.
- Computer use that violates federal, state, or local laws or regulations, including those regarding accessing, viewing, downloading, printing, and distributing child pornography.
- Any other unlawful conduct, disruptive conduct, or any other unacceptable conduct as reasonably determined by library administration or other policies approved by the Library Board of Trustees, that interferes with the library's ability to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for its users.

Commented [TV1]: Need to verify if possession is restricted/illegal versus use or selling.

Article 3: Maintenance of Positive Conduct

Section 3.01 - Staff Intervention and Redirection

Enforcement of this policy will be conducted fairly and reasonably. A person whose behavior violates any of these guidelines will be informed of the issue. Staff will explain the negative impact of their behavior on others and recommend ways to adapt, making every reasonable effort to employ de-escalation protocols and resolve the issue.

Should the activity persist, and the patron does not respond or modify their behavior, library staff may take the following actions:

- Restrict access or limit use of computers or study rooms.
- Separate groups or request the person move to a different area of the library.
- Provide adaptive equipment or other technology that may reduce the disruption or improve their use of the library.
- Provide options for them to focus their energy on something else such as puzzles, games, a volunteer activity, computer use.
- Discuss with the patron any accommodation or need they may have and determine if we can meet that need.
- Ask the patron to leave for the day, or up to three days for no tolerance situations pending further review by the Executive Director.

Section 3.02 - Revocation of Library Privileges

The Executive Director is authorized to limit or suspend library privileges of anyone whose unacceptable behavior is chronic, severely disruptive, dangerous, or criminal for up to six months. In cases of theft, violence, or threat of violence, privileges initially will be automatically suspended for 6 months with the library board to review the matter to determine final action.

Section 3.03 - Restorative Practices

In repetitive or serious instances involving minors, the library may write a letter to guardians detailing the conduct and staff concerns, or schedule a meeting by phone, virtually, or in person with the Executive Director and department manager where the incident took place. The library reserves the right to meet without a social worker or counselor present.

In repetitive or serious instances involving adults, the library may work with local agencies to hire a counselor or social worker to meet with the patron, Executive Director, and the Safety Supervisor to discuss the incident.

Such meetings would focus on talking with the person involved about the behavior, its impact, expectations for library use, and possible opportunities for them to complete volunteer work instead of restricted or suspended use.

In instances of dangerous or criminal activity, the library **may** delay such a meeting for 6 months or until an investigation or court case is concluded.

Section 3.04 - Documentation

Incident Reports will be completed by staff, generally within 72 hours, after situations that require asking a library user to leave or suspending any use privileges. Reports will be disseminated to managers and saved on the library's network. Footage from the library's security cameras may also be used as documentation or shared with law enforcement and the courts for any cases brought by the Waukegan Public Library and as determined by the Executive Director, following applicable laws, policies, and procedures.

Section 3.05 - Subsequent Instances of Prohibited Conduct

Upon return to the library after a suspension, a patron exhibiting continued unacceptable behavior may have their privileges suspended again, up to and including, permanent restrictions.

Any patron or group of patrons who do not leave the Library as directed by staff or return during a suspension period will be considered trespassers. Police may be called at any time to remove trespassers or provide assistance to staff in dealing with persons who are engaged in illegal conduct or pose a threat to the safety and security of the public, staff, or building.

Section 3.06 - Notification of the Board of Trustees

If a library user's privileges are revoked by the Executive Director under the provisions of this Policy, the Executive Director shall inform the Board of Trustees of the matter at the next regular meeting of the Board.

Section 3.07 - Appeal of Revocation of Library Privileges

A person who feels his or her library privileges have been wrongly limited or suspended by the Executive Director or their designee may appeal the decision in writing to the Waukegan Public Library Board of Trustees, no later than its next regularly scheduled meeting following the date of the written notice of suspension. The period of suspension will be in force pending action by the Board on your appeal. The decision of the Board will be final.

Article 4: Related Library Policies & References

Section 4.01 - Library Policies

620 - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
370 - Sexual Harassment Prohibition Policy
130 - Technology Access Policy
430 - Meeting Room Policy
120 - Confidentiality & Privacy Policy

Section 4.02 - Library Standards & Practices

The Waukegan Public Library adheres to and upholds the American Library Association Code of Ethics as adopted by the Library's Ethics & Statements Policy - 330, including providing "equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests."