

CODE OF CONDUCT

POLICY #2018-03

Policy Statement:

The Neuse Regional Libraries are designed to be a safe and comfortable place for all members of the public to use. The following Code of Conduct is intended to protect the rights and safety of library patrons, to protect the rights and safety of staff members, and to preserve and protect the Library's materials, facilities, and property.

The Neuse Regional Library Code of Conduct supports one of the stated goals of the Library's Strategic Plan by ensuring access without restrictions to diverse collections, resources, and services for all community members in a safe environment.

Definition and Scope:

Patrons who exhibit disruptive behavior in the Library will be asked to follow the regulations listed in the Code of Conduct. Patrons who continue to cause disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the library premises.

Disruptive behavior is generally defined as "any patron behavior that interferes with the normal operation of the Library or which interferes with another patron's ability to use the Library."

The Director of Libraries and other staff members to whom the Director of Libraries delegates the authority (and who are on duty at the time) shall have the responsibility for enforcing the Code of Conduct and determining when behavior in the Library is inappropriate.

Regulations:

The following types of disruptive behavior will not be tolerated in the Library:

1. Any behavior that endangers the safety or health of others.
2. Violation of any local, state, or federal law.
3. Damaging, defacing, or destroying the inside or outside of any library structure, or damaging, defacing, or destroying, stealing, or intentionally tampering with the property of the library, patrons, or staff. Taking library materials into the lobby or restrooms if the materials have not been checked out is also prohibited.
4. Intimidating, harassing, or threatening patrons, staff, or volunteers, including but not limited to staring, stalking, lurking, repeating unwanted personal or embarrassing questions, excessive displays of affection, unwanted attention of a sexual nature, actual or implied threats of bodily harm, and discriminatory remarks about a person's physical appearance, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

5. Adults using areas designated for children or teens, attending programs for children or teens, or using computers designated for children or teens without being accompanied by a child or teen or without a need to use resources in those areas
6. Soliciting handouts, donations, or contributions and/or asking for signatures on petitions
7. Monopolizing library resources or staff time.
8. Loud talking, profanity, or use of audio equipment or cell phones that disturbs or could disturb other patrons.
9. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), service animals are welcomed and permitted in all Neuse Regional Libraries. Per the ADA, service animals are dogs or miniature horses individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. No other animals are permitted.
10. Using wheeled devices inside the Library or on Library grounds, except in designated areas, including but not limited to use of skateboards, bicycles, and shopping carts. These restrictions do not apply to ADA assistive devices or baby strollers.
11. Loitering, lying down, or appearing to be sleeping in the Library; placing feet on furniture or other use of furniture outside of the intended purpose; or blocking aisles, exits, or entrances.
12. Bringing into the library, or attempting to place or store in the library any item that interferes with library operations; creates a safety hazard; denies space to other patrons; blocks aisles; blocks access to or exit from the building; is unsanitary or foul-smelling; or is too large to be stored under a standard study chair. Bringing sleeping bags, bed rolls, or blankets into the building (blankets for small children are acceptable) is also prohibited.
13. Library patrons must keep personal belongings with them at all times; the Library is not responsible for personal belongings brought onto Library property and unattended items may be removed without notice.
14. Being on library property between two (2) hours after official public closing time and two (2) hours before official opening time except for returning library materials to after-hours book drops and attending special events authorized by the library.
15. Inappropriate dress or not wearing a shirt or shoes in the Library.
16. Use of alcohol, tobacco products, vaping devices, or illegal substances on library property.
17. Bringing food or drink into the Library outside of covered beverages unless authorized by Library staff.
18. Failure to maintain a level of personal cleanliness that prevents library patrons from enjoying their use of the Library. Changing clothes or washing clothes, bathing, or shaving in public restrooms, spending a prolonged length of time in, or misusing public restrooms, damaging the function of restroom fixtures, or damaging the fixtures themselves.
19. Other kinds of behavior deemed inappropriate in the opinion of the Director or designated staff members.

The library staff reserves the right to ask a patron to leave the Library for any of the reasons listed above.

Adopted by the Neuse Regional Library Board
March 17, 2020

Revised and Adopted by the Neuse Regional Library Board
June 21, 2022

Revised and Adpoted by the Neuse Regional Library Board
November 12, 2024

Appendix: Procedures for Responding to Violations of the Code of Conduct

Enforcement of these regulations may take the form of any of the following, depending on the severity of the misconduct, which will be determined by the staff on duty at the time. These disciplinary procedures are guidelines. The Library may implement any procedure listed, including an immediate ban from the library premises at any time.

Minor Disruption: In the case of a minor disruption, the library patron will receive two warnings. If the behavior continues, the patron may be asked to leave the Library for a stated period of suspension.

Extreme Misconduct: In the case of any misconduct that, in the judgment of a staff member, is extreme, the offender may be given only one warning, may be ordered to leave the Library immediately for a stated period of suspension, or the police may be called.

Guidelines for addressing violations of the Code of Conduct:

1. Staff should always prioritize their own safety as well as the safety of other staff and patrons.
2. Two staff members should always be present when approaching the individual(s) violating the Code of Conduct.
3. Remain professional and calm in addressing the patron(s). Identify yourself as a library employee and ask to speak to the patron(s) in private. Remain non-aggressive and avoid any physical contact.
4. Explain to the patron(s) how they have violated the Library's Code of Conduct and how long they are banned from the Library. The staff member can give a copy of the Library's written policy to the patron(s) if needed. If a patron requests a copy of the incident report staff should arrange for one to be given to the patron.
5. If a patron refuses to leave the Library after being asked to do so, or becomes abusive or aggressive, the staff member will call local law enforcement and ask that law enforcement escort the offending patron from the library premises.
6. Any policy violation incident involving banning, emergency services, or law enforcement must be documented by the staff involved within 48 hours of the incident. A copy of this documentation must be provided to the Director of Libraries.

In cases where a policy violation occurs involving a child under the age of 17, the staff will give the child two warnings. If the behavior continues, the appropriate Branch Manager or Department Supervisor will call and inform the parents that their child was asked to leave the Library for a stated period of suspension and explain the circumstances. Parents of minor children may be held responsible for any damages caused to library materials or property by their child.

If the child continues to cause disruptive behavior in the Library, the child and parents or guardian must meet with the Director of Libraries or designated staff to review policy rules before the child can return to use the Library.

Permanent Ban from the Library:

Patrons who engage in repeated disruptive behaviors that interfere with others' use of the Neuse Regional Libraries or the general operation of the Libraries or engage in behaviors that violate the law may be permanently banned from the premises of the Neuse Regional Libraries. A written notice of permanent ban may be given to the patron. A written appeal of the Branch Manager or Department Supervisor's decision may be made to Library Administration.

Exceptions to the above may be authorized by the Director of Libraries and/or other designee.

Neither the Director of Libraries nor any other member of the library staff is a professional medical or legal expert. All actions taken shall be subject to the best opinion of the Director of Libraries and library staff.

The Neuse Regional Libraries staff will be consistent with enforcing this Code of Conduct to ensure the safety of patrons and staff and create an environment that is enjoyable to our patrons.