



Code of Conduct

Policy Number: LS 502

Effective: April 2022

Purpose

The Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library is supported by the taxes of the citizens of Hillsborough County who have a right to expect each of our facilities to be clean, pleasant and safe places. This Code of Conduct is intended to protect the right of library customers to enjoy a safe library environment conducive to the use and enjoyment of library materials and services.

Policy

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library observes all state and federal laws and local ordinances regarding public behavior. Customers must be engaged in activities associated with the use of a public library while in the building. Customers not engaged in library activity or exhibiting behavior or actions deemed inappropriate by staff will be required to leave the premises. The Library reserves the right to limit the size or type of personal belongings that may be brought onto library property. Staff may dispose of unattended items. The library is not responsible for customers' belongings. Staff may request the inspection of personal belongings in order to prevent unauthorized removal of library materials. Parents or guardians are responsible for the conduct and safety of persons under their care in accordance with LS503 Unattended Children.

Individuals (minors or adults) requiring care or supervision must not be left unattended for long periods of time or at closing. Children under the age of 11 years may not be left alone in the library and must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or a responsible caregiver aged at least 14 years. This age determination was made in consultation with experts in the area of child development.

Threats of violence against staff or other library visitors are not tolerated and will result in immediate trespass from the premises. Threats of self-harm are taken seriously by staff. Law enforcement will immediately be notified.

The following activities are prohibited anywhere on library property:

- Actions or behaviors that interfere with the operations of the Library.
- Refusal to follow the direction of staff.
- Illegal activity.
- Bringing weapons into the library is prohibited unless authorized by law. It is the responsibility of anyone licensed to carry a firearm or other weapon to abide by all applicable concealed weapons laws.
- Possessing, consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Violation of an active trespass warrant.
- Bringing animals into the library with the exception of service animals as defined by [Florida Statute 413.08](#).
- Harassing, intimidating, stalking or prolonged staring at other customers or staff.
- Verbal or physical abuse or harassment of library customers or staff.
- Loud, boisterous, disruptive or any other behavior that can reasonably be expected to disturb others (for example, electronic devices and loud talking.)
- Damaging, destroying or removing library materials without proper check out.
- Abusing, vandalizing or misusing library property including placing feet on furniture.
- Sexual activity.
- Bathing, shaving, washing clothes or other inappropriate use of restrooms.
- Bodily hygiene that is offensive as to constitute a nuisance or health risk to others.
- Drinking beverages in open containers or at library computer stations.
- Eating food other than dry snacks in non-designated areas or at library computer stations.
- Inappropriate attire; shirts and shoes are required.
- Loitering.
- Misuse of computers. (See LS 306, Access to Electronic Resources.)
- Unauthorized selling or soliciting.
- Skateboarding, roller skating or any similar activity.
- Sleeping.
- Smoking, including smokeless or e-cigarettes (“vaping”) or other use of tobacco products.
- Any other actions or behaviors deemed inappropriate by library staff.
- Threats of self-harm are taken seriously by staff. Law enforcement will immediately be notified.
- Threats of violence against staff or other library visitors are not tolerated and will result in immediate trespass from the premises.

Procedure

Staff is authorized to take action when dealing with violations of this policy. Such action may include, but may not be limited to, warning the customer to stop the behavior, ordering the customer to leave the premises, or calling law enforcement to request a trespass warning. In determining which action is appropriate, staff should consider the nature of the violation, the customer's response to the warning, a pattern of violations or the seriousness of the violation.

Safety of the public and library staff is the highest priority. For any potentially dangerous or life threatening situation, 911 should immediately be called and customers and staff moved to a safe area. Two staff members must be on duty for the library to be open. Staff should be alert to their surroundings at all times and know who is in the building, where they are, and what they are doing. Staff should immediately go to help a co-worker if they perceive a potentially difficult situation.

Law enforcement will be called when customers fail to respond to a warning, become belligerent or disruptive or commit an illegal act. Branches within the City of Tampa should call Tampa Police Department; branches in the unincorporated County should call the Sheriff's Office. Generally, but not in all cases, the in-charge person authorizes the call. Staff should make note of the violator's appearance and write down a description with as much detail as possible. Staff must not approach or attempt to detain the violator but should keep track of his or her location.

Staff may determine in some circumstances a trespass warrant should be requested. Circumstances may include, but are not limited to, customers who have a pattern of violations or whose behavior is dangerous, threatening, illegal or seriously disruptive.

In all situations, customers should be treated with respect in a firm, but fair manner. Staff will assume good faith in all customer interactions and be consistent in fairly administering THPL policies.

Offensive odor and flea, lice, or other infestation constitute a nuisance and impedes use of the library. Staff will use tact and sensitivity when enforcing this policy. Customers are welcome back once they have remedied the problem.

Staff will proactively alert customers to closing time. They will ask children whether they have a ride and offer use of the telephone if needed. Two staff members must stay with an unattended child until his or her ride arrives. If a ride has not arrived by 20 minutes after closing, law enforcement will be called to request they take custody.

Staff may ask to inspect bags, briefcases, backpacks, etc. and to see a checkout receipt to prevent unauthorized removal of items from the library. If materials are found they should be checked out or returned to staff. Law enforcement should be called to inspect any suspicious packages or belongings.

Using applicable forms, staff must document incidents, accidents, injuries, medical emergencies and/or serious violations that involve law enforcement. Staff should consult Hillsborough County's Risk Management Manual under the appropriate circumstances. If a customer informs staff that his or her personal property or vehicle has been stolen or damaged, staff will offer to assist in contacting law enforcement to file a report.