

## **BAY COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM STAFF GUIDELINES FOR ENFORCING RULES OF CONDUCT**

All Bay County Library System employees are expected to be familiar with the Rules of Conduct Policy. Employees should work together in order to make sure the environment in our buildings is safe and orderly, and to ensure administration of discipline is fair, firm, and consistently applied.

When a patron behaves in a manner that disrupts order in the library, please follow these general guidelines (always speaking in a calm, but firm manner, and accompanied by at least one other employee when possible):

1. Approach the patron and explain that his/her behavior is unacceptable and why. Refer to the Rules of Conduct Policy and the rule or rules that are being broken. Explain that if the behavior is not corrected you will be compelled to ask the offender to leave library property, including the building & grounds & parking lots of all the branches of the Bay County Library System.
2. If the behavior continues, approach the offender again and tell him/her that they must leave the library property now, or you will be calling the police for assistance.
3. If the behavior continues, call 911 and ask the police to come and remove an unruly patron from the library property. Be prepared to tell the police which rule or rules the patron is violating. If the offender leaves during or after your call, phone 911 back and report that the offender has left.

When available, always get a copy of any police reports. A Bay County Library System Patron Conduct Report should be completed and kept on file at both the branch and the Administrative office.

Any situation that requires intervention by the police should result in a minimum 6 month suspension. All employees, except pages, are empowered to suspend offenders up to one year. Ordinarily, a suspension of more than 6 months is a result of recurring misbehavior by the patron. Only the Director or his/her designee has the authority to suspend for longer than one year.

When in doubt as to length of suspension, inform the patron that the Library will be contacting them with that information. Determination of length of suspension often comes down to common sense judgment. For example, a patron who is talking loudly in the computer area, and does not respond to requests to quiet down, may be suspended for 1 day, or 3 days, or a week, or 2 weeks, or a month, or longer, depending on the nature and history of the behavior. Certainly, if you recognize an individual who is a regular library patron, and is normally well-behaved, you will want to exercise leniency. On the other hand, those who repeatedly violate rules may be in line for progressively longer periods of suspension.

For obvious reasons, disciplining patrons is an act of “last resort.” In all cases we should make every effort to resolve a problem quickly and efficiently. Most patrons will self-correct when errant behavior is pointed out to them politely and reasonably. Teens especially, should be dealt with in a manner that minimizes the potential for embarrassment in front of their peers.

Library staff is encouraged to take their own initiative when they recognize a problem. There is nothing wrong with seeking the support or input of other staff, especially supervisors and/or Managing Librarians, or the Director or Assistant Director, when practicable. However, there may be circumstances when staff must act alone. All reasonable actions of patron discipline by staff will be supported by Library administration.

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