

Caroline County Library
PUBLIC SERVICE POLICY

Policy Statement

The Caroline County Library seeks to provide quality library service to all patrons and pledges to provide an atmosphere conducive to delivering services to its patrons. Everyone has rights in the library – patrons and staff – and everyone is asked to conduct themselves in an orderly and considerate manner. The following policy has been adopted for the comfort, safety and protection of the rights of all using and working in the Caroline County Library.

Policy Regulations

Patron Rights

Caroline County Library patrons have a right to expect certain behaviors from staff when they are requesting or using resources:

- The right to equal treatment regardless of race, color or national origin
- The right to reasonable accommodation based on disability
- The right to be treated politely
- The right to conduct research in a safe environment
- The right to request reasonable research assistance
- The right to expect confidentiality when asking for research assistance

Staff Rights

Library staff members have rights, which should not conflict with the rights of patrons:

- The right to be treated politely
- The right to work in a safe environment
- The right to ask the patron to abide by the *Patron Code of Conduct Policy*
- The right to ask patrons to abide by all other written policies and procedures of Caroline County Library
- The right to offer options when a patron's request exceeds the library's resources

Patron Responsibilities

Library patrons are asked to conduct themselves in an orderly and considerate manner. Any behavior that disrupts the orderly use of the library is prohibited. This includes, without limitation, behavior that constitutes a nuisance, or presents a safety and/or security hazard or affects the ability of the staff to provide service to its patrons. Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Loud talking or other noise
- Physical threats or abuse
- Running and jumping in the library
- Abusive, profane, or offensive language
- Abuse or misuse of library furnishings, equipment or materials
- Congregating in or around entrances or stairways, inside or out
- Loitering

- Commission of an illegal or unauthorized act on library property against the patrons, personnel or property of the library, i.e., theft, trespass, assault, arson, etc.
- Failure to pay fines or proper library costs when due
- Possession or use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs on library property
- Sexual misconduct
- Solicitation, including donation cans
- Use of cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vape pens, cigars, or chewing tobacco on library property
- Eating or drinking inside the library, except in designated areas
- Weapons carried illegally

Unattended Children

Caroline County Library staff wants to welcome all children to the library and we are concerned about their safety and wellbeing. However, parents or caretakers are responsible for monitoring the activities and regulating the behavior of their children while in the library. A responsible adult or caregiver should accompany children while they are using the library. The library cannot assume responsibility for the safety, care, supervision or entertainment of unattended children in the library.

The library staff encourages children to develop a love of reading and learning. We want each child to have a positive experience each time he or she visits the library. The library is, however, a public building that anyone can enter and leave without being observed by library staff. The library staff cannot monitor the safety, behavior or whereabouts of people using the library. The library does not serve in the capacity of providing daycare for unattended children. Children left unattended in the library might become frightened or anxious. It is ultimately the responsibility of the parent or caregiver to ensure the safety of their children both within the library building and on library grounds.

The following policy regulations must be followed by patrons with children:

- Children ages six (6) and under must be in the direct presence of a parent or responsible caregiver at all times.
- Children ages seven through twelve (7-12) may attend library sponsored programming alone, in which case the parent or caregiver must remain in the library building for the duration of the library program.
 - Parents and caregivers should be readily accessible to library staff, in case the child or staff member needs assistance.
 - The parent or caregiver should clearly inform the child of his or her location in the library building before leaving the child alone in any part of the building.
- Children thirteen (13) years old and older may use the library unattended, and are subject to the rules and regulations of the Caroline County Library.
- Persons responsible for children who have special needs related to physical or mental ability, disruptive behavior, emotional problems, lack of adequate attention span, incomplete social skills, etc., must remain with their children at all times.
- Children, as well as their parents or guardians, may be asked to leave the library if their behavior is not acceptable after reasonable warning by library staff.

Suspension of Library Privileges and Appeal

- If a member of staff observes a patron engaging in unacceptable behavior, they may ask the patron to leave the premises with or without prior warning, depending upon the seriousness of the violation. If appropriate, the staff may also inform law enforcement of any violations of the law.
- Suspension of library privileges for a determinate period of time, up to and including a total ban from all Caroline County Library buildings, may occur, at the discretion of the library director. The length of the suspension shall depend upon the nature and seriousness of the offense, the extent of damage or disruption, any history of prior infractions of library policies, and other relevant circumstances.
- Notice of suspension will be provided by telephone, email, or postal mail to the patron or, in case of a minor child, to their parent or legal guardian.
- Suspension of library privileges applies to all library branches, not just the branch where the incident occurred.
- Any patron whose privileges have been suspended has the right to appeal the decision to the Caroline County Administrator's Office. Appeals must be made within ten (10) days of notice of suspension.
- The library director, county administrator, and deputy administrator will assess the appeal. The county administrator may shorten, modify, or terminate the banning period if information submitted by the patron warrants such modification.
- Until such time as any appeal has been reviewed and/or modified by the county administrator, a banned patron may not enter or remain on the library premises.
- The decision of the county administrator is final. Notice of the decision will be provided by telephone, email, or postal mail.
- Any person who is asked to leave the library as a result of the violation of these guidelines and refuses to do so shall be considered to be trespassing and will be subject to arrest and prosecution.

Patron Complaints

While Caroline County Library endeavors to provide the highest quality of service to our patrons, we recognize that a patron may wish to make a complaint. Complaints will be handled in the following manner:

- Patrons may choose to start by making their complaint on an informal basis to the library's staff.
- If patrons do not wish to do so, or if the complaint does not lend itself to informal resolution, the patron should complete a Patron Complaint Form.
- The library director will promptly review the completed form and, where appropriate, attempt to resolve the complaint directly.
- If the patron is not satisfied with the response provided and/or the director feels that the situation warrants the input of county administration, one or both parties may bring the written complaint to the Caroline County Administrator's Office.
- The library director, county administrator, and deputy administrator will review the complaint and any written response to the complaint.
- The decision of the county administrator is final.

Adopted by Caroline Library, Inc. Board of Trustees March 11, 2010

Amended July 2014; September 10, 2015
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