

SUBJECT: CODE OF CONDUCT

EFFECTIVE: OCTOBER 1, 2016

SUPERSEDES: 12/2012

1. PURPOSE:

- A. 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.

2. POLICY:

- A. The Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library shall uphold all state and federal laws and local ordinances regarding public behavior.
- B. Customers shall 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 shall be required to leave the premises.
- C. 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.
- D. Staff may request the inspection of personal belongings in order to prevent unauthorized removal of library materials.
- E. Parents or guardians are responsible for the conduct and safety of persons under their care in accordance with [LS 503 Unattended Children](#).
- F. Individuals (minors or adults) requiring care or supervision must not be left unattended for long periods of time or at closing.
- G. The following activities are prohibited anywhere on library property:
 - 1) Actions or behaviors that interfere with the operations of the Library.
 - 2) Refusal to follow the direction of staff.
 - 3) Illegal activity.
 - 4) Bringing weapons into the library unless authorized by law. It is incumbent upon those in possession to abide by all applicable concealed weapons laws.
 - 5) Possessing, consuming, or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.
 - 6) Violation of an active trespass warrant.
 - 7) Bringing animals into the library with the exception of service animals as

defined by [Florida Statute 413.08](#).

- 8) Harassing, intimidating, stalking, or prolonged staring at other customers or staff.
- 9) Verbal or physical abuse or harassment of library customers or staff.
- 10) Loud, boisterous, disruptive, or any other behavior that can reasonably be expected to disturb others (e.g., electronic devices and loud talking.)
- 11) Damaging, destroying, or removing library materials without proper check out.
- 12) Abusing, vandalizing, or misusing library property including placing feet on furniture.
- 13) Sexual activity.
- 14) Bathing, shaving, washing clothes, or other inappropriate use of restrooms.
- 15) Bodily hygiene that is offensive as to constitute a nuisance or health risk to others.
- 16) Drinking beverages in open containers or at library computer stations.
- 17) Eating food other than dry snacks in non-designated areas or at library computer stations.
- 18) Inappropriate attire; shirts and shoes are required.
- 19) Loitering.
- 20) Misuse of computers. (See [LS 306, Access to Electronic Resources](#).)
- 21) Unauthorized selling or soliciting.
- 22) Skateboarding, roller skating, or any similar activity.
- 23) Sleeping.
- 24) Smoking, including smokeless or e-cigarettes (vaping), or other use of tobacco products.
- 25) Any other actions or behaviors deemed inappropriate by library staff.

3. PROCEDURE:

- A. 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.
- B. 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.

- C. Two staff members must be on duty for the library to 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.
- D. Law enforcement should 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.
- E. In some circumstances, staff may determine that 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.
- F. In all situations, customers should be treated with respect in a firm, but fair manner. Staff shall assume good faith in all customer interactions and be consistent in fairly administering THPL policies.
- G. Handling Special Situations
 - 1) Bodily Hygiene Issues
 - a) Offensive odor and flea, lice, or other infestation constitute a nuisance and impedes use of the library. Staff shall use tact and sensitivity when enforcing this policy.
 - b) Customers are welcome back once they have remedied the problem.
 - 2) Children Left at Closing
 - a) Staff shall be proactive, alerting customers to closing time and asking children whether they have a ride and offering use of the telephone if needed.
 - b) Two staff members must stay with an unattended child until his or her ride arrives.
 - c) If a ride has not arrived by 20 minutes after closing, law enforcement shall be called to request they take custody.
- H. Personal Belongings
 - 1) 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.

- 2) Law enforcement should be called to inspect any suspicious packages or belongings.

I. Reporting

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

4. AUTHORITY:

Pursuant to Section 5(1) of [Chapter 84-443](#), Laws of Florida, the Library Board has the duty and the responsibility, among others, to serve in a recommending capacity to the Director of Library Services and to the County Administrator in respect to all matters pertaining to the public library.

Approved:

Andrew Breidenbaugh, Director