

## Library Policies of the Mercer Public Library

### III. Patron Responsibilities and Conduct

#### Patron Responsibilities and Conduct

In order to keep the library a safe and welcoming place for all, patrons must maintain necessary and proper standards of behavior while using the library. Patrons are expected to:

- **Respect others.**
  - Keep conversations, cell phones, and all electronic equipment (computers, music players, etc.) at a low volume that doesn't disturb others.
  - Respect other patrons' privacy and their right to use the library.
  - Use appropriate language.
  - Follow all town ordinances and state and federal law.
  - Do not expose other patrons or staff to explicit images or information.
  - Do not threaten or harass library staff, volunteers, or patrons.
- **Respect the library and library property.**
  - Respect the library facility, materials, furniture, and equipment.
  - Keep food and beverages contained.
  - Clean up after yourself.
  - Do not intentionally or knowingly remove Library property without permission or prior authorization.<sup>1</sup>
- **Maintain a safe and healthy environment.**
  - Be fully clothed and wear shoes.
  - Keep pets out of the library. (Trained service animals are welcome.)
  - Supervise children under the age of six.
  - Do not use or consume tobacco products, electronic cigarettes, alcohol, or any other controlled substances in the library.
  - Do not visit the library under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
  - Do not carry concealed or openly carried firearms or any other weapons.
  - Follow any additional health and safety recommendations posted by the library during public health emergencies. These recommendations shall be based on information from local, state, and federal health officials and may include:
    - Maintaining safe-distance practices from others.
    - Practicing excellent hand hygiene, including washing hands or using hand sanitizer upon entering the building.
    - Wearing a mask or face covering that covers the mouth and nose.
    - Limiting visits by young children who might be unable to comply with safety guidelines.
    - Not visiting the library when exhibiting any health symptoms of concern, after being exposed to anyone with a disease of concern, while awaiting test results for a disease of concern, or after being instructed to quarantine by a doctor or public health official.
- **Follow all instructions from library staff and volunteers.**

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<sup>1</sup>Added with unanimous consent at the Library Board of Trustees meeting on Monday, August 12, 2024.

## Library Policies of the Mercer Public Library

### Public Behavior Policies

**Young children:** The Mercer Public Library encourages visits by young children, and it is our desire to make their visit both memorable and enjoyable. Library staff do not assume the responsibility for the care of unsupervised children in the library. All children under the age of six must be accompanied by a parent or designated responsible person while in the library. If the young child is attending a library program, a parent or responsible person must remain in the library throughout the program. Parents, whether present or absent, are ultimately responsible for the behavior of their child.

**Disruptive children:** Children of all ages are encouraged to use the library for homework, recreational reading, and program attendance. The library staff realizes that the library will be noisier at times and that children by nature can cause commotion. However, children who are being continually disruptive will be given a warning that they must settle down or will be asked to leave the library. If after a second warning a child continues to be disruptive, he/she will be asked to leave the library. If the child needs to contact a parent, he/she may do so and then wait with a staff person until the parent arrives.

**Animals:** In order to promote the general health and safety of the public and library staff, animals are not allowed in the library unless they are service animals or are part of a library program.

Service animals, which are not always dogs, are not required to be identified by a special harness or collar. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, users of service animals are not required to show papers or to prove a disability. To determine if a patron is accompanied by a helping dog or has brought a pet into the library, staff members may ask the person if the animal is a pet. Owners of service animals should indicate that they are working animals and not pets. Terms used may include *assistance*, *service*, *guide*, *hearing*, or *helping* animal. Service animals are welcome in the library.

**Cell phone usage:** Ringing phones and loud conversations can become a distraction for other library users. We ask that cell phone users be courteous to their fellow patrons and obey the following rules:

1. Turn off cell phones or set to a silent mode while in the library.
2. Refrain from making calls from inside the library. The vestibule area may be used to make short phone calls during inclement weather. Please move extended conversations outside the library.
3. If it is necessary to receive a call while in the library, please do so quietly and move outside or to the vestibule to hold your conversation if possible.

**Concealed or openly carried weapons:** In order to promote a safe environment for staff and for patrons of all ages, no weapons of any kind, concealed or openly carried, shall be allowed in the library.

## Library Policies of the Mercer Public Library

### Loss of Library Privileges

Patrons who violate the *Patron Responsibilities and Conduct* guidelines may be asked to leave the library by any staff member or library volunteer. Individuals who are unwilling to leave or do not leave within a reasonable amount of time after being instructed to do so will be subject to legal recourse.

The library director may determine disciplinary action for patrons who violate the rules of conduct, up to and including the loss of library privileges as follows:

- **1<sup>st</sup> offense:** Loss of library privileges for 60 days. Parents/guardians of minors will be notified.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> offense:** Loss of library privileges for 6 months. Parents/guardians of minors will be notified.
- **Any further violations:** May lead to permanent loss of library privileges, including the right to visit the building and grounds. Repeat offenders or persons ordered from the premises who do not comply may be subject to arrest and prosecution for trespassing.
- **Severe offenses:** Patrons who put the safety of others at risk, violate the law on library premises, or who refuse to obey the instructions of library staff may, at the discretion of the director, be subject to a longer or permanent loss of library privileges depending on the severity of the incident. If there is reason to suspect that Wisconsin statutes or federal laws have been violated, the proper authorities may be notified.

Patrons who have lost library privileges or parents/guardians of minors who have lost library privileges may appeal the director's decision to the Board of Trustees within 14 days of notification of the ban. The decision of the library board is final.

*Patron Responsibilities and Conduct policy reviewed and amended by the Library Board of Trustees, April 11, 2022.*