

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 does not 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.¹
- **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.
- **Follow all instructions from library staff members and volunteers.**

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

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 (6) 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, they will be asked to leave the library. If the child needs to contact a parent, they may do so and then wait with a staff member 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 under Wisconsin statute may be any species, 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. In situations where it is not obvious, staff members may only ask two specific questions: (1) if the service animal is required because of a disability and (2) what work or task the service animal has been trained to perform. 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 provided they remain under the control of the handler through the use of a harness or leash, voice or signal command, or other effective means to maintain control. If a service animal is no longer under control and the handler does not take effective action, staff members may request that the animal be removed from the premises.

Cell phone usage: The Mercer Public Library recognizes that the use of cell phones can be a vital component of communication and information gathering. For this reason, cell phone use that does not disrupt staff members or other library patrons is permitted in the library. The library also recognizes that 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 when using any device within the library. Patrons should consider whether to::

1. Turn off cell phones or set to a silent mode while in the library.
2. If it is necessary to receive a call while in the library, please do so quietly and for as brief as possible.
3. If it is necessary to have an extended call while in the library, please notify a staff member to determine if a private space is available for use.

Concealed or openly carried weapons: In order to promote a safe environment for staff and for patrons of all ages, the Mercer Public Library prohibits the possession, sale, distribution, display, or use of any dangerous weapon as defined in Wis. Stat. §939.22(10) on library premises or the use or threat of use of any other object in such a manner that it may be considered a weapon.

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:

- **1st offense:** Loss of library privileges for sixty (60) days. Parents/guardians of minors will be notified in writing.
- **2nd offense:** Loss of library privileges for six (6) months. Parents/guardians of minors will be notified in writing.
- **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 member or volunteer 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 21 days from the date indicated on the written 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.

Patron Responsibility and Conduct policy amended and approved by the Library Board of Trustees - March 10, 2025.