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*CUSTOMER SERVICE HANDBOOK*  
*Birmingham Public Library*  
*November, 2010*

*The mission of the Birmingham Public Library system is to provide the highest quality library service to the community for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and enjoyment.*

It is the policy of the Birmingham Public Library to provide our patrons with excellent service in a pleasant and orderly environment. We believe that the best preventive for an unsafe or difficult situation is a proactive customer service policy. Our job is to ensure that our mission is fulfilled and that every person who enters our doors feels welcomed, comfortable, and safe. The goal is to develop regular, long-term repeat users.

The purpose of the Customer Service Handbook (CSH) is to help you, the Birmingham Public Library staff, provide superior service to our users and to foster a library environment that is pleasant, safe, orderly, and conducive to reading, studying, and information gathering. Providing this environment is a team effort with every staff member playing a role in its success.

*Everyone is welcome at the library but all must follow the rules.* This concept is basic to providing equitable service to all who enter our doors. This manual will help us balance our desire to provide excellent service to all while managing, preventing, and reducing those disruptive behaviors we want to keep to a minimum.

The CSM provides procedures to follow when patrons do not abide by the rules, become disruptive, or in other ways prevent users from receiving the excellent customer service they need and deserve. The manual also contains tips designed to help you prevent disruptions from users and to help you handle these situations when they do arise.

The vast majority of our users are easygoing and a pleasure to serve. However, there is a small minority who will provide us with unpleasant challenges. We hope this manual will help you turn the most difficult minority into pleasant, satisfied customers. When that is not possible, it will give you help and procedures for handling difficult or unsafe situations.

Please know that you are empowered to make decisions in solving problems and handling these situations, but at any time you may seek the advice and help of another supervisor, a coordinator, or administration.

Note: Throughout this document you are advised to obtain the help of other staff. This always includes but is not limited to security staff. Security may not always be available. Maintaining a pleasant and safe environment requires all staff working together as a team to maintain order and safety for all. Use the information in this manual as a guide to develop skills for dealing with people in all situations.

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## 1. Purpose of the Customer Service Handbook

In order to realize the mission of the Birmingham Public Library (BPL) and to ensure the safety and security of staff and patrons, standard procedures must be understood and observed by all employees. The BPL CSM outlines these rules and explains the necessity of following them to create an environment conducive to a mutually rewarding library experience for both staff and patron.

By definition, public libraries serve an immensely varying population. Difficult patrons make up part of this population. Unruly teens, belligerent adults, unsafe situations, and unreasonable expectations are all part of what we deal with on a daily basis. To a large extent, our response to these challenges determines the outcome. Treating patrons with respect and an even hand go a long way in diffusing difficult situations. Every staff person and patron has the right to a safe and positive library experience.

This manual was created for all staff members. It is a proactive guide in that expectations of staff are specified. How we interact with our patrons determines, to a large extent, how each interaction will play out. In the event that a patron's behavior becomes a concern, this manual also specifies how we should handle the situation. Because it addresses concerns as they arise, it must be read beforehand. It is of little value if consulted after the fact. The more clearly we understand how to handle uncomfortable or even dangerous encounters, the better chance we have of avoiding an escalation and maintaining a pleasant experience for all concerned. Review this manual in its entirety and question anything that you don't understand or don't feel will work to resolve problems.

## 2. Policies for Customer Service and Library Patron Management including excerpts from the BPL Staff Manual

The Birmingham Public Library Board approved the following rules which form the basis for patron use and for this handbook.

### Library Rules

The library is intended to be used for reading, studying, writing, and privately listening to audio materials. In order to provide for the safety and comfort of our patrons, as well as for the security of the building and library materials, we ask your cooperation with the following rules.

- Everyone is welcome at the library. Authorized entrances and exits must be used.
- Noisy or disruptive behavior is prohibited. Any verbal abuse or threatening gestures, whether toward staff or patrons, will not be allowed.
- Library materials may not be taken into rest rooms.

- Rest rooms are to be used for their obvious purposes only.
- No smoking or tobacco use is allowed anywhere in the library. (Birmingham Code, Sec. 11-9-10 Smoking in public places)
- Food and drinks are only allowed in designated areas.
- Patrons may not use library materials or facilities in any manner that would likely cause the materials or facilities to be damaged.
- Library users are prohibited from non-public areas.
- All library materials must be checked out before leaving the building. Reference materials may not be removed from the library. Anyone who attempts to remove these materials may be prosecuted.
- All bags, briefcases, backpacks, bedrolls, containers, books, papers, and similar items are subject to inspection by library security.
- Anyone who steals or vandalizes library property may be prosecuted.
- Only service animals are allowed in the library.
- As stated above, the library is intended to be used for reading, studying, writing, and private listening of library audio material; the library is not to be used as a place to sleep.
- Users must be fully clothed in the library, including shoes and shirts.
- No weapons of any kind are permitted in the library.
- Library equipment made available for public use must be operated in accordance with the guidelines established by the library.
- Children aged seven (7) and under should not be left in the library without a parent or other responsible adult.
- Safety regulations governing the use of elevators and escalators must be observed. Any illegal act or conduct in violation of federal, state, or local law, ordinance or regulation is not permitted.

These rules are statements of existing policies as adopted by the Birmingham Public Library Board. Any violation of these rules could result in expulsion from the library. Library employees have been authorized by the board to enforce these rules.

*Adopted by the Birmingham Public Library Board on April 21, 1994.  
Revised August 23, 2007*

**Excerpts from the Birmingham Public Library Staff Manual:**

The following is from the Birmingham Public Library Staff Manual (revised October 2000). The "Expectations on the Job," found in the Staff Manual, are the basis for this CSM and provides the foundation for service to the public.

## Expectations on the Job

### *Expected Values*

- Unfailing honesty and integrity
- Respect and compassion for all persons
- Service to the public
- Responsiveness and accountability to those we serve
- Pursuit of excellence in all endeavors undertaken

### *Expected Behaviors*

- Shows courtesy, decency, and respect to all persons
- Displays a helpful and caring attitude
- Takes pride in doing a good job
- Maintains a positive and cooperative attitude
- Is sensitive to creating and maintaining positive public perceptions
- Continuously seeks to improve performance
- Looks for ways to better serve the public
- Is friendly and says, "Yes, I want to and can help you."
- Serves with honesty and integrity
- Welcomes accountability
- Fosters a positive team spirit

### *Working in a Public Setting*

In your work at the Birmingham Public Library, you will see, feel, hear, touch, and encounter situations that may be objectionable to you. The Library Board strives to establish policies and procedures that balance the library's responsibility as a public facility with its need to provide a safe and comfortable facility for the staff. Of particular concern in today's library is the possible exposure of staff to illegal sites on the Internet. In order to minimize this exposure and to technologically block objectionable Internet sites, all public PCs are equipped with a filter that blocks offensive sites using broad categories. Despite the library's best effort, you may still encounter illegal and offensive use of the Internet. As part of your job, you should be prepared to report the activity and to follow procedures to manage it. (See Appendix for Public Computer Use.)

### In-Person Service to the Public

Patrons are our first priority. They are our purpose for being here and should never be treated as an interruption.

Be welcoming. Acknowledge all patrons when they enter your area. Stop conversations with staff members, even if work related, when a patron approaches. Smile frequently and make eye contact.

Focus on each patron's request. Be positive in assisting patrons and locating information for them. Keep the patron aware of what you are doing to help him or her (checking stacks, calling another location, etc.) by explaining in clear jargon-free terms. Follow-up. Be aware of your patrons' needs; check with them to see if they have found the information that they seek.

Always speak clearly and with a pleasant tone of voice. Tone of voice is as important as the words used. Do not mumble. Do not sound bored or aggravated.

Maintain a businesslike manner. Do not argue with patrons. Avoid personal, political, or religious discussions with patrons and staff in the public area. Do not comment on patrons' selections, questions, materials selected, or a teacher's assignment. Keep personal opinions about patrons' requests to yourself.

If a patron has a complaint or is upset about something, respect his or her feelings, **LISTEN**, and do what can be done to resolve the problem. Do not hesitate to refer the problem or seek help from other staff.

Do not use endearments with the public, i.e. sweetie, darling, girl, sugar, hon, dude, etc. Do not be sarcastic, cynical, negative, rude, brash, harassing, flip, etc. with patrons or staff. Do not chew gum, eat, or drink while working with the public.

Be careful to keep your voice down, especially when conversing with other employees. Set a positive example.

### Telephone Service to the Public

In-person requests take priority over telephone requests. If you are with a phone patron when a patron approaches your desk, make eye contact and let him/her know you will be with him/her soon. It is okay and sometimes advisable to ask the person on the phone to please hold if the phone conversation lasts longer than expected and there is a patron directly in front of you.

Always call before directing a patron to another location to be sure that the material, service, or information is actually available at that location.

Always identify yourself and your location when you call other libraries, departments, or patrons.

When transferring a patron's call, give the phone number and department to the patron.

Do not leave a person on hold for an extended period of time. Give the patron the option of holding for a reasonable amount of time or allowing you to call him/her later.

Limit personal telephone calls to breaks or lunch time except for short personal business calls and emergencies. Personal long-distance calls must be "zero" dialed and charged to the employee's credit card and not to the library.



Responding to personal beepers and using personal cell phones are discouraged during working hours. Cell phones should be on silent or vibrate and out of site of the public. In March 2008, the BPL Administration decided to prohibit use of blue tooth receivers by staff.

(Birmingham Public Library Staff Manual, revised April 2002 by the Birmingham Public Library Board)

### **3. Guidelines for Positive Staff & Patron Interactions**

The purpose of this manual is to provide guidelines for the staff to ensure that every library patron has a positive experience. Without satisfied and repeat customers, we risk failure in fulfilling our mission. Patrons have great expectations of the library, as they should. We have asked the public to visit our facilities for many reasons. We advertise compelling programs. We offer free computer usage for those who have no other option. We provide access to a vast number of print and electronic materials. Without thoughtful, well-informed, and attentive staff, successful patron visits are much less likely to occur.

#### **Expectations of Staff**

- Walk-in patrons always come first.
- Provide friendly, efficient, and professional service at all times to all users.
- Offer the same quality of service to all regardless of age, race, sex, nationality, educational background, physical limitations, or any other criteria.
- Be familiar with library policies and services. Be able to explain them and the reasons for them.
- Treat patrons politely, promptly, and with careful consideration.
- Make judgment calls in the patron's favor, unless personal history has shown otherwise. (Always document on security log or in incident reports.)
- Ensure that patrons leave the library feeling that their needs have been adequately addressed.
- Work as a team, helping each other in difficult situations. Practice awareness of your coworkers' interactions with the public. Consider establishing code words which will alert coworkers of an escalating situation.
- Do not hesitate to ask for assistance— from your coworkers (including security staff), your supervisor, department and branch heads, coordinators, and administration.

#### **Tips for Successful Patron Interaction**

- Be at your assigned workstation ready to work when the library opens or when your shift begins.
- Wear your staff badge while on duty in public service areas. This will make you easier to identify when people need assistance.

- Answer the phone in a pleasant manner, use a greeting, identify the library and yourself, and offer assistance. “Good morning” and “May I help you?” go a long way.
- Greet the patron with a smile and make eye contact. Acknowledge patrons who are waiting with a short statement that you will help them as soon as you can.
- Refrain from engaging in lengthy conversations with patrons. If it is hard to break away, politely explain that you need to get back to work. (It can be helpful to work out a code with your coworkers to alert them when you need assistance.)
- Use plain language when speaking to patrons. Avoid jargon.
- Rather than place a patron on hold, offer to call back if you anticipate a lengthy wait-time.
- Avoid pointing patrons to another location or library resources. If possible, escort the patron or ask another staff member to do so.
- When referring a patron to another staff member, show courtesy by explaining what the patron needs.
- Make new patrons feel welcome. Take time to answer any questions about the library.
- Offer a comment card to patrons when you are unable to resolve an issue in a satisfactory manner. Assure patron that the card will be forwarded to the director or that they have the option to mail it.
- Inform users how to reach your supervisor, your coordinator, or administration if you cannot solve their problem.
- Get help whenever you need it.
- Keep your voice low to set the tone for all.
- Keep conversation with other staff members to a minimum. If you need to discuss something in depth, do so in a non-public area.
- Personal phone calls should be made in non-public areas. Use of personal cell phones is not allowed in public service areas.
- Be approachable at all times. Being helpful to patrons takes precedence over desk work. People aren’t an interruption of our work, they are our work.
- Be aware of your environment. Know what is going on around you. The key to a secure environment is awareness— always pay attention to people and activities in your area.
- Address problems that you witness. Be cautious of acting on second-hand accounts.
- Assume patrons do not know the Library Rules. When necessary, inform them in a pleasant, matter-of-fact tone of voice.
- When there is an incident of unacceptable patron behavior, document incident in your location’s Security Log and complete the Incident Report Form online. ([http://www.bplonline.org/intranet/forms/Incident Offense Report.htm](http://www.bplonline.org/intranet/forms/Incident%20Offense%20Report.htm)).

#### 4. Handling Patron Complaints

Often when we say no or otherwise fail to meet the expectations of patrons, they will complain. Listen carefully and actively to what they have to say. If possible, solve the

problem that led to the complaint. Keep in mind that many times instead of using the word NO you can often give suggestions or an alternative.

At any time you may refer the patron to your supervisor or manager.

If it is a circulation problem, the supervisor, manager, or any circulation staff is authorized to clear problems on circulation records, waive fines, or in any other way attempt to solve the problem. If you are uncertain or unclear as to how to handle a circulation matter and your supervisor or manager is unavailable, contact the regional or Central circulation staff for assistance.

Staff may, and are encouraged to, give comment cards to patrons. The patron can mail the card or give it to a staff member to send to Administration. Staff may also give patrons the names and telephone numbers of Administration so they may complain directly to the Associate Director or Director.

Patrons have the right to complain but they do not have the right to speak disrespectfully to staff or other patrons. If a situation starts to get out of hand and the patron is becoming more frustrated, the staff should call on other staff members to assist. If the patron becomes disrespectful, uses profanity, screams, and otherwise appears out of control, the staff should remain courteous and calm and walk away from the situation. Security and/or a manager should be called immediately.

## 5. General Safety and Security

Everyone is a first responder in creating and maintaining a pleasant library environment.

It is part of every staff member's responsibility to identify inappropriate patron behavior and to intercede when behavior is disruptive, dangerous, or unlawful. Disruptive, dangerous, and unlawful behaviors are defined as those which interfere with the public's right of access to the use of the library and/or the safety of users or staff is threatened. Staff must work together to ensure that patrons have a pleasant, safe, and productive experience. Everyone has the right to a library environment conducive to quiet study and reading.

### Expectations

- Do not apply rules arbitrarily to one particular group of people and not to others.
- Deal with problems as they happen. Any staff member who observes unacceptable behavior can handle the situation. However, that staff person can enlist the help of other staff at any time needed.
- Patrons have a right to expect a safe and calm environment. If you need to enforce a rule, expect the patron to comply. If the situation escalates, enlist the help of other staff.
- If handled appropriately, expect your supervisor to support your course of action.

- Strive to find a balance between the patron's need and the best interest of the library when trying to solve a problem.

### Observation

- Be aware of your surroundings at all time.
- Form the habit of observing your area utilizing the **30-30-30 Rule**. For **30** days try to pause every **30** minutes and look around for **30** seconds. Observe behaviors, concentrating on things or people that seem to be out of place or out of the ordinary.
- Pay attention to details. A detailed physical description, including age, hair, build, etc., may become important should a situation escalate.
- Be alert and ready to assist other staff members who might be in a difficult situation. Attempt to find ways to divert the patron.
- Be part of the team and help your coworkers by stepping in when they are in a seemingly touchy situation with a patron. Develop signals to help alert coworkers when you feel threatened or need help.

### Communication

- Remain calm. Take a deep breath.
- Think before you speak.
- Learn and practice effective communication skills.
- Make sure that your body language and words are in sync. Effective communications skills include both verbal and nonverbal behavior. Establish good eye contact. Present a helpful face.
- Greet the patron. Inform the patron of the rule that he or she may be breaking.
- Describe the behavior that is objectionable. Be specific. Convey that you are objecting to a behavior that violates library policy and not to the patron personally. Request that the patron comply with the rules, and if they don't comply, inform them that they will be asked to leave the library.
- If this doesn't work, give the patron a copy of the rules. Do not draw the encounter out. Do not be confrontational.
- Some talking points that can be used include:
  - "I'm sure you didn't know, but \_\_\_\_\_ is against library policy." "Please lower your voice. It is difficult for everyone to concentrate or read. Thank you!"
  - "Food or drinks are allowed only in designated areas. Please take your snack outside, or you may finish it and deposit the wrapper in this trash can. Thank you!"
  - "Our rules prohibit large bags in the library; they must be left outside the building."
  - "Sleeping is not allowed in the library. Could you walk around a little to help you wake up?"

- To help diffuse a situation, keep in mind the following:
  - Keep your voice low and level.
  - Promise only what you can deliver to the user.
  - Remain calm and under control. Be confident.
  - Don't take insults personally.
  - Don't tolerate verbal abuse.
  - Move away and get help if you feel threatened.

### Action

Always pay attention while in public service. Be aware of your surroundings. Help your colleagues if they get in an awkward or difficult situation.

- If you feel that a situation has become dangerous, call 911 for police help.
- Be confident and respectful. You know the rules and are in charge.
- Request help from another staff member at any point in any dispute or problem.
- Listen to the patron. It is possible that doing so will diffuse the situation and will give you enough time to decide on a response.
- Again, listen and be empathic by acknowledging their concern and take action if you are able to.
- Respond to the patron's feelings with empathy and understanding.
- Acknowledge their problem.
- Maintain proper body space so that you are not threatening to the patron.
- If a patron makes you feel uncomfortable, keep a barrier of some sort between you, such as a desk, the counter, or another object. Always ask for help from other staff if you need it. Be on the lookout to help other staff when they need it.
- If a patron becomes verbally abusive or will not comply with your request, explain that you cannot help them until they reasonably communicate their concern.
- Library staff is never expected to take abusive or unacceptable behavior from the public. Ask for help any time you feel this type of behavior has taken place.
- If the encounter takes place at a service desk or heavily populated area, ask the patron to further discuss the issue in a less public area (a table or desk). Do not turn your back on the patron. Your goal is to lessen the disruption without placing yourself in danger. This will allow both of you a moment to calm down. Make sure that you are in a position to signal for help or escape. Your safety is paramount.
- Be reasonable but firm, conveying confidence. Expect cooperation. Speak in a calm, steady voice, and maintain control by using "I" statements ("I think," "I need") and cooperative words ("Let's," "How can we...")
- If an issue cannot be resolved, suggest options that are acceptable alternatives.
- If you do not feel you are able to reach a satisfactory solution or if the situation escalates, request help from another staff member.
- Inform your coworkers about specific problems and relate what steps have already been taken.
- Document problems in the Security Log and/or Incident Report as required.

- Keep a list of patrons who create issues. Consult with the Head of Security and/or your coordinator or administration for help with any recurring issues.

## 6. Security Guard Job Description

### Description

Under supervision of the assigned manager, the security guard ensures the safety of staff, patrons, collections, furnishings, and equipment, and proactively and positively enforces library rules. The security guard also maintains order and a pleasant atmosphere in the library.

### Required Work Behavior & Examples of Work

- ◆ Reports to work as scheduled and ready to perform duties
- ◆ Follows instruction of on-site supervisor, usually the branch manager
- ◆ Remains visible and available to library personnel and the public
- ◆ Patrols the library both inside and outside as supervisor and circumstances require
- ◆ Makes periodic inspection tours of the library and parking lot
- ◆ Guards against illegal entry, fire, and theft, and observes and reports unusual conditions and safety hazards
- ◆ Communicates with supervisor and library personnel to work as a team to provide a safe, secure environment
- ◆ Reports directly to on-site supervisor as soon as possible to request any need to change work schedule
- ◆ Requires all visitors to comply with library rules and use appropriate library behavior
- ◆ Provides necessary assistance to library personnel and public
- ◆ Contacts law enforcement agencies as necessary
- ◆ Escorts authorized persons and library personnel entering property to and from parking areas as requested
- ◆ Accompanies personnel and or transportation of money or other valuables
- ◆ Prepares written reports as needed
- ◆ Completes and signs a time sheet at and for every location worked
- ◆ Restricts cell phone use to after duty hours
- ◆ Performs other related duties as required

### Required Knowledge, Abilities, and Skill

Ability to communicate effectively and courteously with staff members and library patrons  
Physical requirements include the ability to stoop, bend, twist, turn, and spend several hours at a time on foot

### Education and Experience

Minimum requirement is graduation from high school or G.E.D. Experience as a certified police officer preferred.

### **Hours and Benefits**

30 hours biweekly, Grade 10, Step 1, \$9.61 per hour.

### **Method of Appointment**

Contact the Alabama State Employment Service for an application. For an interview at the library contact Mr. Mike Lee at (205) 226-3741. Applications should be submitted as soon as possible. Library employees should submit applications directly to Mr. Lee.

**You must pass a pre-employment health screen before you may be employed by the Birmingham Public Library.**

## **7. Enforcing the Rules and Tracking Problem Behavior**

When patrons break library rules, it often occurs out of ignorance or simple errors in judgment. Sometimes, rule breaking constitutes outright criminal behavior. Our responses to these situations must be appropriate, yet consistent.

If possible, do not assume intentional wrong-doing on the part of the patron unless warranted by evidence. For Tier 1, document the incident in the Security Log and inform your supervisor and/or security. For Tiers 2 and 3, document in the Security Log and complete an Incident Report.

Remember, any infraction of the Library Rules warrants attention. Repeated infractions of any rule increases the level of the problem and may result in stronger action. Forward all incident reports to the Head of Security. If the police are called, call the Head of Security and inform him of the circumstances immediately. If he is unavailable, call Administration.

Remember that disruptive and/or disrespectful behavior on the part of patrons may rise to a higher level and should be handled according to the best judgment of staff. These consequences are here to help staff maintain order in the library and are based on Library Rules. The tiers and consequences are guidelines and are designed to make our response to problems consistent across the library system.

***Tier 1 – Lesser infractions (always document incident in Security Log or an Incident Report and inform the supervisor and security.)***

- Use of unauthorized entrances/exits
- Noisy or disruptive behavior
- Panhandling & solicitation
- Taking library material into restrooms
- Eating, drinking, or smoking in non-designated areas
- Being in non-public areas
- Sleeping (more serious if accompanied by intoxication)
- Bringing pets into the library
- Improper use of library equipment

- Inappropriate dress (e.g., no shirt and/or no shoes)

- 1<sup>st</sup> offense: Inform patron of infraction and give copy of BPL rules.  
 2<sup>nd</sup> offense: If problem behavior does not cease immediately, warn patron that he will be asked to leave.  
 3<sup>rd</sup> offense: Same-day suspension (ask them to leave immediately).

*Tier 2 - Greater Infractions. Repeated offenses will result in being banned. (always document incident in Security Log, complete an Incident Report, and inform the supervisor and/or security):*

- Disruptive and/or threatening behavior
- Any harassment of staff or patrons
- Stalking
- Pornography on the computer
- Hindering other patrons' use of the library
- Verbal abuse of patrons or staff
- Misuse of restrooms (bathing, etc.)
- Damaging library materials or facilities
- Threatening or attacking staff or patrons (assault)
- Note: Assault is ANY unwanted or unwelcome touching
- Fighting
- Masturbation or other lewd behavior
- Viewing obscenity/child pornography on the computer
- Sexual harassment (touching or verbal)
- Indecent exposure
- Theft
- Vandalism
- Weapons
- Any other activity in violation of local, state, and federal law

Warning: Do not engage a patron directly if you feel you are in danger. In extreme cases call 911 immediately.

## 8. Special Situations

### Unattended Children Age Seven and Under

It is against library rules for children age seven (7) and under to be left in the library without the supervision of a parent or other responsible adult. A responsible adult must be at least 18 years old. Remember that the child is not responsible for the situation and treat him or her accordingly. When a child is left unattended in the library, contact the parent or legal guardian immediately. A copy of the Library Rules must be given to the parent or legal



guardian. If contact cannot be made, call police or social services to assist you. See Appendix for Unattended Children's Policy.

### Children Age Eight and Older

When children misbehave or are in the library at closing time, staff must address the issue directly with a parent or legal guardian. If the Library Rules are broken, children will be banned after three documented incidents. Each incident must be discussed with a parent or legal guardian and documented in an Incident Report. Give the parent a copy of the report and have him/her sign the library's copy to indicate that they were informed.

If a child is left in the library at closing time, call the parent or legal guardian. Remember that the child is not responsible for the situation and treat him or her accordingly. After 15 minutes, call the Birmingham Police Department. Two staff members must stay with minors until the police or parents arrive. Having more than one staff member stay with a minor is a protection against false accusations of misconduct.

### Curfew Violations

All students (including home school students) must abide by the City's Curfew Law, which states that youth under the age of 17 are not allowed in a public place without parent or legal guardian during the regularly scheduled hours of the Birmingham City School System.

It is permissible for students whose school day ends early and who possess an official school pass be allowed to use the library prior to 3 p.m. It is unlawful for the library staff to knowingly permit a minor to remain in or upon the premises during curfew hours.

Report the student to the Birmingham Police Department. The student may be required to sit in a designated area to wait for the police or a parent to come and get him/her. (see Appendix for full Curfew Law)

### Unacceptable Computer Use

It comes with the territory that staff will witness patrons viewing sites that are offensive from time to time. It is part of everyone's job to maintain appropriate use of the computers. The BPL does not allow the viewing of pornography or illegal sites with obscenity or child pornography but patrons will from time to time access these sites. BPL strives to make this part of staff's job as easy as possible by technologically filtering and providing CybraryN computer management software to manage patrons' use of the computers in an orderly way that is consistent with library policies. (See Staff Manual, "Working in a Public Setting")

Although library computers employ a filter to prevent inappropriate use, from time to time users are able to circumvent this system. If a patron's use of the computer becomes unacceptable, notify the patron by sending a message using CybraryNet, specifying the inappropriate use or behavior. Unacceptable computer use could include but is not limited

to viewing pornography, excessively loud volume, disturbing others, and talking on cell phones in the computer area.

Using CybraryNet, choose the correct terminal and select "send a message." Copy and paste the appropriate message from the following list into the message box as needed:

- As a courtesy to other computer users, please limit your conversation while in the computer area. Thank you.
- As a courtesy to other computer users, please lower the volume of your headphones while in the computer area. Thank you.
- As a courtesy to other computer users, cell phone use is not allowed while in the computer area. Please discontinue your call or leave the computer center. Thank you.
- Due to the limited size of the computer center, only one person may be at each PC. Thank you.
- Food and drink are not allowed in the computer area. Thank you.

If the behavior continues, send the following message the same way, inserting the appropriate request in the middle:

- Final Warning: You have been asked to (insert message), if this continues you will be logged off. Thank you.

If the behavior continues, log the patron off of the computer. If you believe the patron may become disruptive, alert security or other staff to assist you. (See Internet Policy and Guidelines for Public Computer Management Appendix)

### Convicted Sex Offenders

The following rules apply to convicted sex offenders:

#### Library Card Application:

Sex offenders have the right to use the library and have a library card. There is no statute requiring a sex offender to identify themselves as such when applying for a library card.

If a sex offender presents his Registered Sex Offender Identification card as his only form of identification, put in notes field that individual has been verified with a sex offender I.D.

A registered sex offender cannot be employed by the library.

A registered sex offender cannot loiter in a library.

A registered sex offender can read and do research in a library.

A registered sex offender cannot enter any section of the library designated for children/youth.

If you are aware that a sex offender enters a forbidden area of your library you are responsible for asking him to leave. If you meet with resistance, call the Birmingham Police Department immediately.

## 9. What to Do When a Patron Violates Library Rules and/or Policies

### Intervention

Remember that any illegal activity such as assault, masturbation, indecent exposure, etc. should immediately be reported to the police. The judgment of staff must determine whether to call 911 or the closest precinct and request a car be sent.

Included in the regular duties list of all branch heads, department heads, and coordinators is the enforcement of all library rules and policies. It is essential that all staff is trained on library policies and procedures. Each supervisor is responsible for policy and procedure compliance in his or her assigned area. If you have any questions about policies or procedures, talk to your supervisor, branch or department head, coordinator, or administration.

If confronted with a situation that you are unable to handle or that requires patron disciplinary action, always refer it to the person in charge. The person in charge may intercede in one of the following ways:

- Verbal or Written Warning
- Referral:  
Referrals encompass a grey area of issues that do not include harassing or threatening behavior by a patron. Contacting the appropriate social service agency or a professional may be all that is required. Staff may also give the patron appropriate information for him or her to make the contact. [See Community Resources Directory Appendix.
- Banning/Trespassing:  
Violations of any law or Library Rule may result in being banned from the library. For minor but repetitive infractions, the patron may be banned immediately and for a specified period time. Permanent or long-term banning requires approval by the director and head of security based on recommendation and documentation from the staff involved and their supervisor.
- Legally Trespassing Patrons:  
Your coordinator and the head of security will assist you with this procedure. Contact law enforcement to legally prohibit a patron from the library premises (law enforcement refers to this as "legally trespassing patrons"). A police officer will inform the patron that he or she is banned from the library premises and will issue a case number. Should the patron return, do not confront. Call the police immediately, provide the case number, and ask for assistance.

Refer to Section 6. Enforcing the Rules and Tracking Problem Behavior for specific responses to offenses.

## 10. Documentation

All incidents of rule breakage and/or policy violation should be documented. Forms are available on the library's Intranet.

Each location will maintain and retain a Security Log that details daily security incidents. If the situation warrants completing an Incident Report, a copy of that report should be retained at the location, and additional copies must be sent to the head of security, the department or branch head, the coordinator, and administration. All reports should be centrally filed and accessible at each location for all staff. For the Central library, the files will be kept with the head of security and the Public Services Coordinator.

Minor violations of rules or observations of situations which need watching or monitoring should be tallied on the Security Log. At the end of each month, a copy of the Security Log should be forwarded to the appropriate coordinator and head of security who will in turn report to Administration.

If a major violation occurs, an Incident Report must be completed and submitted electronically. The Incident Report is available on the BPL Intranet under "Forms General." After the form is submitted, a confirmation page will appear. The form is automatically sent to the Head of Security and the Administrative Council. This page must be printed and filed with all other security reports on a revolving 12 month basis. If the police are called they will write an incident report. Obtain a card with the report number. The head of Security will obtain the report.

These files will include copies of incident reports, monthly security logs, and notes regarding specific patrons who have broken rules or laws at that location. These files may contain paper copies of patron photographs that have been taken by staff or security. These photos are never to be uploaded to a computer. They are strictly to aid staff in identifying individuals who may be potential security concerns. Individual files should also include police reports and copies of any internal memoranda regarding a specific individual.

As with any documentation regarding patrons, the language of any communication should be neutral and should describe only the objectionable behavior which has been witnessed by staff.

### Security Log

Date	Time	Name/Description	Type	Police/Medic	Staff	Narrative


Enter the proper code that is listed below in the "Type" Column,

- A--Assault
- AD--Alcohol/Drugs
- BT--Bomb Threat
- CM-- Computer Misuse
- DC--Disorderly Conduct
- EI-- Employee Injury
- DTP-- Damage to Property
- FA-- Fire Alarm
- MR-- Miscellaneous Rule Infraction
- OT--Other
- PI--Patron Injury
- PPL--Potential Problem
- SOL--Soliciting
- TH--Theft
- TR-- Trespass
- RA-- Rule Advisement

**Birmingham Public Library**  
**Incident/Offense Report**

**Report Information**

Date: Thursday, October 28, 2010

Time: 11:43 AM

Reporting Location:

**Incident Information**

Date/Time of Incident:

Location of Incident:

Type of Incident:

**Describe the Incident**

[Empty text area for describing the incident]

**Information Regarding the Person Involved**

Name of Person Involved: \_\_\_\_\_

Race:

Sex:  male  female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Employer School Information**

Employer/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Witness Information**

Witness's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Vehicle Involved Information**

Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Make: \_\_\_\_\_

Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Reported By: \_\_\_\_\_

Reported By Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and Date (provide if mailing hard copy) \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and Date (provide if mailing hard copy) \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature and Date (provide if mailing hard copy) \_\_\_\_\_



## **11. Appeal Process and Request for Reinstatement**

A patron who has been suspended or banned has the right of appeal. The patron must submit a written request for appeal outlining the reasons he or she believes an appeal is warranted to the library director. The director will discuss the appeal with the Head of Security and any other staff involved in the suspension. The director will meet with the suspended patron and hear his or her appeal. The director makes the final decision regarding the patron's reinstatement or continued suspension.

At the end of the suspension period, the patron must submit a written request for reinstatement. For Central Library, these should be forwarded to the Head of Security. Appeals at branch locations should be directed to the coordinator. Contact information must be included.

## 12. Appendices

### Birmingham Public Library Security Personnel Duties

#### Job Summary:

To provide general security for a particular library facility or branch. To ensure the safety of all patrons and staff. To guard against theft and/or misuse of library property, and to enforce all library policies and rules. To render assistance to patrons and staff when it is necessary and feasible, without hesitation.

#### General Guidelines for Security Personnel

1. Your first responsibility is the protection of life and property and preservation of the peace at the library to which you are assigned.
2. Read, understand, and follow all guidelines in the CSM.
3. Be alert at all times, and focus on your duties.
4. Be visible to staff and the public as much as possible.
5. Treat all people you come into contact with (staff & public) with the utmost courtesy and respect.
6. Cell phone use should be kept to a minimum. Keep cell phone on vibrate while on duty.
7. No personal audio or video devices may be utilized while you work.
8. Physically inspect the inside and outer perimeter of your building, in a random fashion to prevent predictable patterns.
9. Become familiar with the physical layout of your building (fire exits, number of doors, windows, etc.).
10. Provide escorts for patrons and staff.
11. Learn the beat officers' names and precinct in your district.
12. Always wear clean pressed uniforms with polished shoes.
13. Maintain control and remain calm in times of crisis.
14. Never leave your assignment for any reason without first notifying the branch manager or person in charge.
15. Do not hesitate to contact the police or sheriff's department if necessary.
16. Document each and every significant event you respond to.
17. Maintain a professional demeanor at all times, and act in a professional manner.
18. Recognize that you may be the first person with whom a patron comes in contact with at the library. Strive to make that first contact pleasant and be as helpful as possible.
19. Follow all written and verbal instructions given by your supervisor.
20. You may not smoke, use drugs, sleep, or drink intoxicating beverages while on duty or in uniform.
21. You will enforce and abide by all rules and regulations issued and approved by the Library Board of the city of Birmingham.