

LEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY

EMERGENCY POLICY

I. Emergency Procedures

Should a personal emergency arise to a patron (heart attack, seizure, fall, etc) call 911 and then try to keep the patron calm and comfortable until help arrives. An incident report should then be made immediately to the safety administrator at City Hall. If a patron refuses to let you call 911, get a written statement from them stating they refused assistance.

In a case of winter snow storms, the Library Director must use her or his best judgment about opening the library. If it is possible to make it in and the stores in town are open, then open. This is also true if the storm starts during the day and there may be a question of closing early. The director will contact the local radio station KBMW (642-8488) to have them announce the early closing or not opening at all during the day.

In case of a tornado warning, tune to KBMW for weather announcements. In case of a tornado WATCH (one that has been sighted in the area) prepare staff and patrons in case it should turn into a tornado WARNING. If this happens, the City sirens will be activated. The siren sounds like the fire siren but will sound continuously without stopping. At that time, direct all staff and patrons to go to the basement of the Law Enforcement Center. Be sure to lock both west and north doors to the library; if time permits, turn off all lights and computers. If absolutely necessary and time is of the essence, go to the north closet in the kitchen of the library. Bring with a radio and resume service when the all-clear announcement is made on the radio.

Should maintenance emergencies arise, contact the Custodian at the number listed above. In cases of water flowing from sinks or stool, turn off valve while waiting for help to come. If the emergency arises during the evening or weekend, call the On Call person at the number listed above.

Upon the discovery of a fire or the fire alarms sound and fire can be extinguished, do so immediately. If not, call 911 immediately and make the announcement to patrons to use the nearest exit and evacuate the building. The librarian in charge should make an effort to see that everyone leaves, directing staff and patrons to exit the building as quickly as possible. Do not return to the building for any reason until approval is given by the Fire Department.

All staff should know the location of all shutoffs, breakers, fire extinguishers, alarms, and exits.

II. DISTURBANCES BY PATRONS

Hints for dealing with Disturbed Patrons

1. Remain calm
2. Repeat your request if necessary
3. Do not argue with outrageous statements
4. Be explicit
5. Stay in control of the situation: do not allow patron to manipulate you
6. Avoid humor or personal remarks
7. Alert other staff members when strange behavior occurs

8. Be considerate; listen to whole explanation even if you have heard it a thousand times before
9. Offer a choice of actions or alternatives if you can
10. Be a team player when confronting a disturbed patron; **get help**
11. Give support to another staff member who has had to confront a disturbed patron
12. Never try to restrain or detain a patron forcefully. **Do not touch a disturbed patron.**

Library Staff Response to Disruptive Behavior

Occasionally people in the Library manifest behavior that is annoying, inappropriate or threatening to Library users and staff. To aid in coping with these incidents, guidelines are described below. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide for staff a consistent approach to handling disturbed or disturbing patrons, in order to enable others to make fullest use of Library resources and services, free of distraction and disturbance.

- A. Angry Verbal Abuse (Examples: extremely abusive and threatening argument about a bill, insistence upon special privileges, etc.) Normally calm and reasonable Library patrons may be aggravated into disruptive behavior and these are steps that should be taken when each type of behavior is encountered; use plain language instead of penal code numbers whenever possible.
 1. Acknowledge existence of problem; explain procedures, describe steps that can be taken to solve the problem. Listen supportively, with empathy and understanding. Be aware that a patron is venting inner frustration; anger is probably not directed at you, especially in the early stages.
 2. Enlist aid of supervisor or another staff member, if you cannot resolve the complaint, refer problem to supervisor.
 3. Personal verbal abuse should not be tolerated. If a patron's tirade goes beyond criticism of Library policy and focuses on you, particularly if this abuse is racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic in nature, excuse yourself and retreat from the confrontation immediately. Request assistance from supervisor.
 4. Fill out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report.

- B. Destruction of Library Materials (Examples: writing in books, cutting out pages, damaging furniture , etc.)
 1. If action seems to be accidental, unintentional, or fairly minor (such as writing in a book), tell the patron to stop. If patron is cooperative, and this is the first offense, you may want to handle the problem locally, i.e., have the patron replace the material. Use your own judgment.
 2. If action seems deliberate and seriously destructive call 911 and describe the situation. Secure damaged materials as evidence. If patron leaves the area, be prepared to give the officer a physical description, and to file a formal complaint. See below.
 3. Fill out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report.

- C. Disruptive Behavior (Examples: loud talking, singing, approaching staff or other patrons and engaging them in unwanted and inappropriate interaction.)

1. Ask patron to be quiet. Inform patron that the behavior is disturbing and distracting to other Library users and must be stopped. Enlist aid of another staff member if necessary.
 2. If behavior continues, ask patron to leave.
 3. If patron does not cooperate, call 911 for assistance.
 4. Fill out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report
- D. Suspicious Lurking (Examples: complaint or observation of person seeming to watch other patrons or their belongings, or attempts to enter non-public area.)
1. Ask if patron needs assistance.
 2. Watch the person, notify other staff members.
 3. If person's response is not appropriate or seems evasive, call 911, even if the patron has left the area. Say, we have a suspicious person; describe the person if possible and give the person's name if known.
 4. Fill out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report.
- E. Obscene or Threatening Phone Calls
1. Hang up immediately—check caller ID for number and copy. Contact supervisor.
 2. Call 911. Be prepared to describe what you can recall of the caller's voice, sex, probable age, what the caller said and describe background noises, if any
 3. Fill Out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report.
- F. Sexual Offenses (Examples: indecent exposure, inappropriate sexual advances.)
1. Call 911 immediately. Describe the situation, or if not possible, say it's a sexual offense. Give as full a description of the offender as possible.
 2. Encourage the patron to whom the behavior was directed to stay until the officer arrives. Be supportive of the feelings of the victimized patron or staff member and move to non-public area for any discussion of the problem.
 3. Fill out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report.
- G. Threats to Personal Safety of Staff and Patrons (Examples: disturbed patron is armed and/or violent.)
1. Call 911. Say we have a violent person. If person is armed, inform dispatcher.
 2. Have someone stay on the line with the dispatcher if possible. Without risking your own safety or inflaming the situation, try to get other staff and patrons and yourself out of the area/building.
 3. Fill out a Library Unusual Occurrence Report.
- H. Filing a Formal Complaint

Be prepared to take action when:

Disturbance or damage is serious (examples: theft, sexual assault or exposure, battery, violent behavior, destruction of library materials, ongoing or repeated disturbance of the peace), and even if only you have witnessed the behavior. Officers cannot arrest someone for an action they have not witnessed unless the person who has observed the behavior is willing to file a formal complaint.

In filing a formal complaint, you are making a charge that may lead to a person's arrest. It is possible that you may be asked to appear in court. A witness statement must be made in the presence of a police officer. The statement will then be filed with the District Attorney. The officer at the scene should advise you.

UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE REPORT

Use this form to report incidents such as verbal abuse, destruction of library materials, disruptive and/or disturbed patrons, theft, obscene phone calls, sexual offenses, etc. that occur in the library

TO:

FROM:

SUBJECT: LIBRARY UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE REPORT

1. Date: _____

2. Nature of occurrence: Time: _____

3. Action taken:

4. If an officer was contacted, his/her name: _____

5. Name(s) of person(s) involved in occurrence and/or witness(es) to occurrence:

6. If an accident, name person(s) injured:

7. If an accident, nature of injury:

Please give this report to the Librarian/Library Director

ADOPTED BY THE LIBRARY BOARD
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