

# Somerset Public Library

## Behavior Policy - Children



May 15, 2012

Revision -

**The Somerset Public Library exists to serve as a center of informal learning, individual growth and recreation for the citizens of Somerset. The Library expects to make a contribution to the learning process and to aid individuals in the lifelong process of growth and appreciation and understanding of themselves, their neighbors, and the world around them. In addition, the library makes its building available as a setting for appropriate events according to the needs and interests of the community.**

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Somerset Public Library  
1464 County Street  
Somerset, MA 02726  
508-646-2829  
[www.somersetpubliclibrary.org](http://www.somersetpubliclibrary.org)

**1. Basis in Law** - See Adult Policy for reference to *Massachusetts General Laws Annotated*

## **2. General Library Rules of Behavior**

### **A. Philosophy**

The Somerset Public Library exists to serve as a center of informal learning, individual growth and recreation for the citizens of Somerset. The Library expects to make a contribution to the learning process and to aid individuals in the life long process of growth and appreciation and understanding of themselves, their neighbors and the world around them. In addition, the library makes its building available as a setting for appropriate events according to the needs and interests of the community.

### **B. Governance**

The Library Board of Trustees is responsible for determining the rules of behavior necessary to protect the rights of individuals to use library materials and services; to protect the rights of library employees; to conduct library business without interference; and preserve library materials and facilities.

The Board of Library Trustees believes that library patrons, regardless of age, have the right to use library materials and services without being disturbed or impeded by abusive and/or disruptive library users; that library patrons and employees have the right to an environment that is secure and comfortable; and that library patrons and employees have a right to materials and facilities that are available and in good condition.

### **C. Children Behavior Policy**

Child patrons are described as being seventeen years of age or younger. The Library exists for the use by adults as well as children; therefore, the Library Staff should guide and encourage child patrons toward acceptable library behavior.

- a) The staff will give warning of inappropriate behavior.
- b) The staff will explain rules to the child and may offer alternatives.
- c) If the disruption is minor in nature, and after explanation and warning, the child may be asked to leave for the rest of the day.
- d) If the offending child refuses to follow the requests of the staff, or the staff feels there is potential danger to patrons or staff, the police and/or parent/legal guardian may be called.

If the child repeatedly ignores the warnings issued by the staff, the staff has the right to remove the child for specified periods of time. A specific date and time will be attached to the restriction, and it will be posted for the information of the entire staff.

## **D. Behavioral Standards**

The follow serves as a general behavioral guide for all patrons, whether adult or child, while in the library.

1. No smoking (or use of tobacco in any form) or use of controlled substance is allowed in the Library.
2. There is a restricted area eating and drinking in public service areas of the Library [see separate Food and Drink Policy].
3. No soliciting or distributing of leaflets within the Library is allowed. With the approval of the Library Director or Department Head, items may be left for display on bulletin boards and/or pamphlet racks.
4. Animals are not permitted in the main section of the Library (except for guide or assist animals).
5. Appropriate attire including shirts and shoes must be worn at all times.
6. Roller skates and roller blades, etc., are not allowed in the Library
7. Bicycles ridden to the Library should be placed in the bicycle rack and locked. Bicycles may not be left inside the Library nor may they be left on the sidewalks leading into the building. The Library is not responsible for lost or stolen bicycles.
8. Personal electronic music devices (for example: Radios, tape players MP3 players) may be used, but only with personal headphones. The staff reserves the right to request the volumes be turned lower.
9. Any sports equipment brought into the Library must be left at the public service desk. (Examples – skateboards, basketballs, tennis rackets, etc.) The Library is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
10. Using cell phones or other communication devices to make phone calls is not allowed in the main library. These devices may be used in the vestibule or hallways of the library. Personal "smart phones" are allowed in the main library for all purposes except for making calls. Earphones must be used so as not to disturb other patrons.
11. The staff is not responsible for personal belongings left unattended.
12. Items left behind will be placed in lost and found for thirty days. After thirty days the items will be discarded or donated to an appropriate organization based upon the item. Any items donated will be documented.
13. To the extent permitted by law, the Library Staff reserves the right to call the Police to inspect any/all bags, purses, briefcases, packs, etc. for library materials which may have been inadvertently packed with patron's other materials.
14. The materials and equipment in the Library are here for patrons and staff use. Any purposeful damage done to the materials, equipment, furniture, building or property of the Public Library is against the law and will be reported to the police.

15. The telephone at the Circulation Desk may be used by patrons (with permission of the staff) in case of emergency or to call home for rides. Patrons may not use the Library phone for casual personal use.
16. Many patrons use our Library for study. Loud or boisterous behavior is not permitted at any time.
17. Physical or verbal harassment of staff or patrons is not permitted at any time.
18. There is a separate policy on patron behavior while utilizing the Internet and Public Computer terminals.

## **E. Safety of Children in the Library**

The staff of the Somerset Public Library is concerned about the safety and well-being of all our patrons. We welcome all children and offer many programs to encourage lifelong appreciation of books and other resources. However, with this in mind, the Library is a public building and available to anyone. Due to the many responsibilities of the library staff, monitoring each child's behavior and location is not possible. Library staff does not and will not take over parental responsibilities for children when they come into the library. The staff of the Somerset Public Library hopes that the children who use our Library will find our facilities to be warm and inviting places to develop a love of books, reading and libraries.

Many programs are offered to make the library inviting to children. However, children left unattended for several hours when no library programs are offered may become disruptive. It should not be assumed that young children are safe when left unattended in the Library. The staff cannot know if children are leaving the building with parents or with strangers. Please see next section (F) for age requirements of unattended children.

## **F. Policy**

Children are expected to adhere to the same rules as stated for all patrons with the following additions.

- 1) Parents are responsible for the behavior of their children in the Library and may not leave children under the age of ten unattended.
- 2) If a problem arises with children of any age and we are unable to locate the parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s), or if the library is closing and any of the aforementioned cannot be located, the police will be called at the discretion of the staff.
- 3) Children age 10 and older may be left unattended (at the discretion of their parents) for the period of time needed to complete homework assignments or special projects. The library staff or Trustees are not responsible for the safety or protection of these children. Children left unattended, should know how to

reach a parent or guardian and parents should be aware of the closing time of the Library.

- 4) When children are left unattended, repeatedly and/or for long periods of time, the staff may notify parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) of the Library's policies
- 5) When children are attending Library programs, parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) must be aware of the times of the programs, so their children do not have to wait for unreasonable amounts of time to be picked up. For the child's safety, parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) should have their children wait for them inside the building to avoid the hazards of the parking lot.
- 6) It is the policy of the Library that staff members will not transport children from the library to any other location, except in cases of extreme emergency.
- 7) In the event a young person is still at the library 10 minutes after the library closes to the public, the police will be called to pick up the young person. Attempts will be made during that 10 minutes to reach parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s), but in no instance will staff take children or teenagers home.

## **G. Disruptive Children**

This policy is not intended to restrict library services to children. Instead, the policy has been adopted to ensure the safety and well-being of all children who use the library.

### Disruptive attended children.

Examples of destructive behavior include but are not limited to the throwing or tossing of books or items, running, screaming, writing in or tearing of books, standing on chairs or shelving, playing with water fountain, etc. The staff will be tolerant of children playing in the children's area, but if behavior is becoming disruptive:

- 1) Staff will ask the children who are being disruptive to behave.
- 2) If the disruptive behavior continues, staff will inform the parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) that their child (children) is disturbing others.
- 3) The family will be asked to leave if parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) refuse or are unable to control their child (children).

### Disruptive unattended children:

- 1) Staff will give the child a gentle warning that their behavior is disruptive to the patrons of the library. They will be told that if the behavior

continues they will be asked to leave or their parents will be contacted. Up to two warnings will be given before action is taken.

- 2) If the disruptive behavior continues, the children will be told to sit quietly in a designated area while their parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) are contacted.
- 3) Staff will contact parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) who will be asked to pick up their child immediately.
- 4) Parent(s), caregiver(s), and/or legal guardian(s) will be informed of their child's (children's) disruptive behavior.

## H. Special Needs Exception

The Somerset Public Library recognizes that there may be special circumstances regarding behavior of a special needs child. If a behavioral situation occurs that is elevated to the point of disturbing others, we encourage the parent/guardian/patron to disclose if there is a "special need diagnosis" to our staff in order to be covered under the Special Needs Exception rule. Parents, caregivers, and/or legal guardian have the right to not disclose if there is a special needs diagnosis, however staff is prompted to implement the Child Behavior Guidelines Protocol (see above) when no diagnosis is communicated.

The Somerset Public Library requests that patrons understand that not all disabilities are visible and to ensure that staff will be handling a situation that may be disturbing patrons. Staff is not allowed to disclose to another patron if a child is covered under the Special Needs Exception rule. However, staff will be able to provide you a copy of this policy for your review.

## I. Emergency Situations

In case of medical emergency, the Town of Somerset emergency personnel will be notified, and the parent(s), legal guardian(s) and/or caregiver(s) will be contacted – in that order.

TRUSTEE APPROVAL DATE	CURRENT REVISION	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
02/27/1992	-	Original release of the Behavior Policy
06/17/2008	A	Update to policy
04/17/2012	-	Reviewed by Trustees
5/9/2012		Reviewed by Town Counsel
5/15/2012		Approved by Trustees