

Policy of Conduct for Library Patrons

Atlantic County Library System (ACLS) is committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all patrons, staff and volunteers. ACLS has established these policies of conduct to protect the rights, safety, and privacy of all patrons who visit an ACLS library.

Personal Behavior

Library users are to be respectful of others, to act according to the generally accepted standards of behavior in public buildings, and to refrain from unacceptable and prohibited behavior. Unacceptable behaviors include but are not limited to the following:

1. Engaging in any conduct or activity that violates any applicable federal, state, or local law, ordinance, or regulations.
2. Engaging in disruptive behavior in an ACLS Library or on Library property.
3. Interfering with another person's use of an ACLS Library, library staff's performance of their duties, or library operations.
4. Inappropriate attire for a public building. Footwear must be worn throughout the visit.
5. Creating unreasonable noise, including excessive or disruptive conversations in the library.
6. Personal Property should be within eyesight and not placed where it obstructs aisles, doorways, stairways, walkways, elevators or ramps. The Atlantic County Library System is not responsible for personal items that are lost or stolen.
7. Bicycles, skateboards, nor scooters are allowed inside the library.
8. Solicitation, including begging and selling, is prohibited.
9. Service animals aiding a person with a disability and program-authorized animals are welcome.
10. Take photographs or make audio or video recordings:
 - in non-public spaces, which includes restrooms, areas and offices reserved for library staff only, and other areas of library facilities not open to the public;
 - in areas of the Library where patrons are using library services;
 - in spaces where a person's reading, viewing, or listening activities can be identified, which includes the circulation desk and materials holding areas.

Children and Vulnerable Individuals

Children under the age of 10 and vulnerable individuals must be accompanied by a responsible adult throughout their entire visit to an ACLS branch. A vulnerable individual is a person with

mental or physical impairment who is unable to protect himself/herself from abuse or exploitation or to comprehend and comply with ACLS policies.

The safety of children left alone in a library building is a serious concern of the library staff. **The responsibility for the safety and behavior of children in the library rests with the parent/caregiver and not with the library personnel.** Library employees cannot be responsible for children who are left unattended or demonstrating inappropriate behavior.

Children under the age of 10 must have an actively engaged parent or responsible adult in the immediate vicinity of and in visual contact with the child. The assigned caregiver must be a responsible person and must carry emergency contact information. If a child under 10 years of age is attending a library program, the parent or caregiver must remain in the immediate vicinity of the program and must immediately join the child at the end of the program.

If a child under 10 years of age is found unattended, library staff will attempt to locate the parent/caregiver in the library and inform him/her of the policy. If the parent/caregiver cannot be found, or if the child is found unattended again, the police will be called for assistance.

However, parents are still responsible for the actions and well-being of their child(ren). Patrons, including children, using inappropriate behavior may be asked to leave the library. All unaccompanied children at the library must have the telephone number of someone who can assist them in an emergency. It is the responsibility of the parent/caregiver to be accessible to pick up the child at any time.

Library Programs

Library staff is not responsible for supervision of children during library programs or events.

Children age 10 or older may be permitted to attend a library program without a parent or caregiver. No unattended child under the age of 10 may participate in such a program without the supervision of a parent or responsible adult.

For programs with smaller attendance (e.g. craft event, book group), registration should be completed in advance of the event by the parent or caregiver, including a phone number where he/she can be reached. Depending on the age of the child and type of program, children over 10 may be left unattended to participate in the program as long as there is a sufficient ratio of staff/adults to participants. As a guideline, there should be one staff member or parent/caregiver/adult volunteer for every ten (10) children over the age of 10 participating in a program.

For programs with larger attendance (30 or more participants, e.g. library-sponsored parties, certain performers, movie nights), individuals can pre-register, but if an individual has not pre-registered, he/she must register on the day of the program by filling out the designated program sign in sheet.

For all programs and events, library staff is not responsible for supervision of the children during the event. Parents/caregivers are responsible.

It is the prerogative of ACLS staff to decide whether a specific behavior is to be considered unacceptable.

Failure to comply with these policies may result in removal from an ACLS Library, loss of library privileges, or arrest.

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