

TITLE: Customer Conduct – Management of

POLICY: A-1009

AUTHORITY: Chief Executive Officer

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POLICY STATEMENT

Edmonton Public Library (EPL) customers and staff expect and deserve a welcoming and pleasant environment in which to use the Library’s services and facilities. On occasion, the conduct of an individual may disturb this environment. In organizations that deal with the public, issues are bound to arise. These may range in seriousness from unintentional disruptive conduct, such as whistling, to actual physical assault. Individuals may not be aware that their conduct is disruptive.

Disruptive and/or inappropriate conduct requires staff involvement when it interferes with other persons’ use of the Library and/or when it could result in injury to self or others. Violations of library rules and expectations may result in restriction of Library privileges, including suspension from library facilities and services. Depending on the seriousness of the offence, violations may result in prosecution.

Disruptive and/or Inappropriate Conduct

Disruptive and/or inappropriate conduct by an individual(s) includes, but is not limited to:

- excessive noise
- cursing
- damage of property
- sexual harassment
- sleeping
- smell that is highly offensive
- inappropriate attire for a public space, such as no shoes/shirt.
- contravention of health and safety guidelines

Disruptive or inappropriate conduct will be addressed. Each situation is different. Staff must use judgment and good common sense when dealing with disruptive conduct or complaints about conduct. What may be disruptive to one individual may not be disruptive to another. If questions arise, staff are requested to speak with a colleague or a supervisor to determine the scope of the concern.

Young children may be unintentionally disruptive. It is important that staff support the caregiver in dealing with the situation.

There is no all-encompassing approach for dealing with disruptive or inappropriate conduct; a usual course of action should be:

1. The staff member approaches the individual(s) and requests that they stop the disruptive conduct, explains why the specific conduct is disruptive or inappropriate and informs them of what conduct is acceptable. If the behaviour persists, they are informed that they may be asked to leave the Library. Generally, for minor incidents, one statement is made before the individual(s) are required to leave. For minor offenses, particularly those involving youth, encourage people to return to the Library at a later time.
2. If the individual(s) are required to leave, staff may need the support of either another staff member, a manager, a security or peace officer (where available) or, if the situation warrants, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS).
 - a) *At the Stanley A. Milner Library:*
Staff may contact the security guard for support. If the situation demands, staff and/or the security guard will call EPS or peace officers for assistance.
 - b) *At the branches:*
 - If the branch is a “standalone” building, the staff member may call EPS or EPL contracted security.
 - If the branch is located within a mall and arrangements are in place with mall security, the staff may call for help from mall security guards¹ or call EPS.
 - c) Serious instances of disruptive or inappropriate customer conduct require staff to complete an EPL Incident Report and are to be discussed/shared with the manager. If the staff member has found a particular episode to be very distressing, the manager may refer the staff member to Human Resources for assistance.
 - d) It is important that serious incidents be shared with the manager, as a follow-up conversation and a suspension may be warranted.

Food and Beverages

Consumption of food and non-alcoholic beverages is permitted in the public areas of the Library, with the exception of Makerspace areas, provided doing so does not result in any damage to library materials, furnishings or equipment.

Criminal Activity

Criminal activities are not tolerated and could result in legal action.

Harassment

Harassment may include both active and passive threats and advances to staff or other individuals. Outright harassment is against the law and is not tolerated. The individual(s) are informed that their conduct is not acceptable and are asked to leave. At all locations, it is important that the situation be shared with the manager, as a follow-up conversation and a suspension may be warranted.

¹ *Shopping mall security guards serve the public areas of the shopping malls. Individual tenants are responsible for their own security. However, mall security guards will assist in serious situations. Managers of library branches in shopping malls or other public facilities with security guards are requested to discuss security policies and practice with the appropriate mall or public administration officials.*

If EPS are involved, library staff may be asked to complete a witness statement and follow through with whatever action is necessary.

Verbal Abuse

Individuals may become verbally aggressive or abusive for a variety of reasons, some related to service concerns. When dealing with an aggressive or abusive individual, the staff member should:

- Remain calm as a strategy to diffuse the high emotional state of the customer.
- Explain in a composed, business-like manner that the conduct is inappropriate.
- If the individual(s) do not respond to the staff member's explanation, the next level of authority is called upon or an avenue of appeal is explained. Business cards of managers are made available.
- If the communication is by telephone, the staff member calmly explains to the individual that the telephone call is being terminated and hangs up the receiver.
- Seek staff support as needed and complete an incident report.

Use of Alcohol and Drugs

Use of alcohol and drugs includes possession and being under the influence. The sale, consumption of, or visible intoxication by, alcohol or drugs is prohibited in the Library. If any of these situations occurs:

- a) *At the Stanley A. Milner Library:* Staff or security guard will escort the individual out of the building and may call 211, EPS or 911.
- b) *At the branches:* Staff will request that the individual leave the library and may call 211, EPS or 911. For those locations in a mall, mall security may be contacted for support.

It is important to assess the individual's overall condition in order to determine the appropriate action. When an individual exhibits medical concerns, is incapable of caring for themselves, is likely to be a danger to themselves or others, and/or is violent, staff need to contact 211 (24 hour information and referral line to help people connect to social, health or government service). A 911 call is for emergency situations.

Use or Display of Weapons

This may include possession of a weapon or threats made with a weapon. In the event that anyone is threatened with a weapon, the individual is to immediately go to a safe location and:

- a) *At the Stanley A. Milner Library:* If the situation allows, contact a security guard who will call EPS. In the absence of a guard, the staff member should call EPS.
- b) *At the branches:* Staff will call EPS.

Unless the staff member is absolutely certain that the weapon is a toy, it is to be considered a dangerous weapon.

Vandalism

Use the following are guidelines when dealing with cases of vandalism, attempted theft or theft of library materials.

Vandalism occurs when individual(s) are observed damaging Library property (including facilities, materials and equipment). Vandalism can range from minor (e.g. damage to a book) to major (e.g. destruction of library equipment).

In cases where there is proof of minor vandalism to library property, replacement charges may be posted to the cardholder's account. It is important that staff share the situation with the manager should follow-up action be warranted (conversation with the individual, possible suspension).

In other cases of vandalism, the staff member completes an incident report and the manager makes a recommendation for suspension. For serious cases, the manager will contact EPS.

If the individual has a valid Edmonton Public Library card, charges may be posted to the cardholder's account according to the [Circulation Manual – Billing Users](#)

If the customer does not have a valid Edmonton Public Library card, use the guidelines as outlined below in Theft.

Theft

An unsuccessful effort to unlawfully remove Library property is defined as attempted theft.

Attempted theft occurs within the Library area when an individual willfully:

- tries to remove Library material from the premises without borrowing the material, is stopped at checkout, and either:
 - steps back and abandons the material in the Library when detected, or
 - hands over the material to the staff when detected

Theft occurs when an individual unlawfully removes Library property from the premises. This includes:

- succeeding in taking material outside of the Library without properly checking it out
- refusing to stop and/or turn over Library property

If theft or attempted theft is observed, staff need to contact their supervisor. At the Stanley A. Milner Library, Security will also be contacted. Incident reports are to be completed.

Theft and attempted theft is subject to a system-wide suspension as outlined in: [Customer Suspensions- Short and Long Term](#) and reporting to Edmonton Police Services (EPS).

Staff must inform a parent or guardian if a person under eighteen is involved in an incident.

Related Bylaws and Policies

- [Library Use Board Policy \(B-2028\)](#)
- [Public Internet Access Board Policy \(B-2010\)](#)
- [Privacy and Confidentiality of Customer Information Board Policy \(B-2005\)](#)
- [Fraudulent Behaviour](#)
- [Children – Unattended](#)
- [Workplace Violence](#)

Related Administrative Procedures

- [Customer Suspensions - Short and Long Term](#)
- [Library Online Business Rules](#)
- [Library Use Fee Schedule](#)
- [Privacy and Confidentiality of Customer Information \(A-1052\)](#)