

# NWRL SURVIVAL MANUAL

## INTRODUCTION

All NWRL staff members have the responsibility to keep the library as pleasant an environment for the public as possible. This includes discouraging disruptive behavior in the library and coping with emergencies. The following procedures provide guidance for how to handle difficult situations that may occur in a library setting.

If someone has exhibited lewd and lascivious behavior such as exposing themselves, the library shall have the right to ban that person up to and including permanently. This policy shall include all past occurrences. The NWRL Board shall send a letter to the offender by registered mail to say: because of his/her conduct, he/she has been banned to enter the library. If he/she attempts to enter, it will be considered trespassing and the police will be called. A copy of the letter will be sent to the police.

### Complaints, Accidents, Emergencies

**POLICIES:** All library users have a right to question library policies and procedures. When such situations arise, staff members should:

Be receptive and nonjudgmental. Listen carefully to the patrons's questions or complaints. Explain the library's policy and show a written copy when necessary. Some examples of situations that may occur are as follows:

**CIRCULATION RECORDS** - Take all necessary steps to insure the individual's circulation records are accurate. If the patron still has questions, refer them to the Director. Remember that circulation records are confidential. At no time may library staff identify the names of library patrons with specific materials to anyone but the patron.

**LIBRARY MATERIALS AND SELECTION** - When an individual questions the selection of library materials, refer to the "Selection Policy" and inform the patron that they may fill out the form "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials." This form is submitted to the Director for processing.

**SOLICITORS** - Soliciting is strictly prohibited. Patrons are not to sell raffle tickets, candy, etc. in the library. If a violation of this regulation is witnessed, explain the library's policy to the patron.

**PETITIONS** - Circulating petitions among library patrons and staff is prohibited. Follow the same action as in Solicitation.

**PETS** - Pets are not allowed in the library except for special programs. One exception is Seeing Eye dogs. If a violation is witnessed, explain library's policy

to the patron.

**SMOKING** - Smoking is strictly prohibited in public facilities, to include the library.

## **INCIDENTS:**

**INJURY OR SUDDEN ILLNESS OF PATRON** - If a patron is injured or becomes ill and requires medical attention, call 911. Do not move the patron. Wait for the paramedic team. Make the patron as comfortable as possible and inform him/her that emergency help is coming. Clear the area of bystanders and remove any obstacles (small furniture, book trucks) that may be in the path of the emergency assistance crew.

Obtain the name, address and telephone number of the injured person as well as any witnesses, if appropriate. Also note the names of staff members who were at the scene. Complete an incident report and submit to Director.

**INJURY OR SUDDEN ILLNESS OF STAFF** - Follow same emergency procedures as for patrons. Secure necessary worker's compensation forms when injury is job-related. Complete incident report form and submit to the Director.

**FIRE** - It is the responsibility of any staff member to call 911 if a fire starts in the building. (Always know the location of fire extinguishers for a minor occurrence.) After 911 is called, EXIT all people from the building immediately. Make a final check in the stacks and lavatories before exiting yourself.

**ILLEGAL OR VIOLENT BEHAVIOR** - If a patron is exhibiting illegal behavior, or behavior which could be potentially violent, call 911 immediately. Do not approach this person. Notify Director as soon as possible. Also file an incident report.

If a staff member or a patron witnesses the use or sale of **ILLEGAL DRUGS**, notify the police. Also notify Director as soon as possible. File an incident report.

If a staff member witnesses what appears to be **ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR TO A CHILD**, notify the police. Or, if a child says something about abusive behavior while visiting the library, contact the police. Also notify the Director and file an incident report.

**BOMB THREATS** - If a bomb threat is received, keep the caller on the line as long as possible. Try to write down every word spoken by the person. Ask for the location of the bomb or time of possible detonation. Pay particular attention to peculiar background noises such as motors running, background music, and any other noises which may give a clue as to where the call is being made. Immediately after the caller hangs up, call 911 and notify the Director. File an incident report.

**WEAPONS** - It is unlawful to carry, display or draw a dangerous weapon in a manner and a place that intimidates another or that warrants alarm for the safety of others persons. If anyone enters the library with a weapon other than a sheathed knife, call the police immediately and notify the Director. File an incident report.

## **NON-EMERGENCIES**

**POWER FAILURE** - During daylight hours, the library will remain open. Manually charge out library materials and request patrons to exit dark areas. After daylight hours, request patrons to leave the building. Station staff near door to inform incoming patron of the power failure. If power remains off longer than one hour, close the library. Notify radio stations of closure.

**OBSCENE OR THREATENING TELEPHONE CALLS** - If a threatening call is received, hang up and call the police immediately. Notify the director and file an incident report after the police are finished filing their report. Obscene calls should be handled by hanging up on the caller. If the caller persists by making additional calls, notify the police and the Director. File an incident report.

**SEXUAL DEVIANTS** - If someone is suspiciously watching or following a patron or staff member, write down a description of the person. Notify the police if it happens a second time. Call 911 immediately if a patron is exposing themselves. Notify the Director and file an incident report.

**DRUGS** - It is not always obvious whether a person who is acting strangely is under the influence of drugs. If the problem is not severe, but the patron is disturbing others, ask him/her to leave the library. Call the police if necessary. Notify the Director and file an incident report.

**DRINKING** - If the patron has been drinking before entering the library, but behavior is not offensive, this is not a problem. If the patron is loud, obnoxious, or if other patrons are complaining, take action. Tell the patron to leave the library, stating that disruptive behavior is not allowed in the library. Call the police if necessary. File an incident report and notify the Director.

## **PROBLEM BEHAVIOR:**

Problem behavior is any behavior which violates or restricts the rights of others to use the library. Deal with problem patrons with courtesy, tact, calmness and

common sense. If behavior becomes very difficult, ask patron to leave the library. Call the police, if necessary, to enforce this rule.

**DISTURBANCE** - When observing a disturbance, approach the individual and explain the library regulation that is being violated. Ask the patron to leave the library if the behavior does not stop.

**ANGRY OR IRATE PATRONS** - Dealing with angry or irate patrons is a problem everyone faces who works with the public. Remain calm and listen attentively to elicit all information about the complaint. Paraphrase what the patron said. When the problem is completely understood, take action. If the complaint is legitimate, write it down and submit to Director. When not legitimate, refer the patron to the library's policy. Alternatives which do not violate the policy may be suggested, which may alleviate the situation. If a patron speaks in an abusive or obscene manner, tell patron this language is not appropriate and ask him/her to leave the library.

**EMOTIONALLY/MENTALLY HANDICAPPED** - An emotionally or mentally handicapped patron has the same right to use the library as any other patron. If the patron is disturbing others, explain that it must be stopped or they will be asked to leave the library.

**GROUP BEHAVIOR** - If a group of people are exhibiting rowdy behavior, ask them to stop. If the group continues to be rowdy, give them a second warning. Ask them to leave the library on the third warning. Call the police if necessary.

Adopted August 20, 1998

**NORTHWEST REGIONAL LIBRARY  
INCIDENT REPORT**

Type of incident:

Disturbance \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency \_\_\_\_\_

Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Day \_\_\_\_\_

Name of patron (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Incident \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

People Involved/Witnesses

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Record of Calls made:

Police \_\_\_\_\_ Fire Department \_\_\_\_\_ Ambulance \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Call \_\_\_\_\_ Time personnel arrived \_\_\_\_\_

Officer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

First aid given \_\_\_\_\_

Other solution \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of staff member handling incident

If patron refuses help for injury or illness, please ask for signature below:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Patron's Signature)

File Report in Director's Office  
APPENDIX A: HELPFUL HINTS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH PROBLEM PATRONS

Incidents which involve problem patrons are among the most difficult situations library staff members face. Problem patrons are often skillful manipulators who know how to use a staff member's feelings of doubt, guilt, pity, embarrassment, and fear to their best advantage. In all dealings with patrons who are causing trouble, it is important to assess the seriousness of the situation as early in the confrontation as possible.

The following general suggestions might be helpful in dealing with problem patrons:

1. Listen carefully and assess the situation. Problem patrons often provide clues about their motivation and likely course of behavior. Take the time to evaluate the situation before acting.
2. Maintain a calm, friendly, nonjudgmental attitude. Staying calm will often help to defuse an unpleasant situation and will enable you to exercise better judgment.
3. Avoid a loud tone of voice or use of phrases that might be considered moralizing or condescending.
4. Use common sense in dealing with problem patrons.
5. When you understand what the problem is, take immediate action.
6. Explain your position in firm unambiguous language. It is important to convince problem causers that you are in charge. Do not become involved in bargaining or argument - this may escalate a confrontation.
7. Do not allow yourself to be sidetracked by the patron. Simply repeat the library's position firmly, as often as necessary.
8. Suggest suitable, realistic alternative.
9. State sanctions. Let the patron know what will happen if problem behavior does not stop. (e.g. "You will have to leave the library," "I will call the police.")
10. Be alert to signs that a patron is being disruptive, as other patrons are always not quick to report a problem. These signs include:
  - a. Patrons moving away from another patron
  - b. Patrons starting at another patron
  - c. Patrons looking at staff members as a form of complaint
11. Call outside help if necessary. Be aware of which agencies should be called upon for particular problems.
12. If the patrons appear to be dangerous, call the police. Then ask other patrons to move away from the disturbed patron for their safety. All staff should also move away. Do not attempt to stop the patron if he/she decides to leave library.
13. Notify the Director.

14. File incident report.

