

TITLE: Customer Conduct – Management of **POLICY:** A-1009

AUTHORITY: Chief Executive Officer

<i>Effective:</i> April 26, 2010	<i>Reviewed:</i>	<i>Revised:</i> February 25, 2015
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Edmonton Public Library (EPL) customers and staff expect and deserve a safe and pleasant environment in which to use the Library’s services and facilities. On occasion, the conduct of a library customer may disturb this environment. In organizations which 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 customer 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 suspension or 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 or by small groups includes, but is not limited to:

- excessive noise
 - cursing
 - damage of property
 - sexually suggestive or overt conduct
 - sleeping
 - smell that is highly offensive
 - unwanted and inappropriate touching
- Disruptive or inappropriate conduct should be addressed. Each situation is different. Staff must use judgment and common sense when dealing with disruptive customer conduct or complaints about customer 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, but a usual course of action should be:

1. The staff member approaches the customer, asks the customer to stop the disruptive conduct, explains why the specific conduct is disruptive or inappropriate and informs the customer of what conduct is acceptable. If the customer persists, they are informed that they may be asked to leave the Library. Generally, for minor incidents, one statement is made before the disruptive customer is required to leave. For minor offenses, particularly those involving youth, customers should be encouraged to return to the Library at a later time.
2. If the customer is required to leave, staff may need to approach the individual with 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:*
The person in charge 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 person in charge may call EPS or EPL’s security service;
 - If the branch is located within a mall and arrangements are in place with mall security, the person in charge may call for help from mall security guards* or call EPS.
 - * *Mall Security Guards*
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.
 - 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 or library services coordinator. 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.

Harassment

Harassment may include both active and passive threats and advances to staff or other customers. Outright harassment is against the law and is not tolerated. The customer is informed that his or her conduct is not acceptable and is asked to leave. At all locations, it is important that the situation be shared with the manager as a follow-up conversation and/or a suspension of the customer may be warranted.

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:

- Explain to the customer in a calm, business-like manner that his or her conduct is inappropriate.
- Remain calm as a strategy to diffuse the high emotional state of the customer.
- If the customer does 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 and library services coordinators 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 quietly 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 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:* The Manager, person in charge and/or security guard will escort the individual out of the building and may call 211, EPS or 911.
- b) *At the branches:* The Manager, Library Services Coordinator or senior 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.

Security and staff must 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 911 or other social agency (e.g. Bissell Centre's 24/7 Mobile Assistance Program).

Food and Beverages

Consumption of food and non-alcoholic beverages only will be permitted in the general public areas of the Library, provided it does not result in any damage to library materials, furnishings or equipment.

Use or Display of Weapons

This may include possession of a weapon or threats made with a weapon. In the event that a staff member or customer is threatened with a weapon, the employee or customer 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

Vandalism occurs when a customer damages 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 of minor vandalism to library collections, replacement charges are either collected from the customer immediately or posted to the card holder's account. It is important that staff share the situation with the manager as other follow-up action (conversation with the customer, possible suspension) may be warranted.

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

Theft

Theft occurs when a customer unlawfully removes Library property (including equipment or materials) from the premises. An unsuccessful effort to unlawfully remove Library property is defined as attempted theft.

If theft or attempted theft is observed by Library staff, staff should contact their Manager or person in charge. At the Stanley A. Milner Library, Security will also be contacted. Incident reports should be completed.

Theft and attempted theft is subject to suspension of borrowing privileges or a system-wide suspension as outlined in the [Customer Suspensions- Short and Long Term](#) Thefts of more than \$100 are reported to EPS.

Related Bylaws and Policies

- [Library Use Board Policy \(B-2028\)](#)
- [Public Internet Access Board Policy \(B-2010\)](#)
- [Fraudulent Behaviour](#)
- [Children – Unattended](#)
- [Workplace Violence](#)

Related Administrative Procedures

- [Customer Suspensions - Short and Long Term](#)
- [Library Online Business Rules](#)
- [Incident Reports](#)