



# SAN BENITO COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

470 Fifth Street, Hollister, CA 95023

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## San Benito County Free Library Behavior Policy

### Policy Statement

The San Benito County Free Library welcomes everyone to the library on library business. This includes reading, doing research, asking questions, using the internet, checking library materials in and out, and attending library programs and/or meetings.

The San Benito County Free Library is designed to be a safe and comfortable place for all members of the public to use. Patrons are expected to observe the rights of all other patrons and of all staff members. The San Benito County Free Library's Behavior Policy is intended to protect the rights and safety of library patrons, to protect the rights and safety of staff members, and to preserve and protect the library's materials, facilities, and property.

### Definition and Scope

Patrons who exhibit disruptive behavior in the library will be asked to follow the rules listed in the behavior policy. Patrons who continue to cause disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the library premises.

Disruptive behavior is generally defined as "any behavior that interferes with the normal operation of the library or which interferes with another patron's ability to use the library."

The County Librarian and other staff members to whom the County Librarian delegates the authority (and whom are on duty at the time) shall have the responsibility for enforcing the Behavior Policy and determining when behavior in the library is inappropriate.

### Regulations

The following types of disruptive behavior will not be tolerated in the library:

1. Any behavior that endangers the safety or health of others.
2. Violation of any local, state, or federal law.
3. Vandalism or deliberate destruction of library materials.
4. Theft of library materials or the personal property of other patrons and staff.
5. Taking library materials into the lobby, Barbara Room, or restrooms if the materials have not been checked out.
6. Use of abusive or intimidating language or gestures to patrons or staff members.
7. Behavior that is willfully annoying, harassing, or threatening to another person.

(Harassment is defined as any action taken or situation created intentionally to produce psychological or physical discomfort, embarrassment, or ridicule. Harassment is characterized



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by requests for sexual contact, unwelcome physical advances, or conduct (verbal or physical) of a nature that is intimidating, demeaning, hostile, offensive, or potentially dangerous to self or others.)

8. Soliciting of any kind and/or asking for signatures on petitions.
9. Monopolizing library resources or staff time.
10. Use of the library telephone for personal business, unless in an emergency or a request for transportation.
11. Loud talking, laughing, or using audio equipment or cell phones that disturbs or could disturb other patrons.
12. Consumption of food or drink inside the library.
13. Use of skateboards, roller blades, skate shoes, or scooters inside the library or on library property.
14. Inappropriate dress, such as bathing suits and wet clothing or not wearing a shirt or shoes in the library.
15. Excessive displays of affection, including any sexual conduct or physical contact deemed inappropriate for a public place.
16. Blocking library aisles or doorways.
17. Loitering on library premises.
18. Sleeping and/or lying on library furniture or floor.
19. Photography or filming on the library premises without prior express written permission from library staff.
20. Use of alcohol, cigarettes, or illegal substances in the library.
21. Poor hygiene or body odor that constitutes a nuisance to others.
22. Other kinds of behavior deemed inappropriate in the opinion of the Director or designated staff members.

**Per California State law, all unvaccinated guests aged two-years-old and older must wear a mask or face shield covering the nose and mouth at all times while inside the San Benito County Free Library. Guests who are unwilling or unable to comply with this law will be asked to leave the library building and utilize our Curbside Service.**

**The library staff reserves the right to ask a patron to leave the library for any of the reasons listed above.**



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## Procedure

**Enforcement of these regulations may take the form of any of the following, depending on the severity of the misconduct, which will be determined by the staff on duty at the time. These disciplinary procedures are guidelines. The library may implement any procedure listed, including an immediate ban from the library premises at any time.**

- **Minor Disruption:** In the case of a minor disruption, the library patron will receive two warnings. If the behavior continues, the patron may be asked to leave the library for a stated period of suspension.
- **Extreme Misconduct:** In the case of any misconduct that, in the judgment of a staff member, is extreme, the offender may be given only one warning, may be ordered to leave the library immediately for a stated period of suspension, or local law enforcement may be called.
- **Permanent Ban from the Library:** Patrons who engage in repeated disruptive behaviors that interfere with others' use of the library or the general operation of the library or engage in behaviors that violate the law may be permanently banned from the San Benito County Free Library premises by the County Librarian. A written notice of permanent ban may be given to the patron. A written appeal of the County Librarian's decision may be made within 30 days.

**In cases where a policy violation occurs involving a child under the age of 17**, the staff will give the child one warning. If the behavior continues, the library director will inform the parents that their child was asked to leave the library for a stated period of suspension and explain the circumstances. Parents of minor children may be held responsible for any damages caused to library materials or computers by their child.

If the child continues to cause disruptive behavior in the library, the child and parents or guardian must meet with the County Librarian to review policy rules before the child can return to use the library.

Note that young children under the age of 12 must be supervised by an adult while at the library.

Exceptions to the above may be authorized by the County Librarian and/or other designee.

*Neither the County Librarian nor any other member of the library staff is a professional medical or legal expert. All actions taken shall be subject to the best opinion of the County Librarian and library staff.*



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*The San Benito County Free Library staff will be consistent with enforcing this Behavior Policy to ensure the safety of patrons and staff and create an environment that is enjoyable to our patrons. This policy also ensures that the quality of library materials is maintained.*

## Guidelines for Dealing with difficult patrons:

1. Remain friendly and calm in addressing the patron situation. Identify yourself as a library employee.
2. Do not touch the patron.
3. Discuss the issue with the patron away from other patrons in the library if possible.
4. The staff member can **give a copy of the library's written policy to the patron** if needed.
5. If the patron refuses to leave the library after being asked to do so, or becomes abusive or aggressive, the staff member may call the local law enforcement and ask that law enforcement escort the offending patron from the library premises.
6. Any incident of policy violation must be documented by the County Librarian or library staff with the date in which the incident occurred and a brief description of the incident.

*Last updated 06/15/2021. Adapted from the Denver Public Library Behavior Policy.*