



## SAFE LIBRARY USE POLICY

Policy #: 4001

Effective Date: May 22, 2023

### I. POLICY STATEMENT

Sonoma County Library provides service to all people regardless of any individual characteristic, including all races, all genders, all sexual orientations, all religions, all abilities, all ages, all national or ethnic origins, all languages, all citizenship statuses, all economic statuses, all political affiliations. Sonoma County Library is an inclusive community hub where people intersect and thrive.

It is the goal of the library to be open and accessible to all. This Safe Library Use Policy ("policy") protects the rights and safety of library users and staff by setting safety standards for all library users, including minors and vulnerable adults, to ensure the library premises and resources are maintained in a safe and welcoming manner. This policy also protects the library's resources, equipment, and spaces so that everyone may use and enjoy the library as intended.

All library users are required to follow this policy. The library has the responsibility to suspend library use in the manner described herein for any person who is unable or unwilling to follow this policy.

### II. DEFINITIONS

- **Caregiver:** A person age 14 or older with the social and emotional maturity, as well as physical ability, to aid and be responsible for the behavior of another person in their care.
- **Harassment:** Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct that demeans or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual based upon that individual's characteristic(s), including age, ancestry, color, physical or mental disability, reproductive health decision-making, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, medical condition, military and veteran status, national origin, race, religious creed, sex, sexual orientation, and any other classification protected by law.
- **Library Premises:** Sonoma County Library buildings, facilities, surrounding property, equipment, collections, and resources, including those offered online, offsite or via phone.
- **Library User:** An individual accessing library premises.

- **Minor:** An individual under the age of 18.
- **Suspension:** A determined time period during which an individual is excluded from library premises.
- **Vulnerable Adult:** An individual age 18 or older who has a functional, mental, and/or physical disability who is unable to independently care for themselves while on library premises.

### III. POLICY

#### A. Scope

This policy shall apply to all library users with the goal of keeping the library safe and welcoming for all. This policy describes examples of unsafe activities and typical outcomes for users who impact or endanger safety. Library staff are authorized to apply this policy, other library policies, and applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations to maintain safety on library premises. The library retains the right, at its discretion, to take any action necessary to ensure a safe environment. The Library Director or designee may give additional direction consistent with this policy that assists in its implementation.

#### B. User Responsibilities

All library users shall do the following. Failure to do so is grounds for suspension, generally in line with the examples in the library's Policy #4001A, Safety Issues and Recommended Suspension Lengths.

- Be responsible for their conduct, including how they conduct themselves on library premises and during library programs as well as with library staff and other users.
- Communicate with respect. The library does not tolerate derogatory, threatening, harassing, or abusive behavior, including hateful language or gestures.
- Use library premises, equipment, and resources as intended, and ask for assistance from library staff whenever the library user is unclear on how to do so.
- Maintain possession and control of their behavior and belongings at all times.
- Follow all library policies and directions from library staff.
- Shall not take any action to inhibit the library premises from being safe.
- Shall not enter or impede access to areas marked not open to the public.
- Shall not engage in any activity prohibited by library policy or local, state, or federal law, such as interfering with library employees' work. (See, Cal. Penal Code, § 602.1(b).)
- Shall not endanger other library users. (See, Cal. Penal Code, § 602.1(b).)
- Shall comply with all directives regarding proper conduct and behavior, as listed in the library's Policy #4001A, Safety Issues and Recommended Suspension Lengths.

Library users shall comply with all instructions from library staff to stop any prohibited behavior. Individuals who fail to abide by staff instruction shall be subject to penalty,

including but not limited to suspension pursuant to this policy, arrest for trespassing, and other civil and criminal liabilities. (See, e.g., Cal. Pen. Code, § 602.1(b).)

Guidelines regarding specific safety issues and typical suspensions are listed in the library's Policy #4001A, Safety Issues and Recommended Suspension Lengths.

### **C. Vulnerable Adults**

Vulnerable adults must be accompanied by a qualified and available caregiver.

The library is not responsible for the care or supervision of vulnerable adults on library premises, nor is it responsible if a vulnerable adult leaves library premises.

### **D. Minors**

The Sonoma County Library welcomes and encourages minors to visit library premises, use library resources and services, and attend library events. These additional standards apply to minors to protect their safety and the safe functioning of library premises.

- Minors age 8 or younger shall not be unattended on library premises at any time. Such minors shall be accompanied by a caregiver at all times and both individuals shall carry emergency contact information.
- Minors who, due to social, emotional, and/or physical reasons, require supervision to be safe on library premises shall not be unattended on library premises at any time. Such minors shall be accompanied by a caregiver at all times and both individuals shall carry emergency contact information.

Families should consider the following when deciding whether their minor child is ready to visit the library on their own:

- A minor age 8 or younger may not be unaccompanied on library premises.
- Library staff cannot, and will not, act in place of a caregiver, parent, or guardian.
- Library staff is not responsible if a minor leaves library premises.
- The library is a public building, open to all members of the community, and library staff is not responsible for monitoring interactions between library users.
- The library contains collections for all ages, as well as unfiltered Internet access, and library staff is not responsible for monitoring minors' access to such collections.
- Minors who fail to follow library policies may be subject to suspension from the library premises without warning. When possible, minors will be given the opportunity to contact a parent or guardian if suspended from library use.

### **E. Law Enforcement**

Library staff, at their discretion, may involve law enforcement in the event a library user appears to violate, or actually violates, this policy, other library policies, or any local, state, or federal law. In addition, staff may involve law enforcement if necessary to keep library staff, users, or premises safe.

Library staff may also contact law enforcement if a minor or vulnerable adult is left unattended at the library in violation of this policy. Before doing so, if the situation permits, library staff shall make a reasonable effort to first contact the minor or vulnerable adult's emergency contact.

## **F. Suspension and Administrative Review**

The library may suspend any library user's access to library premises at any time for violation of this policy, other library policies, or local, state, or federal law. To do so, the library shall issue a notice of suspension explaining the factual circumstances leading to the suspension, the law or regulation violated, the duration and terms of the suspension, and the user's right to appeal and how to do so.

A library user under a suspension shall not enter onto any library premises, nor be allowed to borrow materials, attend programs, or receive library services in any format, including by internet or telephone. Should a suspended user try to enter any library premises during their suspension period, staff may contact law enforcement for trespassing. Library suspensions do not preclude or supersede other consequences or penalties that may be imposed by law. The Library Director or designee has the authority to extend suspensions beyond the initial suspension period, based on safety concerns for library premises, staff, or other users.

A library user who has been suspended pursuant to this policy may appeal the decision. To appeal, the user must submit a written request for an administrative review to the Library Director within ten days of receipt of the notice of suspension. The request should be sent to the contact information below and should detail the reason or reasons the suspension should be revoked. The suspension remains in effect pending the administrative review process.

- 6135 State Farm Drive, Rohnert Park, CA 94928
- 707-545-0831
- [director@sonomalibrary.org](mailto:director@sonomalibrary.org)

The Library Director, or designee, shall review the notice of suspension and request for administrative review, and then issue a decision to either affirm, revoke, or modify the suspension within ten days of receipt of the request. The Director's decision shall be final.

## **IV. REVISION HISTORY:**

**Policy #:** 4001

**Effective Date:** May 22, 2023

**Significant Changes:**

- Policy name change; incorporation of Policy #4002, Unattended Children Policy; updated format; separation of Policy #4001A, Safety Issues and Recommended Suspension Lengths
- Review with Racial Equity Lens and trauma-informed perspectives

- Updated language to clarify safety issues, suspensions and law enforcement involvement; addition of definitions
- Addition of information about the safety of vulnerable adults
- Review for compliance with applicable laws
- Addition of administrative review procedures and description of the Library Director's role in administering this policy

**Previous Policies:** "Standards of Behavior," *last revised May 13, 2014*; and "Unattended Children Policy," *last revised May 3, 2016*.

**Approved by:** Library Commission