LS 501 Code of Conduct

Section: 500-Safety & Security
Effective: September 2026

Purpose

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library is supported by the taxes of the citizens of Hillsborough County who have a right to expect each of our facilities to be clean, pleasant, and safe places. This Code of Conduct is intended to protect the right of library customers to enjoy a safe library environment conducive to the use and enjoyment of library materials and services.

Policy

Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library observes all state and federal laws and local ordinances regarding public behavior. Customers must be engaged in activities associated with the use of a public library while on property. Customers not engaged in library activity or exhibiting behavior or actions deemed by staff to be detrimental to library operations will be required to leave the premises.

Threats of violence against staff or other library visitors are not tolerated. Even if a threat of violence is perceived as a joke, regardless of intent, it will result in immediate trespass from the premises. Threats of self-harm are taken seriously by staff, and law enforcement will immediately be notified.

Parents or guardians are responsible for the conduct and safety of persons under their care in accordance with LS204 Unattended Children. Individuals (minors or adults) requiring care or supervision must not be left unattended at any time including at closing. Children aged 12 and under must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or a responsible caregiver aged at least 14 years. Youth Services areas are intended for use by youth and their parents or caregivers. Adults not requiring immediate access to youth materials shall be required to relocate to other areas of the library.

The Library is not responsible for customers' belongings. If a customer informs staff that their personal property or vehicle has been stolen or damaged, staff will offer to assist in

contacting law enforcement for the customer to file a report. Customers must keep their belongings with them at all times and cannot leave them unattended on the premises. The Library reserves the right to limit the size or type of personal belongings that may be brought onto the property. Staff will dispose of unattended items that present a health risk immediately and follow LS 910 Lost or Abandoned Property for all other properties.

Strong body odor, open wounds, soiled clothing, infested belongings, such as roaches, ants, fleas, lice, bedbugs, etc. constitute a nuisance or health risk and impedes use of the library. Customers will be asked to leave and welcomed back once they eliminate the problem.

The following activities are **prohibited**:

Alcohol or Drugs: Possessing, consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on library property.
Animals: Bringing animals into the library is not permitted with the exception of service animals as defined by Florida Statute 413.08
Bicycles and Skateboards: Skateboarding, roller skating and riding bicycles or two-wheel scooters is not permitted inside the library or the parking lots. Bicycles, two-wheel scooters or similar items must be secured to the bike rack and cannot be inside the library.
Damaging or Stealing Library Property: Engaging in activities or behavior that result or may result in damage to library property is prohibited, including the following: • Abusing, vandalizing or misusing library property. • Damaging, destroying or removing library materials without proper check out.
Disruptive Behavior: Actions that interfere with the operations of the library or the refusal to follow the direction of library staff.
Entering Restricted Areas: Accessing or entering any designated staff or restricted area is prohibited.
Excessive Noise: Loud, boisterous, disruptive or any other behavior that can reasonably be expected to disturb others (for example, electronic devices and loud talking.)

Food or Drink: Eating food other than dry snacks in non-designated areas or at library computer stations is prohibited. Drinking beverages without lids or at library computer stations is not allowed.
Harassment or Vulgar Language: Intimidating, stalking or prolonged staring at other customers or staff is not permitted. Use of vulgar language such as swearing or name calling toward customers or staff is prohibited.
Hygiene: Strong body odor, open wounds, soiled or infested clothing/belongings, or any other activity that constitutes a nuisance or health risk to others are prohibited on library property.
Illegal Activity: Engaging in any activity that violates federal, or state law is prohibited on library property.
Inadequate Attire: Clothing must completely cover the upper torso, buttocks, and genitalia. Shoes must be always worn.
Misuse of Computers: Use of library's computer resources or wireless access to include accessing, displaying or distributing obscene images and/or bypassing daily use restrictions. Unplugging Library equipment or directly plugging devices into the Library network is prohibited (see LS801 Access to Electronic Resources).
Misuse of Restrooms: Bathing, shaving, washing clothes, loitering or other misuse of restrooms is prohibited.
Personal Belongings: Bringing personal items that do not fit comfortably under a desk is prohibited. All personal items must remain with the owner. Library staff will not watch personal belongings and are not responsible for items left unattended. Items may not obstruct aisles and walkways, or the entry or exits to the library.
Sexual Activity: All sexual acts are prohibited on Library property.
Sleeping & Loitering: Sleeping or the appearance of sleeping is not permitted in the library. Customers must be engaged in library activity.
Smoking or Vaping: Smoking, vaping including smokeless or e-cigarettes and other use of tobacco products are prohibited inside the library and close to entrances.
Unauthorized Selling or Soliciting: Selling or soliciting money or services on library property is prohibited (see LS 402 Petitioning).
Violation of Trespass

Violence or Threat of Violence: Threats of violence against staff or other library visitors are not tolerated. Even if a threat of violence is perceived as a joke, regardless of intent, it will result in immediate trespass from the premises. Threats of self-harm are taken seriously by staff and law enforcement will immediately be notified.
Weapons: Bringing weapons into the library is prohibited unless authorized by law. It is the responsibility of customers to follow state weapon laws. Brandishing of an otherwise lawfully possessed weapon is prohibited.
Any other actions or behaviors deemed detrimental to library operations by staff.

Procedure

In all situations, customers should be treated with respect in a firm, but fair manner. Staff will assume good faith in all customer interactions and be consistent in fairly administering Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library policies.

Safety of the public and library staff is our priority. For any potentially dangerous or life-threatening situation, 911 should immediately be called and customers and staff moved to a safe area. Staff should be alert to their surroundings at all times and know who is in the building, where they are, and what they are doing.

Staff are authorized to take action when dealing with violations of this policy. Such action may include, but may not be limited to, warning the customer to stop the behavior, ordering the customer to leave the premises, or calling law enforcement to request a trespass warning. In determining which action is appropriate, staff should consider the nature of the violation, the customer's response to the warning, a pattern of violations or the seriousness of the violation. Staff should immediately go to help a co-worker if they perceive a potentially difficult situation. Violations of Code of Conduct need to be documented using the incident reporting software. See Attachment A for Staff Enforcement of Code of Conduct.

Law enforcement will be called to trespass when customers repeatedly fail to respond to a warning, become belligerent or violent or commit an illegal act. Branches within the City of Tampa should call Tampa Police Department; branches in the unincorporated County should call the Sheriff's Office. Generally, but not in all cases, the in-charge person

authorizes the call. Staff should make note of the violator's appearance and write down a description with as much detail as possible. Staff must not approach or attempt to detain the violator but should keep track of the location. With the officer present, staff will verbally explain to the customer that they are being trespassed from the property and cannot return for one year.