



Facilities and Space Use Policy

Purpose

The library recognizes the vital role that space plays in the exchange of ideas and information, and offers a variety of spaces and facilities as a public service. This policy outlines principles and directives that shall be observed in the delivery and use of space and facilities as a service.

Scope

This policy applies to members of the public and their use of designated public spaces on library property, including but not limited to stacks, computer labs, seating & play areas, lobbies, ingress/egress areas, and library-operated/controlled outdoor areas such as gardens and parking lots.

This policy may not apply to library-sponsored space or facility use, nor to certain areas in the vicinity of the library, such as streets, sidewalks, or other properties not belonging to the library.

General Rules of Conduct

In order to create a welcoming, safe, comfortable, and inclusive environment that facilitates the use of library resources, the behaviors below are not permitted.

Health & Safety

- Illegal activity of any kind, or activity that violates any library policy
- Unattended children (see additional guidance below)
- Threatening, harassing, or intimidating language or behavior
- Disorderly, disruptive, or boisterous conduct; running, throwing, horseplay, etc.
- Possession of any weapon, except as permitted by law, which must be secured or holstered, and not brandished or displayed in a threatening or intimidating manner
- Open flame or use of heating elements
- Intoxication; consumption or possession of intoxicating (nonmedical) substances
- Use of wheeled conveyances such as skateboards, bicycles, shopping carts, etc.; does not apply to assistive devices such as wheelchairs, strollers, etc. used for mobility
- Being in unauthorized areas, or remaining on library premises after closing or evacuation
- Not wearing footwear if ambulatory; not wearing clothing that covers the torso
- Unhygienic behavior or any conduct that may spread bodily substances
- Failure to observe safe food practices
- Animals brought inside, unless a service animal; unleashed animals anywhere on the premises, unless the handler is unable to leash a service animal because of a disability
- Insect infestation, either on an individual's person or in their living space



- Any other activity that threatens library security or the health, safety, and well-being of individuals

Disruptions

- Obscene, indecent, sexual, or lewd conduct
- Solicitation of the general public (see additional guidance below)
- Loud or avoidable noise in designated quiet areas
- Speaking on a phone or other communication device in unapproved areas
- Using auditory devices without headphones; may not apply to assistive devices
- Use of electronic smoking devices or tobacco products
- Strong odors of any kind
- Use of flashing lights or other visual disturbances, does not apply to assistive devices
- Any other sensory disturbances that interfere with use of library resources

Misuse of Library Space, Property, or Facilities

- Actual or potential damage, destruction, tampering, vandalism, or theft of property
- Use of areas and property other than for the intended purpose and by the intended users
- Sleeping, bathing, washing laundry, camping, or otherwise using the library for living or accommodation purposes
- Creating a custodial burden such as with food or drink, refuse, litter, dirt, etc.
- Blocking walkways, aisles, doorways, or otherwise interfering with ingress/egress or the free movement of individuals
- Unattended personal property (see additional guidance below)
- Leaving library premises during open hours while a vehicle is parked on library property or overnight parking
- Engaging on-duty staff in personal, social, or other activities not related to services
- Not following a reasonable request made by a library staff member

Personal Property

Personal property may not be stored at the library, and the library is not responsible for any items left on library premises, or for lost, stolen, or damaged personal items. There will be no compensation for items lost by members of the public. Any belongings found may be placed in lost-and-found and will be discarded after an amount of time determined by administration.

Solicitation & Sales

Solicitation of the general public is prohibited on library premises. Solicitation is defined as the act of asking for or trying to obtain something from someone. Examples include petitioning, canvassing, asking to sell something, panhandling, requesting rides, etc.

Any activities or events that are intended to achieve monetary gain are limited to defined spaces with a capacity of 5 or less. Some examples include sales of products or services, collecting attendance fees, the receipt or solicitation of contributions, donations, or fundraising, etc.



Children at the Library

All children aged 10 or younger, or dependents of any age who are vulnerable or unable to autonomously adhere to library policy, must be accompanied and closely attended by a caregiver at least 14 years old with the maturity and ability to effectively regulate the child's behavior and guard their safety. The library is not responsible for the care, supervision, or control of minors. Unattended children whose caregivers cannot be contacted may be placed in the care of local police.

Events & Activities Hosted by the Public

- Reservable spaces may be either open to the public or limited to a private audience.
- Public use or reservation of library space is granted on a first-come, first-served basis. Prior reservations shall have priority over walk-in space use requests.
- Equipment, if available, may be reserved at the time of application. Users are responsible for the correct use of and their own proficiency with library equipment.
- Space use must begin and conclude within the allotted reservation times, including any set up and clean up activities. Spaces may not be opened before the allotted reservation time and must be returned to their original state, configuration, and cleanliness.
- Failure to appear for scheduled reservations or to provide 24 hours advance notice of cancellations, or excessive cancellations, may result in loss of space & facility privileges.

Eligibility for Reservations

The host is the individual making a reservation. Hosts shall:

- Have a library card in good standing (for spaces with a capacity greater than 15)
- Produce any documentation related to a reservation if requested by library staff, such as ID, library card, proof of insurance, etc.
- Serve as a point of contact for the group or reservation
- Remain on the premises throughout the reservation or until the event ends
- Define a guest list or allowed attendees, if applicable and requested by the library
- Provide for or secure any auxiliary aids or services needed in compliance with the ADA
- Accept responsibility for any loss or damages resulting from use of facilities
- Report attendance to library staff at the conclusion of the reservation

If the host does not meet these responsibilities, the space or facility use may be terminated.

Publicity

Publicity prepared for activities and events hosted by members of the public (e.g., not sponsored by the library) must not identify or imply the library as a partner, sponsor, or similar, and may not use the library's branding. Written or spoken publicity must contain the following statement: "[Event or Group Name] is not sponsored or endorsed by the Porter County Public



Library System.” The library’s information may not be used as contact information for the organization or event.

Non-Competition with Library Services

The library has an interest in protecting its brand and the quality of library services delivered on its premises. As such, certain activities that closely emulate or resemble library services in manner or type are not permitted unless sponsored by the library. Any public activities that approximate library services will be asked to be restructured to a different format. If individuals or groups are not able or willing to restructure their events accordingly, the space use will be denied, cancelled, or terminated. Please see the appendix for additional guidance.

Library Rights and Responsibilities

The library reserves the right to close any forum or space it has opened for public use. The library also reserves the right to deny, cancel, terminate, or alter use of library spaces by the public for any of the following reasons:

- To accommodate library-sponsored use (with provisions, below)
- Use that does not comply with, or individuals or groups that have failed to comply with, library policy, procedures, or any applicable laws
- Groups or individuals with outstanding fines or fees owed to the library.
- A facility, weather, or other emergency

Public and Library Use Conflicts

Library staff and library partners shall have priority use of library spaces, facilities, equipment, or other resources. The library shall make a reasonable effort to avoid conflicts with public use and reservations of library resources. However, in the rare event that a conflict is unavoidable, the library will make a reasonable effort to give ample notice and to assist the group in reserving another date or library space. If an alternative accommodation cannot be arranged, there shall be no further obligation of the library to any members of the public.

Indemnification

Organizations, groups and individuals using Library meeting rooms and facilities take the premises "as is" and assume all risks of injury, including death or property damage, to members of the group, organization, event participants, and event spectators which might arise out of activities or out of conditions present on the facilities and groups. Further, all organizations, groups and individuals using Library meeting rooms and facilities agree to indemnify and hold harmless the Porter County Public Library System and its Trustees, Directors, agents and employees from and against all losses, damages, claims, costs and expenses (including reasonable attorney's fees and legal costs) arising from injury or death of any person(s), or damage to property resulting from any act or omission of such users or their employees, agents,



representatives, guests, invitees, or the general public to the extent that such losses, damages, claims, costs and expenses arise in connection with or relate to the organization's or individual's use of the library. Organizations or individuals using meeting rooms shall be liable for all damages, expense and loss, including theft and property loss, caused by any person who attends, participates in, or provides goods and services connected with the organization's or individual's use of the facility and all tangible property. Replacement value may be used by Porter County Public Library System to determine the damage cost charged.

Copyright restrictions apply to the use of Library meeting facilities and equipment. Library meeting facilities and equipment cannot be used to duplicate or show material protected by copyright law. Applicants may be liable for any infringement.

Access & Intellectual Freedom

In choosing to serve community space needs, the library cannot, under law, discriminate or deny access because of the viewpoint of speakers, the content of their speech, or because they are perceived as offensive, controversial, or are otherwise opposed by members of the community. Permission to use library facilities does not constitute the library's endorsement of the activities, speech, or views of the individual(s) involved.

The library board authorizes the director, or their designee, to develop and implement procedures in furtherance of this policy. Any procedural limitations on space or facility use may only apply to manner, time, & place, and must be applied equally for a given space to any who fall within the scope of this policy. No limitations shall be enacted as a result of the content of speech or expressed viewpoints, or in a way that is prejudicial towards any individual or group who may wish to use the space.

Enforcement

Conduct that does not comply with this policy may result in the loss of library privileges, such as account blocks, temporary or permanent removal from the premises, or no-trespass orders. The library reserves the right to immediately discharge individuals who are dangerous or in any way threatening. Library staff may take any measures reasonably appropriate to enforce this policy, including contacting law enforcement.



Appendix: Defined Library Services

When offered to the general public on library premises, these specific program formats are reserved exclusively for sponsorship by the Porter County Public Library System.

Early Literacy Programs ("Storytimes")

- **Definition of Prohibited Activity:** Any program marketed to the general public that involves a designated leader reading aloud from children's picture books or board books to a group of children, typically under the age of six. This definition includes activities that incorporate songs, rhymes, puppets, or developmental learning elements intended to promote early literacy skills.
- **Rationale:** The library invests in staff training and curriculum to provide high-quality, age-appropriate early literacy instruction. This service is a cornerstone of the library's educational mission. This definition protects the public from confusing third-party programs with the library's own evidence-based offerings. It does not prohibit private groups from reading to their own children, but rather the act of presenting the activity as a formal "Storytime" service to the public.

Facilitated Media Discussion Groups ("Book/Movie Clubs")

- **Definition of Prohibited Activity:** A program where a specific book, film, or other media is selected in advance for a group to read or view, with the primary purpose of a subsequent, leader-facilitated group discussion of that media. This applies to programs marketed to the general public as a "book club," "movie club," or similar discussion.
- **Rationale:** The library curates and facilitates discussion groups to foster critical thinking and introduce patrons to diverse materials. This definition is intended to prevent outside organizations from using the library as a venue for their own book clubs, which could create confusion or involve hidden costs. It does not prohibit groups who reserve a room to discuss a book on their own but prevents them from publicly advertising a competing "book club" service within the library.

Public Film Screenings

- **Definition of Prohibited Activity:** The public screening or exhibition of a commercially produced film or television program to a general audience. This includes events where participants are encouraged to talk, sing, or use props in coordination with the film.
- **Rationale:** The library pays for public performance licenses that legally permit it to show films to the public. Allowing outside groups to host their own public screenings would create significant legal and liability risks for the library. This definition protects the library from copyright infringement while allowing it to continue offering film screenings as a service. It does not apply to the viewing of original content created by the hosting group or media viewed for educational critique in a closed-group setting.



Appendix: History

Updated: August 20, 2025

- **Name changed** from “Public Conduct Policy” to “Space & Facilities Use Policy”
- **Changes** to the conduct policy include updated language concerning sales and solicitation, personal property section is rewritten, open flame and storage of items at the library is now prohibited.
- **Added** sections for scope, reservable space use, library rights & responsibilities, and access & intellectual freedom.
- **Supersedes** “Meeting Rooms” section from the PCPLS Policy Manual Section II (2011), Public Conduct Policy (re-approved April 17, 2025)

Adopted: April 17, 2024

- **Supersedes:** The following sections of PCPLS Policy Manual Section II (2011): “Petitions, Surveys and Solicitations”, “Drugs & Alcohol”, “Eating and Drinking”, “Lost or Stolen Property”, “Tobacco-Free Library”, “Patron Rights,” “Patron Responsibilities,” “Problem Patron Procedures”, “Illegal Behavior”, “Unattended Children”, and “The Use of Buildings Located on Library Property”.