

Our Mission

The mission of the Suffolk Public Library is to connect individuals and groups to experiences, information, and resources, prioritize equitable access to opportunities, and serve the unique needs of a diverse community.

In order to do this safely and effectively, library staff will determine what behavior is acceptable and what will interfere with the peaceable use and enjoyment of the library campus by other users.

It should be known that any illegal activity will be reported to the authorities and that some of the prohibited behaviors are outlined in either the Code of Virginia or the City of Suffolk Municipal Code.

Library Staff will assess each situation, and consequences may include calling the authorities, or being asked to leave the library premises.

Guidelines for Behavior

- No behavior that is disruptive to library use, including but not limited to:
 - Excessive or unreasonable noise
 - Pushing, shoving or throwing things
 - Obscene or vulgar language and/or gestures
 - Confrontational or combative behavior
 - Physical conduct against an individual or their property
 - Inebriation or intoxication
 - Threats of violence (even if meant as a joke)
 - Harassing behavior (e.g. unwanted sexual advances, derogatory comments or slurs, insults, etc.)
- No unattended children aged 7 or younger (See Unattended Children Guidelines)
- No theft, damage or unauthorized use of library property
- No blocking passage (e.g. aisles, stairways, entrances, exits, etc.)
- No entering unauthorized areas
- Wear clothes and shoes
- No unauthorized animals
- No soliciting
- No use of tobacco products (e.g. e-cigarettes and vapes, etc.) inside any library location, as well as within 25 feet of library entrances
- No toy or water guns on library property
- No illegal behavior

Unattended Children

An unattended child is:

- A child age 7 years or under who is left in the library without supervision from a responsible caregiver
OR
- A child 17 years or younger whose safety and well-being is threatened by being left without a responsible adult caregiver when considering factors including the child's age, ability to follow the library's Code of Conduct, maturity, comfort and level of development.

Responsible Caregiver: A person who is 14 years or older and demonstrates the concern and responsibility of caring for a younger child.

Suffolk Public Library strives to provide a warm, welcoming, and educational place for both children and their families; however we ask that they are aware of and adhere to the following:

- Suffolk Public Library staff is not responsible for children in the library. Parents, caregivers and/or guardians are responsible for their children's safety, well-being and behavior. Staff are not "in loco parentis" and cannot assume the role of a daycare or childcare provider.
- Children ages 7 and under must be in visual and immediate proximity to their responsible caregiver.
- Children and teens age 8 and above are allowed to be at the library without supervision and are expected to follow all the rules outlined in the Code of Conduct.

- Suffolk Public Library reserves the right to ask the caregiver of a child or teen to stay with their child/teen while in the library and within line of sight, no matter the age. Some programming may require parents to remain with their children so parents may be asked to stay at the discretion of library staff.
- If an unattended child is found at the library and their safety is at risk, Suffolk Public Library staff will make an effort to contact the child's caregiver, parent, or guardian. If staff is unable to contact the child's caregiver, parent, or guardian they will contact the Suffolk Police Department and/or Suffolk Department of Social Services for assistance. They will then determine if the child is missing or what the circumstances are as to how the child became separate from a responsible caregiver.
- Children and teens who are 8 and over must leave the library or be picked up by the library's closing time. If the child/teen is not picked up, Suffolk Public Library staff will make an effort to contact the child's caregiver, parent, or guardian. If staff is unable to contact the child's caregiver, parent, or guardian they will contact the Suffolk Police Department and/or Suffolk Department of Social Services for assistance.
- Groups of children are welcome to attend the library with their classroom, daycare, or organization, but these groups must be supervised. One adult should be present for every five children. If the group is interested in attending a program, please contact the Community Learning Manager.
- If a child of any age is unable to follow the library's Code of Conduct, library staff may require that the child's adult caregiver meet with the Library Experience Manager before the child is allowed to return to the library.

Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is defined as "any person 18 years of age or older who is impaired by reason of mental illness, intellectual or developmental disability, physical illness or disability, or other causes, including age, to the extent the adult lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make, communicate, or carry out reasonable decisions concerning their well-being or has one or more limitations that substantially impair the adult's ability to independently provide for their daily needs or safeguard their person, property, or legal interests" (Code Ann. 18.2369)

- Vulnerable adults, who can understand and follow the Code of Conduct as well as care for their personal needs without library staff assistance, are welcome to be in the library without supervision.
- A vulnerable adult may not be left alone in the library or out of the sight of their caregiver or legal guardian, if:
 - They cannot follow the library's Code of Conduct independently OR
 - Their safety is at risk by being left alone OR
 - They cannot provide for their own personal care without assistance (for example, needing assistance to use the restroom)
- Groups of vulnerable adults are welcome to attend the library with their care facility, but these groups must be supervised. One caregiver should be present for every six adults. If the group is interested in attending a program, please contact the Community Learning Manager.
- A vulnerable adult's caregiver(s) and/or legal guardian(s) are responsible for their behavior in the library and must ensure the safety of the individual, as well as their adherence to the library's Code of Conduct.
- Library staff are only permitted to assist customers with library services and resources. They can neither assist vulnerable adults with personal care, nor transport them on or off library property.
- If a vulnerable adult is left alone in the library, library staff will attempt to locate the caregiver inside the library. If they cannot be located, staff may contact the Suffolk Police Department and/or Social Services for assistance.