

Code of Conduct in Libraries and Recreation Centers

Briefing to
Quality of Life Council Committee

December 12, 2005

Purpose

To provide information about an initiative to provide a pleasant and inviting atmosphere to the daily visitors to the City of Dallas libraries and recreation centers.

Background

- People who visit City of Dallas libraries and recreation centers deserve the highest level of customer service in a safe and inviting environment.
- Staff assumes accountability to ensure a pleasant experience
- Most visitors are respectful of others, but occasionally there are exceptional situations that must be dealt with

Background (cont.)

- The Code presented today evolved out of the Library's efforts to update its current guidelines for acceptable behaviors and provide a pleasant environment for all users
- Staff conducted a search for guidelines for acceptable behavior in libraries
- The search found that Kansas City, MO has a policy that covers the Library and other public city buildings

Background (cont.)

- It quickly became obvious that Dallas Public Library is not the only City department that has daily public usage of its facilities
- For example, The Park and Recreation Department has many visitors to its public facilities
- The Library worked very closely with the City Attorney's office and Park and Recreation staff to develop a code that has continuity and consistency across the two departments

The Code

- The Code incorporates certain behaviors that are prohibited by the Texas Penal Code and Dallas City Code
- In addition, it provides for other behaviors that could be considered disruptive to others in a public setting
- Implementation of the Code will help create environments that are customer-friendly in libraries and recreation centers

The Code

- The following prohibited behaviors are addressed in Texas Penal Code:
 - Engaging in theft or attempted theft or the destruction or attempted destruction of City materials or property, or the personal property of building customers or staff. (Texas Penal Code § 28.04)
 - Gambling in any form (e.g., throwing dice, pitching pennies, playing poker and other games of chance) on City property. (Texas Penal Code § 47.02)
 - Making offensive gestures, cursing or using obscene, abusive, or threatening language including hateful speech, racial slurs or profanity. (Texas Penal Code § 42.01)
 - Displaying explicit sexual material or obscene material. (Texas Penal Code § 43.22 and § 43.24).
 - Engaging in acts of sexual misconduct, including, but not limited to, acts of exposure, public masturbation, sexual harassment, offensive touching and sexual solicitation. (Texas Penal Code § 21.07 and 21.08)

The Code (cont.)

- Stalking other customers or staff, including excessive staring or voyeurism (peeping). (Texas Penal Code § 42.01 and § 47.072); (Dallas City Code § 31-36).
- Using or possessing controlled substances or alcohol on City property or otherwise exhibiting signs of being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances. (Texas Penal Code § 49.02)
- Bringing knives, firearms, clubs, stun guns, starter guns, pepper spray, mace or other weapons onto City property or into City buildings. Exemptions from this prohibition are recognized for Law Enforcement Officers and individuals licensed to carry handguns in accordance with state law. (Texas Penal Code § 49.02)
- Engaging in physical altercations including assaults or violent acts, fighting, running, pushing, shoving or throwing things. (Texas Penal Code § 22.01)

The Code (cont.)

- The following prohibited behaviors are addressed in the Dallas City Code:
 - Entering or remaining in a City building before or after posted hours of operation without the express permission of the Department Director or Director's designee. (Dallas City Code § 31-37).
 - Smoking or using tobacco products in City buildings. (Dallas City Code § 41-2)
 - Entering into staff work areas not open to the public. (Dallas City Code § 31-14)
 - Littering. (Dallas City Code § 7A-3)

The Code (cont.)

- The clear judgment of staff will be used to handle the following behaviors on a case-by-case basis with consideration to the level of disruption to a pleasant and productive environment:
 - Conversing, laughing, or otherwise talking or shouting in a loud and disruptive manner, banging on computer keyboards or disruptively using devices, including cell phones, CD players, MP3 players, walkie-talkies, PDAs, laptop computers or any other instruments. (Making sounds that are considered loud or disruptive when they are clearly audible from a distance of 3 feet by any other building user or staff member.) Sound generating or amplification devices employed by building staff or used by persons with the authorization of building staff for authorized events are exempt from this prohibition.

The Code (cont.)

- Using City buildings for other than their intended purpose, including: loitering, sleeping, changing clothes, bathing (except for washing hands or face), shampooing, shaving, washing clothes or utensils, preparing meals or food, or personal grooming unless it is considered appropriate for an approved activity. Changing clothes in building bathrooms and applying makeup is permitted in preparation for a city-approved program or event with express permission of city staff.
- Eating, drinking, or bringing food or beverages in open containers into a City building is prohibited, except in cases where an event has been previously approved.
- Bare feet and bathing suits or clothing that does not cover both upper and lower torso is prohibited in public areas unless it is considered appropriate for an approved activity.
- Introducing any animals, insects or other living organisms into City buildings without express permission of the City staff, with the exception of service animals, such as seeing-eye dogs or other guide-trained animals.

The Code (cont.)

- Using wheeled recreational devices such as skateboards, roller skates, roller blades, bicycles, and scooters in or on City Property, except in designated areas.
- Entering, or attempting to enter City buildings possessing such defects of bodily hygiene as impairs a clean and sanitary environment, as it is intended for enjoyment of the building. This includes individuals whose neglect of bodily hygiene gives offense and therefore constitutes a nuisance to others and staff.
- Entering into or remaining in City buildings while emitting odors (including bodily odors or perfumes), which interfere with the use of services by other users or the work of staff.
- Entering into City buildings with large framed backpacks, bedrolls, blanket rolls, or more than three grocery-sized paper or plastic bags or parcels. Personal belongings including purses or cell phones must not impede access to doors, services or materials. Customers must keep personal belongings with them at all times. The City is not responsible for unattended personal belongings.

The Code (cont.)

- No soliciting or proselytizing on City property, except as authorized. No panhandling at any time.
- Neglecting to provide proper supervision of children.
- Using areas for any activities, other than their intended purpose.
- Physically blocking aisles, exits, or entrances, including sitting or lying down in them.
- Moving, altering, or rearranging furniture or equipment; altering the configuration or settings of electronic equipment without the authorization of staff; or otherwise using furniture or equipment for other than its intended purpose

The Code (cont.)

- Using electronic equipment in excess of posted duration limits if other customers or staff are waiting to use the equipment.
- Assembling more than two people around a computer if it creates a disturbance to others.
- Use of parking lot before or after hours of operation or for performing non-emergency automotive repairs or maintenance at any time.
- Engaging in any other activity that disturbs normal activities and/or the environment for other users and City staff.



City of Dallas

We Promise!

The City of Dallas wants you to enjoy your visit at this outstanding facility. We pledge to provide you a safe and pleasant environment.

Make your outing more memorable!

Be mindful of these helpful courtesies!

***Use This Facility and
Its Services As Intended!***

Be Considerate of Other Visitors!

Act Responsibly!

Safeguard Your Possessions!

***Prevent Hazardous Conditions
and Situations!***

Public Awareness

- Notification of the Code of Conduct will be provided to the public in various ways:
 - Posting in libraries and recreation centers
 - Posting on websites
 - Customer-friendly bookmarks or brochures that can be handed to visitors

Next Steps

- Public awareness campaign to advise visitors of the existence of this code of conduct