

## **Westwood Public Library Acceptable Behavior Policy**

The Westwood Public Library is open to all; a judgment-free space for everyone, shared by the community and used by many different people for many different reasons. The Library expects each of our facilities to be clean, comfortable, and safe places for community use. To this end, the Library is responsible for establishing rules of conduct to protect the rights and safety of Library patrons, volunteers, and staff, and for preserving and protecting the Library's materials, equipment, facilities, and grounds.

To ensure individuals' rights to use the library free of disruption, library patrons shall be engaged in activities associated with the use of a public library while in the building. Use of the Library requires respect for others who are also enjoying the Library facilities and services. Parents and caregivers are responsible for the supervision of their children. Please see the Children and Teens in the Library policy for detailed guidelines.

The following activities are inappropriate to the library setting and are prohibited in the library or on its grounds:

- Smoking, including electronic smoking devices in the Library or on the premises
- Disruptive behavior, such as creating loud noises, loud talking, screaming, or banging on computer keyboards
- Entering the Library barefooted, without a shirt, with offensive body odor or personal hygiene, or being otherwise attired so as to be disruptive to the Library environment
- Possession or the use of alcohol, illegal drugs, or recreational drugs
- Possession of weapons including but not limited to: knives, clubs, guns, and blades
- Bicycles or scooters in any Library public area except in designated areas
- Wearing roller skates/blades in the library; Bringing bicycles or skateboards inside the building, or using them on the outdoor stairs or walkways
- Running around the building, jumping from stairways and furniture, climbing the outside of stairways
- Misuse of restrooms (including but not limited to using them for bathing, shampooing, or doing laundry)
- Bringing animals into the Library, except service animals and those part of library programming (see Appendix B: Animals in the Library for full policy)
- Verbally or physically threatening behavior
- Moving furniture
- Lying down or appearing to be sleeping in the Library; having feet on furniture; or blocking aisles, exits or entrances
- Abusing or defacing library materials (including library-owned hardware or software)

- Misusing computers
- Interfering with another person's right to use the library or with the library staff's performance of their duties
- Soliciting or canvassing of any kind, except for ballot question petitions and nomination papers and only in lobby of both branches (please see appendix A on specifications)
- Entering areas designated "Staff Only"
- Leaving a child under the age of 10 unattended in the library
- Theft of library materials, use of false identification to obtain a library card, or use of another person's library card without permission is against state law and may be prosecuted

Additionally, failure to comply with the library's Acceptable Behavior Policy may result in a patron being asked to leave the library. If a patron does not leave when asked, the Westwood Police Department will be notified.

The Westwood Public Library  
660 High Street  
Westwood, MA 02090  
(781) 326-7562  
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## **Appendix A Petitions and Nomination Papers**

Both the United States and Massachusetts Constitutions protect the right to solicit signatures on nomination papers and ballot question petitions in a reasonable and unobtrusive manner in open public areas. This includes the public areas of municipal property as well as the common areas of privately owned shopping centers. Distribution of printed material in connection with signature solicitation is also protected. The right of signature solicitation (along with other free-speech activities) on municipal sidewalks, in parks and in similar open public areas is clear. *Hague v. CIO*, 307 U.S. 496, 515-16 (1939).

In *Batchelder v. Allied Stores International, Inc.*, 388 Mass. 83, 445 N.E.2d 590 (1983) the Supreme Judicial Court held that Article 9 of the Massachusetts Constitution protects the right to solicit signatures, and to distribute related printed material, in the common areas of privately owned shopping centers, subject to reasonable regulations. At least the same amount of protection must apply on municipal property that is regularly open to the general public for municipal business.

Therefore, ballot-access and nomination paper signature solicitation must be allowed on municipal property that is regularly open to the general public for municipal business, subject only to reasonable time, place and manner regulations.

In keeping with these protections, the Westwood Public Library allows the collection of signatures for nomination papers, petitions, etc. in the library building, subject to conditions set by the Library Director or their designee, as long as the collectors do not violate Mass. General Law, Chapter 272, Section 41, which prohibits disturbing people in a public library "by making noise or in any other manner."

To this end, the Library Director designates the lobby and walkways as areas in which signatures may be collected, and requires that the person(s) collecting signatures may neither interfere with the ongoing activities of the library, nor prevent library users from freely entering or leaving the building.

Nomination papers should not be left unattended in any public building as it could be construed as using public funds (such as a table or town owned pens) to support a candidate. No nomination papers may be left unattended at the Westwood Public Library.

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## **Appendix B Animals in the Library**

### **General Policy**

Service animals are welcome in all library locations. Pets and other personal animals are not permitted in any library building. Under Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 272, Section 98A), it is a violation to bring animals into the library except those needed to assist persons with disabilities.

### **Service Animals**

Under Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a service animal is defined as any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Miniature horses that have been individually trained to perform tasks for individuals with disabilities must also be accommodated as a reasonable modification to library policy.

Examples of recognized service animals include:

- Guide dogs (Seeing Eye dogs) for individuals who are blind or have low vision
- Hearing or signal dogs for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Psychiatric service dogs trained to perform specific tasks (e.g., reminding a handler to take medication, providing room searches, or interrupting self-harmful behaviors)
- Seizure response dogs trained to assist individuals with seizure disorders
- Sensory or social signal dogs trained to assist individuals with autism

### **Staff Inquiries Regarding Service Animals**

When it is not obvious that a dog is a service animal, library staff may ask only two questions:

- Is the animal required because of a disability?
- What work or task has the animal been trained to perform?

Staff may not ask about the nature or extent of a person's disability, require documentation or proof of certification, or require the animal to demonstrate its task. These questions should not be asked if the animal's service function is obvious (e.g., guiding a person who is blind, or pulling a wheelchair).

### **Handler Responsibilities**

Handlers are responsible for the care and supervision of their service animals at all times. The library is not obligated to provide care or supervision for any service animal. Service animals must:

- Be under the handler's control at all times, via harness, leash, tether, or voice command
- Be housebroken
- Be vaccinated in accordance with state and local laws
- Not engage in disruptive behavior (e.g., uncontrolled barking, jumping on others, or running away from the handler)

The library reserves the right to ask a handler to remove a service animal if the animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, or if the animal is out of control and the handler does not take effective corrective action.

### **Emotional Support Animals**

Emotional support animals (ESAs), comfort animals, and therapy animals are not service animals under the ADA and are therefore not permitted in the library. The U.S. Department of Justice has determined that ESAs do not carry the same public access rights as service animals.

While ESAs can provide meaningful therapeutic benefit—including relief from loneliness, anxiety, or depression—they are distinguished from service animals because they have not been individually trained to perform a specific task directly related to a person's disability. A letter from a doctor or mental health professional does not qualify an animal as a service animal under the ADA.

The key distinctions are:

- **Service animals:** trained to perform specific disability-related tasks; permitted in all public areas of the library.
- **Emotional support animals:** provide comfort through companionship but are not task-trained; not permitted in library buildings.
- **Therapy animals:** provide therapeutic contact in clinical or group settings; not permitted in library buildings.

### **Allergies and Fear of Animals**

Allergies and fear of dogs are not valid reasons for denying access to a patron accompanied by a service animal. If a staff member or patron has an allergy or significant fear, library staff will make reasonable efforts to accommodate both individuals, such as providing adequate physical separation. The library will work to find a solution that serves all parties.

### **Legal References**

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Titles II and III
- Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 272, Section 98A
- U.S. Department of Justice ADA guidance on service animals: [ada.gov](http://ada.gov)
- ADA National Network, "Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals": [adata.org](http://adata.org)

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