

The policies of the Brazoria County Library System are intended to insure equitable access to the library's resources, services and programs for the residents of Brazoria County.

BCLS Policy Manual

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Contents

Chapter 1 – Introduction	4
Vision statement	4
General description of the library system.....	4
Chapter 2: Emergencies	5
Evacuations	5
Shelter-in-place	5
Chapter 3: Budget.....	6
Chapter 4: Gifts and memorials.....	7
Chapter 5: Circulation services.....	8
Confidentiality of library records.....	8
Applications for patron accounts.....	8
Educators	8
Borrowing library materials.....	9
Fines and Fees	9
Claims Policy.....	10
Recovery service	10
TexShare library accounts	11
Chapter 6: Collection development	12
Mission, values, and goals.....	12
Selection of materials	12
Collaboration.....	13
Donations.....	13
Self-published works	13
Withdrawal of materials.....	13
Disposal of library materials.....	13
Requests for reconsideration.....	13
Chapter 7: Display of materials	15
Policy on exhibits.....	15

Policy on Documents for Public Viewing.....	16
Chapter 8: Friends of the library	17
Examples of Friends activities include:.....	17
Use of space	18
Chapter 10: Library board.....	19
City library boards	20
Chapter 11: Meeting rooms	21
General policy.....	21
Branch Meeting Room Policy	21
Purpose.....	21
Space Priority.....	22
Reservations.....	22
Usage of Meeting Room.....	23
Chapter 12: Public code of conduct	26
General statement	26
Chapter 13: Public relations and publicity	27
Inquiries:.....	27
Images/media:	27
Unofficial or non-work related contact:.....	27
Employment references:.....	27
Contact information and mailing lists:	27
Speaking engagements:.....	27
Chapter 15: Public Services.....	29
Reference services and readers' advisory services.....	29
Programming and outreach.....	29
Computer services	30
Internet access.....	30
Internet Use Policy and Guidelines	30
Responsibilities of Users	31

Wi-Fi access	33
Tablet circulation	33
General Services.....	34
Interlibrary loan.....	34
Lost and found	35
Use of library facilities	35
VIP access.....	36
Policy	36
Acceptable use statement	36
Patron rules	36
Proctoring tests	37
Makerspaces	38
Library of Things	38
Voter registration.....	39
Chapter 18: Volunteers	40
Adult volunteers.....	40
Minor volunteers	41
Summer reading program volunteers	43
Community service workers.....	43

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Vision statement

The Brazoria County Library System serves the educational, informational, and recreational needs of Library users. Its mission is to provide library resources for citizens of all ages. The library strives to achieve the highest level of service, while stressing convenience, speed of access, and quality of information. *approved by the Brazoria County Library System Board 6.24.2002*

General description of the library system

The Brazoria County Library System (BCLS) consists of one eBranch and twelve physical branches, geographically arranged in four regions. Those regions are: Region I, Northside -- Manvel, Pearland and West Pearland; Region II, Central – Alvin, Angleton and Danbury; Region III, West of the Brazos – Brazoria, Sweeny and West Columbia; and Region IV, Brazosport – Clute, Freeport and Lake Jackson. The Library System is unique in that we have a contractual agreement with various cities. The City is responsible for providing and maintaining the building, furniture and fixtures. The County is responsible for staffing the libraries and the providing the collection, network, & programming. We offer a variety of services, and the Library System’s goal is to serve all areas of Brazoria County.

Chapter 2: Emergencies

In the event of an emergency, BCLS staff will take reasonable steps to promote the safety of staff and patrons.

Evacuations

In the event of an evacuation, patrons are required to vacate the building immediately. No library services will be provided during an evacuation. Any patron failing to leave the building will be charged with trespassing.

Shelter-in-place

During a shelter-in-place order, patrons are urged to remain in the building until the order has been lifted. They are, however, free to leave at any time at their own risk. Anyone remaining in the building during a shelter-in-place order is required to follow all staff directives.

Chapter 3: Budget

Brazoria County's fiscal year is October 1 to September 30. The approved budget is published on the county website. (See Commissioners' Court minutes).

Chapter 4: Gifts and memorials

BCLS will accept gifts and memorial items at the discretion of the branch librarian and the library director. The library reserves the right to accept, reject and/or dispose of any gift as necessary or expedient.

1. All gifts to the library system, whether given in person or online, must be approved by the Commissioners' Court.
2. Donors wishing to donate books, items, or money as a memorial or an honorarium may have a plate attached for that purpose to the book or item by the library.
3. Gifts to the library are welcome under the following conditions:
 - a. Monetary gifts shall be administered in accordance with county policy.
 - b. Gifts, such as furnishings, decorative items, and equipment intended for the sole use of a single branch become property of the city and are maintained by the city. (Decorative items include such articles as wall hangings, paintings, and sculpture.)
 - c. General donations will be accepted by staff on behalf of the Friends of the Library. Other types of donations may include gifts of specific titles, directed donations and memorials. The library handles each instance on a case-by-case basis. Items accepted into the collection become property of BCLS and circulate according to the use of policies.
 - d. A tax letter from the Friends, based on the amount of the gift, is available upon request.
 - e. Equipment designed to utilize the library collection (such as scanners, microfilm reader, etc.) will become property of Brazoria County and will be maintained by the county. Computer equipment intended to be added to the county network must be purchased by the county IS department.

Chapter 5: Circulation services

Confidentiality of library records

BCLS maintains the confidentiality of library records in accordance with all pertinent laws and statutes.

Library records may be disclosed only if the library determines that one of the following applies:

- The records are released to the person to whom the information relates
- The person to whom the information relates has provided written permission to release the records to a third party
- The Texas Attorney General has determined that the information should be released
- The records are released under a court order or subpoena

Applications for patron accounts

Any resident of the state of Texas is eligible to open a library account with BCLS in accordance with the procedures and guidelines of the system. While the account will be opened in the name of a minor, accounts for children under the age of eighteen are considered joint accounts and are owned by the adult who assumes financial responsibility for all materials borrowed on the account.

Educators

As a professional courtesy, educators may be issued a separate library account with increased circulation periods and item limits.

Proof of employment must be provided along with all other application requirements set forth in policy. Homeschool educators must provide curriculum program affiliation as proof of employment. If the applicant has a personal library card, that card must be in good standing.

Educators with a class size greater than 10 may have a total of 100 items, with a maximum of 15 DVDs, checked out at any one time for a period of no more than 45 days with no renewals. Educators with a class size of 10 or fewer may have a total of 50 items, with a maximum of 8 DVDs checked out at any one time for a period of no more than 45 days with no renewals. The number of items on a particular subject may be limited at the discretion of the branch lead. Current Bluebonnet or 2X2 titles may not be checked out with the educator account.

Borrowing library materials

Eligible patrons may borrow a total of 50 items per account at one time; however, additional limits apply to certain collections (these limits apply to non-digital materials):

- Reference materials do not circulate
- Current Bluebonnet titles are limited to two per account
- All videos are limited to 15 per account.

Non-digital materials circulate for two weeks except as noted below. Library staff may override these limits in special circumstances.

- Mobile hotspots circulate for one week
- Equipment circulates for three days
- ILL items generally circulate for two weeks, but the lending library may set its own circulation period.

All BCLS materials can be returned to any branch of the library system, unless otherwise noted at check-out. ILL materials must be returned to the branch from which they were borrowed. Fines and fees for overdue, damaged and lost materials will be assessed according to the fine and fee schedule approved by the Brazoria County Commissioners' Court.

Fines and Fees

Patron accounts will accrue daily fines for items not returned by the due date. Additional fees may be charged for lost or damaged items. Fines for overdue traditional materials accrue at \$0.10 per day per item (max \$5.00 per item). Fines for overdue non-traditional materials accrue at \$1.00 per day per item up to the total replacement cost. Fines and fees will be assessed at the branch where the materials are returned regardless of material type or origin of the circulation. If a patron pays the full replacement cost of an item, the patron owns the item and may do with it as he/she wishes.

BCLS accepts cash, check and credit card payments. Additional fees will apply to credit card payments. In lieu of payment for lost or damaged items, BCLS will – at the branch lead's discretion – accept a new (or like new) copy of the item. The replacement must be the exact same version as the lost/damaged item as verified by the item's ISBN or UPC. All other fees will still apply.

Fees for special services and supplies may apply. For more information consult library staff. Fees are as follows:

Cleaning fee	\$20.00
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Lost/damaged processing fee	\$3.50, nonrefundable
Lost/damaged books	List price of the item
Lost/damaged audiovisual materials	Replacement price
Lost/damaged nontraditional materials	List price plus supplementary costs
Lost/damaged ILL materials	Fee set by lending institution
Lost/damaged cases	Replacement price
Lost/damaged hanging bags	\$3.50
Lost ILL band	\$1.00
Lost/damaged periodicals	Cover price or \$5.00
Recovery service	\$10.00
Returned check fee	\$30.00
Unretrieved ILL	\$5.00

approved by Commissioners' Court 09/21/2022

Claims Policy

BCLS allows patrons to claim items they feel were never actually borrowed, returned but not checked in by staff, or returned with missing pieces.

- Accounts in good standing are allowed a maximum of three active claims. Once that limit is reached the patron's borrowing privileges will be suspended until at least one of the claims has been resolved.
- Accounts may accumulate up to 30 active and resolved claims. After which, borrowing privileges will be permanently suspended.
- The collection at all branches will be searched for 60 days.
- If the item(s) is found in the library, it will be checked in and the fines waived.
- After 2 years if the item(s) is not found by the patron or the library, the patron will be charged for the item(s).
- Patrons are responsible for inquiring into the status of claimed item(s).
- Item(s) with a *lost* status cannot be reset to a *claimed* status.

Recovery service

BCLS has contracted with a recovery service for the recovery of lost items and overdue fines and fees. This process will be instituted after eight weeks when BCLS notices have been sent. All notifications are sent as a courtesy. A lack of notification does not negate the patron's financial responsibility.

The recovery service conducts all its attempts to recover the outstanding balance within a 17-week period; after which, the account may be credit reported. For more information contact Unique Management Services.

Patrons may request the collection service activities be suspended for the following reasons:

- The patron and branch lead have agreed to a repayment plan.
- Special and/or extenuating circumstances (such as long-term or catastrophic illness, natural disasters, etc.) have occurred.

TexShare library accounts

BCLS participates in the TexShare library card program sponsored by TSLAC. This program provides free reciprocal borrowing privileges to registered borrowers of member libraries, academic and public. For a complete description of this program visit the TexShare page at www.tsl.texas.gov/texshare/index.html.

The TexShare card allows BCLS patrons to borrow materials from all other participating libraries in Texas. Typically, libraries do not permit TexShare card holders to download digital materials. BCLS patrons with accounts of at least six months and in good standing (no overdue or lost books and library fines of less than \$10.00) may obtain a TexShare card. TexShare cards expire one year from the date issuance.

TexShare cards may be issued only to adult patrons as defined by BCLS policy or to juveniles if the card is signed by a parent or guardian. Materials borrowed from other TexShare libraries should be returned in person or by first class mail by the borrower to the lending library. The borrower is responsible for any expenses associated with returning the item including fines accrued due to delivery delays.

Chapter 6: Collection development

The collection development policy of the Brazoria County Library System (BCLS) establishes the guidelines by which the system selects and withdraws library resources. This policy supports the mission, values and goals of the system.

Mission, values, and goals

At BCLS, collection development supports the library's mission to meet the informational, educational and recreational needs of its communities. The values of collection development of BCLS reflect the library as a place

- to freely explore all ideas and points of view*,
- that provides free and open access to resources for all cultural and economic backgrounds, all ages and all levels of ability, and
- that inspires and enriches lives while promoting lifelong learning and civic engagement.

The goal of collection development is to serve the diverse communities of Brazoria County with a collection that is

- relevant and up-to-date,
- available in multiple formats,
- in demand,
- reliable and authoritative,
- of literary merit, or
- reflective of the community.

Selection of materials

Selection refers to the decision that must be made either to add a specific item or type of resource to the collection within budget, space and availability constraints or to retain material already in the collection. Selection standards, including professional and commercial reviews, popular demand, and local interests, are considered by collection development specialists in selecting resources. The library provides a framework for staff and community contribution to the selection process. Specific criteria are used to select works of imagination, information and opinion[^]. The choices made to develop the collection are not necessarily a reflection of the opinions or values of the selectors, the library board or Commissioners' Court.

Collaboration

Under a variety of cooperative lending programs, including the state inter-library loan program, the library can assist patrons in obtaining resources not owned by BCLS. Resources made available through collaborative initiatives may fall outside of the selection criteria of the library system.

Donations

General donations will be accepted by staff on behalf of the Friends of the Library. Other types of donations may include gifts of specific titles, directed donations and memorials. The library handles each instance on a case-by-case basis. Items accepted into the collection become the property of BCLS and circulate according to the use policies.

Self-published works

BCLS may accept self-published works donated by the creator. Self-published works must meet collection development criteria.

Withdrawal of materials

BCLS will evaluate its collection on an ongoing basis in response to the changing nature and needs of the community. The same criteria used in the selection of materials will be considered during the withdrawal process. In order to maintain the collection in its most useful and attractive condition, the professional staff will consider for withdrawal material that is no longer in demand, superseded by a newer edition or more accurate resource, or in poor condition. Replacement of a withdrawn item is not automatic. The decision to replace will be based on the selection policy.

Disposal of library materials

Library material purchased with Brazoria County funds or donated to the library are the property of Brazoria County. In the disposal of withdrawn, obsolete or damaged library material, BCLS follows all local and state law.

Requests for reconsideration

If a patron has a concern about the inclusion, classification, or location of library material, a request for reconsideration of materials form is available. For a reconsideration request to be considered, the form must be completed in full. The patron submitting the request must hold a valid borrower's card. A committee will review the details of the request. BCLS will respond, in writing, within 30 days of receiving the request. The response will indicate the action to be taken and the reasons for or against the request. The library director will consider any requests to appeal the committee's decision. An item will be evaluated for reconsideration only once in a 12-month period.

*BCLS library incorporates, as part of this policy, the principles contained in the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read and Freedom to View statements.

^Collection development selection criteria include, but are not limited to the following:

- representation of an important movement, genre, trend, or national culture
- artistic presentation and experimentation
- sustained interest
- entertainment value
- representation of challenging points of view
- accuracy

approved by Commissioners' Court, 09/21/2022

Chapter 7: Display of materials

The policies and procedures for displaying informational brochures, flyers, pamphlets, or posters are established herein. Display of these items does not constitute an endorsement by the County or the Library. The responsibility for implementing this policy and for displaying the above items rests with the individual branch manager of the building where the above-mentioned items are to be displayed. The library director retains final authority for implementing this policy.

1. Informational brochures, flyers, pamphlets, or posters may be displayed in designated areas within the libraries of Brazoria County only upon approval by the branch manager.
2. Regulations for display of material
 - a. Library-related items, including Friends of the Library information, will receive first priority for display purposes. Other items will be displayed on a first-come, first-served, space-available basis.
 - b. Non-library related items may be displayed at the branch manager's discretion and may be disposed of at will.

Policy on exhibits

Exhibits function as an integral part of the BCLS program of public service and are welcomed from community groups and organizations. Within the various branches, a variety of facilities are made available for the housing of exhibits. Exhibits should direct the attention of the public to the materials, services and aims of the library. The library reserves the right to reject any part of an exhibit or to change the manner of its display.

1. Exhibits from the public
 - a. The library may invite outside exhibitors to display their own materials in the library, said materials being appropriate to the library's needs and purposes and in accordance with this policy.
 - b. Non-solicited requests for display space from outside exhibitors shall be directed to the branch manager who will evaluate the requests. The requests must be submitted in writing, including a list of the contents of the exhibits and description of the presentation. One-person art exhibits are not encouraged and will not ordinarily be permitted.
 - c. Final authority regarding the acceptance or rejection of outside exhibits for library display rests with the library director.
2. Guidelines for exhibits

- a. The individuals or organizations placing exhibits in the library do so at their own risk.
- b. The library shall in no way act as agent for the sale of items from an outside exhibit. Purchase prices shall not be posted nor shall they be listed in exhibit brochures.
- c. Transport and delivery of exhibit items is the responsibility of the exhibitor. The exhibitor is responsible for mounting and arranging the display. Library staff members will provide guidance, but not assistance. No alteration of the library building is allowed.
- d. Exhibits must be in place on agreed start date and disbanded and removed from the library building within 48 hours of the agreed end date.

Policy on Documents for Public Viewing

From time to time vendors and other entities will deliver a public document for display in the library. These include things like environmental impact studies, permit requests, etc. The vendor is required to make them available to the public. As a courtesy, the library acts as that public venue.

The library has no obligation to seek out these documents, but will display them if requested by the originator.

Documents will be displayed for a reasonable period of time.

If the document includes an end date, the document must be retained through that period. Documents that *do not* include a printed end date will only be retained for a maximum of six months from the delivery date.

Chapter 8: Friends of the library

Libraries of all sizes benefit from the energy and the enthusiasm of a local friends of the library group. The relationship between the local library board and the friends is significant and ongoing.

A friends of the library organization is a group of active volunteers who are independently organized to support, promote, improve and expand local library services. The reasons for founding a friends organization vary among libraries and usually involve advocacy, community involvement, fundraising and public relations.

Friends are recognized as one of the most important citizen groups in the library world. Friends groups benefit libraries through their activities and representation of community needs and interests. Their role and the local library board's function are not the same.

The basic relationship between the friends group and the library board is one that is mutually communicative, cooperative and supportive. Both groups are dedicated to promoting and improving library services; however, this relationship is affected by the distinct differences in the roles of each.

Library board members serve the library officially in an advisory capacity as a legally appointed board and are responsible for the results of their decisions and actions. Restrictions on library board responsibilities and activities are established by state or local law, ordinance or policy.

Friends groups are separate, independent organizations with their own officers and organizational structure. Friends groups should be non-profit organizations legally chartered by the State of Texas and have the IRS not-for-profit 501(c)(3) status. While they cannot legally take on any of the functions assigned by law to the library board, there are a wide variety of ways friends groups can serve their libraries.

Examples of Friends activities include:

- Raising public awareness of library services
- Presenting or sponsoring cultural and educational programs such as film series, book discussions, author appearances, seminars and sponsoring writing or poetry contests
- Conducting book sales and other fundraising activities to provide money for projects or items not covered by the library's operating budget
- Communicating the library's needs to the governing body or the voters
- Advocating for increased library services and funding at the state and national levels
- Organizing and/or providing volunteers for work on specific or ongoing projects

- Supporting new services
- Operating gift shops and/or used book stores in the library
- Recognizing exceptional performance of individual library staff members

Use of space

City library boards or library friends groups may utilize space in the library under the following conditions:

- Limited library space is provided for retention of records of the city library boards and/or library friends groups.
- Limited library space is provided for an ongoing book sale.
- Limited library space is provided to house donated items.
- All library space is provided at the discretion of the branch manager.

Chapter 10: Library board

The Advisory Board consists of one member representing each of the public branches. The members are appointed by the Commissioners Court for a three-year term. The board meets with representatives from administration monthly, generally at the administration building. Other members of the staff or representatives from interested organizations may also attend at the board's invitation.

Currently, the meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at noon.

The board's central function is to advise library administration on the operation and mission of the system. This is not a governing board and has no authority over the budget or operation of the system. However, the board's advice and support is vital to the function of the library and highly valued by library administration.

Board members provide a unique perspective on the communities they represent and can advocate for the resources and services that will best enhance library service in their community. At the same time, board members should also be advocates for the library to their communities.

Board members are also encouraged to advocate on behalf of the library at the county, state and national levels. Effective members maintain a relationship with elected officials and regularly bring to their attention issues of importance to BCLS and the library community at-large.

Below is a list of the regular duties of the board. This is not an exhaustive list. It is intended to be representative of board responsibilities:

- Endorse the annual library budget request, generally in April or May,
- Suggest and endorse new policy and revisions to existing policy as needed throughout the year,
- Consult with staff about new services, resources and programs,
- Approve the TSLAC annual report and accreditation request, generally in March, and
- Communicate with county commissioners about library issues,

Finally, board members are expected to maintain relationships with their city board (in those communities which have one: Alvin, Freeport, Lake Jackson & Pearland) and their branch's friends organizations.

Traditionally, advisory board members serve simultaneously on the BCLS Foundation Board; however, membership on that board is not mandatory. The meetings are generally

held concurrently. The foundation functions as the de facto system-wide friends' organization. Advocacy and fundraising are its primary activities.

City library boards

The city may establish a city library board composed of no more than seven citizens of the area served by the library and selected by its council. The commissioners shall select one member of the board to act as liaison between the board and the Brazoria County Library Board.

1. The library director and the branch librarian shall serve as non-voting, ex-officio members of the city library board.
2. The city library board shall advise the library director and branch librarians of community needs and act as liaison between the city's council and the county library.
3. It may propose how funds donated to the city on behalf of the library shall be used.
4. It may recommend building, furnishing and maintenance needs to the city.

Chapter 11: Meeting rooms

General policy

While the meeting room policy of each branch is set by the owning entity, BCLS recommends the following policy be adopted by all relevant organizations.

Branch Meeting Room Policy

The policies and procedures for the use of the meeting room and conference room in the Branch Library of the Brazoria County Library System are established herein. The responsibility for implementing this policy and for scheduling the use of the meeting rooms rests with the individual librarian in charge of the building where the meeting rooms are located. The Library Director retains final authority for implementing these policies.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the meeting rooms and spaces are for programs presented by the library or library-related organizations. The general public may use the meeting rooms in the library when the meeting rooms are not required for the library or library-related organizations' use. Meeting rooms may be used by groups for educational, informational, civic, or cultural programs.

1. Meeting rooms are available for use during normal library hours of operation and may be available after the library closes. Conference rooms are available only during normal library hours of operation. Procedures for accessing meeting rooms after hours vary by library.
2. All activities in the library's meeting rooms must be free and open to any member of the public who wants to attend.

- a. **Prohibited Activities:**

Library meeting rooms and event spaces may not be used for any activity that is incompatible with the library environment or interferes with its operations. **Charging admission or registration fees, and/or soliciting donations other than in conjunction with a program or event sponsored or hosted by the Friends of the Library organization are prohibited.** Examples of other prohibited activities include but are not limited to:

- Programs involving the solicitation, sale, advertising, marketing, or promotion of commercial products or services whether benefiting an individual or a for-profit or not-for profit organization at the time of the meeting or in the future

- Personal events such as birthday parties, baby showers, or other private parties, etc.
- b. Library staff retains the right to attend any meetings or events scheduled at the library to ensure compliance of the room usage.

Space Priority

- a. Library-related functions will be given first priority.
- b. Other requests will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis. Any previous approvals may be canceled at any time if the room is needed on an emergency basis for official governmental business or the reservation conflicts with library programming. The reservation shall be canceled and may be rescheduled at the group's request.
- c. A calendar of each branch's room availability is available online.

Reservations

- a. There is no charge for the use of the library meeting rooms.
- b. After hours usage will require a key, which must be checked out by the requestor in advance. Failure to return the key will result in a fee.
- c. A representative of the group or an individual reserving a room must hold a Brazoria County Library System card in good standing.
- d. Room requests can be submitted no more than 90 days (3 months) and no less than 24 hours in advance.
- e. To ensure equitable use of library facilities, the library reserves the right to limit usage.
- f. Reservations are not automatically renewable.
- g. Reservation requests are moderated. Requests are not confirmed until receipt of confirmation email.
- h. The length of time requested for the meeting should include time for setting up the meeting rooms or spaces and putting it back in order at the end of the meeting. If the meeting extends beyond the scheduled time, the staff member in charge may request that the meeting be adjourned.

- i. The room requestor or designee must be present throughout the length of the meeting.
- j. The individual making the reservation, as well as the membership of the group as a whole, will be held financially responsible for any and all damage that may occur as a result of the use of the facilities. Permission to use the library meeting rooms and spaces may be withheld from groups whose members or invitees damage the room, carpet/tile, equipment, or furniture, or fail to comply with these rules and regulations. Individuals causing disturbances during meetings will be asked to leave.
- k. Cancellations by either the group or the library must be made 24 hours in advance of the meeting date in order to free the room for other groups. Repeated cancellations or failure to show could result in the withdrawal of meeting room privileges.

Usage of Meeting Room

- a. Room set-up and take down are the group's responsibility. No additional furniture or equipment other than that already available in the meeting rooms will be provided unless prior arrangements have been made. Staff can offer limited assistance with equipment. It is the group's responsibility to determine equipment compatibility.
- b. If the representative of the group who has reserved a room fails to check in with the library staff within fifteen (15) minutes of the start of the reservation, the library may, at its discretion, cancel the reservation.
- c. The group shall leave the room in the same condition as it was found at the beginning of the meeting. The authorized representative of the group must report to library staff at the end of the meeting. Library staff may conduct a walk-through after each meeting to verify that the rooms, fixtures, and equipment are left in proper order. If an after-hours meeting, the walk-through may be conducted the next business day.
- d. Groups must vacate the meeting room 15 minutes before library closing time unless using an after-hours room.
- e. Attendance at meetings must be limited to the seating capacity specified by the Fire Marshal. Meeting room applications will state room capacities. Open aisles must be maintained within the seating arrangement to provide clear

access to exits in case of emergency. For statistical purposes the number of people attending must be reported to the library.

- f. Groups must obtain permission from the branch librarian before affixing articles to the walls in the meeting rooms and spaces.
- g. Library staff will not handle reservations or incoming phone calls for any non-library-related group. Outgoing calls may not be made for any non-library-related organization.
- h. Light refreshments may be served, but groups may not prepare food on library property. Groups are responsible for cleanup and removal of trash from the building.
- i. Smoking or vaping is not allowed in the library. Alcoholic beverages may not be dispensed or consumed in any part of the library or library property.
- j. The library will not be responsible for lost or damaged materials.
- k. The individual making the reservation, as well as the membership of the group as a whole, agree to indemnify and hold the City and County harmless from and against any and all losses, expenses, demands, and claims made against the City and County arising in any manner from such group's use of the library facilities.
- l. The individual making the reservation, as well as the membership of the group as a whole, agree to comply with all applicable federal, state, county, and city ordinances, rules and regulations now in force or which may hereafter be enacted or promulgated.

Failure to comply with any of these rules may result in refusal by the library to allow future meetings by the offending group or individual. Use of the library's meeting rooms and spaces does not constitute endorsement, by the City, County or the Library, of points of view expressed by the group. No advertisement or announcement implying such endorsement will be permitted. The library's address, logo or phone number may not be used in any context that implies affiliation with or endorsement by the library.

By clicking Continue, I confirm that I have read and will comply with the Brazoria County Public Library System's Meeting Room Policy.

Revised 10/1/19

Adopted MM/DD/YY

Chapter 12: Public code of conduct

General statement

BCLS is committed to providing everyone with fair and equitable access to the library and its resources and services in a welcoming environment. BCLS established this policy to help ensure that each patron's visit to the library is a positive experience for everyone.

Patrons should

- Use language that is respectful, responsible and considerate,
- Use care with library equipment, furniture and property,
- Ensure that children under the age of 12 are accompanied by someone 12 years of age or older (Those accompanying children are responsible for the child's behavior and library resource usage.),
- Wear shoes and shirts in the library,
- Bring only trained service animals inside the library,
- Park bicycles, scooters, etc., outside before entering the library, without blocking entrances or pathways, and
- Understand that the library is not responsible for personal belongings that are unattended.

Behaviors that are unacceptable in the library include, but are not limited to

- Vandalism, damage to or theft of library materials/property,
- Verbal or physical abuse, threats, insults, or harassment,
- Inebriation or disorderly conduct,
- Excessive noise,
- Offensive odor,
- Using the restrooms for bathing or doing laundry,
- Unreasonably monopolizing library space, seating, tables, computers, or any equipment to the exclusion of other patrons and staff,
- Failing to adhere to the library's Computer and Internet Use agreement, and
- Entering staff work areas without permission.

Violation of the code of conduct may result in the individual(s) involved being asked to leave the library or may require the intervention of law enforcement.

Approved by Commissioners' Court, (09/21/22)

Chapter 13: Public relations and publicity

Inquiries:

All system level media inquiries, including interview requests, must be sent to the library director, or designated agent who will respond or redirect the inquiry to the appropriate staff member. Branch level inquiries will be sent to the branch manager.

Images/media:

By coming to the library or participating in library sponsored events a patron agrees to allow BCLS the right to use their image and/or likeness by media now known or hereafter devised for advertising and/or other promotional purposes. By sharing an image with BCLS, the patron grants the library the permission to use that image at the library's discretion.

Unofficial or non-work related contact:

When not on duty, and unless designated by administration, individual staff members do not speak for the library and personal opinions do not necessarily reflect the position of the library or Brazoria County. Therefore, staff members should avoid identifying themselves as library employees in personal media contact (e.g. personal letters to the editor, interviews, etc.)

Employment references:

All requests to verify employment and for references (except when a staff member has been asked to provide a personal reference) will be directed to Brazoria County Human Resources department. No staff member may volunteer any information concerning a past or present member of the Brazoria County Library Staff. Providing any information beyond the dates of employment may be actionable and expose Brazoria County to potential litigation.

Contact information and mailing lists:

Personal information such as membership records, staff directories, donor lists, and all other similar resources have been obtained and maintained for the sole use of Brazoria County Library System and will be used, with discretion, in any way necessary to further the mission of the library. Such information will not be shared with any non-affiliated organization. Excepting open records requests, staff information will not be disseminated without the express permission of the staff member in question.

Speaking engagements:

All speaking engagements must be approved by the assistant director or designated agent in advance. All pertinent information concerning the event including sponsoring

organizations, anticipated format (round table, panel discussion, and individual presentation), topics to be covered, and expected level of media coverage must be available prior to permission being given. The content of the presentation is subject to the assistant director or designated agent's approval. All materials for distribution must be obtained from or approved by Administration.

Chapter 15: Public Services

Reference services and readers' advisory services

Patrons requesting assistance in person will be given priority. If the information needs of an individual cannot be met using library resources, the individual may be referred to an agency that can provide the requested information. Sources will be cited for answers to reference questions. As with other library transactions, confidentiality requirements apply to reference services. Please see chapter 5 for more information.

BCLS reference service does not include the following:

- Medical, financial or legal advice
- Valuations
- The solution to specific math problems
- The identification of insects, animals or plants over the telephone
- Lengthy readings over the telephone

Reference and readers' advisory services may be limited to three questions per patron in a given day or a time limit may be imposed during peak hours.

Programming and outreach

BCLS provides programming designed for patrons all ages, birth through adult, as a gateway to other library services. While all library programs are open to the public, not every program is intended for all audiences. All library programming is free of charge, although attendance limits may be imposed upon certain programs due to capacity constraints or availability of supplies. Programs may be sponsored directly by the library or through a partnership with another organization.

The goal of library outreach is to introduce the library to the community and promote its services and materials. Outreach programming can be provided as library staff and resources are available.

Group visits

BCLS encourages group visits to the library. In order to ensure a quality library experience for every patron, the library requests that groups abide by the following guidelines:

In-house

- Visits may be arranged at branch's discretion.
- Group visits must be scheduled a minimum of two weeks in advance.

- Groups who wish to attend a scheduled program may do so as space allows. Priority will be given to individuals and families.
- Group attendees may not be able to participate in all aspects of the program, e.g. storytime crafts.
- Attendees must be supervised at all times by group representative in accordance with state regulations.
- Arrangements for any SRP activities must be made by May 15.
- If the group wishes to include a tour, library instruction, etc., arrangements must be made at the time the visit is scheduled.

Off-site

- Branches will arrange off-site visits with nonprofit groups or residential facilities only.
- Off-site visits must be scheduled a minimum of 30 days in advance.
- Content of the program and frequency of visits is at the discretion of the library.

Computer services

Internet access

BCLS provides access to the Internet via desktop computers at each branch. Additional access is provided for personal devices via unsecure wireless network. Printing is available for a small charge per page.

Internet Use Policy and Guidelines

This policy applies to all users of Brazoria County Library System computers or networks. If you have any questions about the policy or what it means, please contact a librarian for more information.

Purpose: To fulfill our mission, Brazoria County Library System (BCLS) provides access to a broad range of information resources, including those available through the Internet. We make this service available as part of our mission to offer a broadly defined program of educational, informational and recreational opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Internet Functions Supported: BCLS provides Internet access at all our branch locations. The library exercises discretion in the selection of materials for inclusion in its collection, including those materials it recommends on the Internet. Internet access to the library is provided via Brazoria County's Information Systems Department. This access, provided to all county employees, and provided to the public as a free service through the Brazoria County Library System, includes filtering software, which permits system administrators or the library director to block access to sites containing lewd adult

entertainment, pornography, and sites promoting illegal activities is included. This filtering program is updated continuously. However, since any filtering technology is not perfect, the library cannot guarantee that access to all those sites will be blocked. BCLS may not provide Internet access to chat sites, games, news groups or blogs, Internet E-mail accounts, or allow attached files to be either sent or received if these activities degrade BCLS or Brazoria County administrative operations.

Access to any site may be reviewed. Please request an **Internet Reconsideration Form** from any staff member should you be denied access to a desired site or to report objectionable sites.

BCLS only assumes responsibility for the information provided on the home page and for BCLS links to other sites. BCLS does not monitor and has no control over the information accessed through the Internet. The Brazoria County Library System cannot guarantee our system will work perfectly, and cannot guarantee the perfect operation of sites sought.

The Internet offers access to many valuable local, national, and international sources of information. However, not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, complete, or current information. A good information consumer evaluates the validity of information found. **Restriction of a child's access to the Internet is the responsibility of the parent or guardian; BCLS does not have the right or responsibility to act *in loco parentis*.** For more information on children and the Internet, see Child Safety on the Information Highway produced by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and Interactive Service Organization.

Responsibilities of Users

Supervising children's use: It is BCLS policy that parents or legal guardians must assume responsibility for deciding what library resources are appropriate for their children. There will be some Internet resources that parents may feel are inappropriate for their children. Parents should let their children know if there are types of Internet sites that they do not want them to use. BCLS encourages parents to supervise their child's Internet sessions.

Choosing and evaluating sources: The Internet is a global entity with highly diverse user population and information content. Library patrons use it at their own risk. BCLS cannot censor access to materials or protect users from all materials they may find offensive. It is not possible to apply the same selection criteria used for the purchase of other materials available in the Library. Users need to be good information consumers, and should question the validity of information received. In choosing sources to link to our home page, we follow generally accepted library practices. Beyond this, we do not monitor or control information accessible through the Internet and do not accept responsibility for its

content. We are not responsible for changes in content of the sources to which we link, nor for the content of sources accessed through secondary links.

As with printed information, not all sources on the Internet provide accurate, complete, or current information. It is an unregulated medium and as such it enables access to some material that may be offensive, disturbing, and/or illegal. Users should evaluate Internet sources just as they do printed sources.

Rules governing use: Time on the workstation is limited to 30 minutes if someone is waiting.

Users may not:

- Use the workstations to gain access to BCLS networks or computer systems or to any other network or computer system.
- Obstruct other people's work by consuming gratuitously large amounts of system resources or by deliberately crashing any computer system.
- Make any attempt to damage computer equipment or software.
- Make any attempt to alter software configurations.
- Disconnect or render BCLS computers inoperable by disconnecting electrical connections, network connections, or any accessory plugged into a computer.
- Plug personal, non-County equipment into the library computer network.
- Make any attempt to cause degradation of system performance.
- Use any BCLS workstation for any illegal or criminal purpose.
- Violate copyright laws or software licensing agreements in their use of BCLS workstations.
- Engage in any activity that is deliberately and maliciously offensive, libelous, or slanderous.
- Install any software.

Violations may result in loss of access. Unlawful activities will be dealt with in a serious and appropriate manner.

Users may save their files to external storage devices providing no software be installed on Library computers to enable the storage devices.

Copyright: US copyright law (Title 17, US Code) prohibits the unauthorized reproduction or distribution of copyrighted materials, except as permitted by the principles of "fair use". Users may not copy or distribute electronic materials (including electronic mail, text, images, programs or data including music and video files) without the explicit permission of the copyright holder. Any responsibility for any consequences of copyright infringement

lies with the user. BCLS expressly disclaims any liability or responsibility resulting from such use.

BCLS expressly disclaims any liability or responsibility arising from access to or use of information obtained through its electronic information systems, or any consequences thereof. Libraries are public facilities. BCLS further disclaims any liability or responsibility arising from patron online commercial or financial transaction.

Liability Disclaimer: *In consideration for the privilege of using the system and for having access to the free information contained within it, you hereby release and hold harmless the County of Brazoria, their officers, agents, servants, or employees, the Brazoria County Library System, its staff, volunteers, representatives or advisors, and all Cities in a contractual agreement with the County of Brazoria, their officers, agents, servants, or employees, from any and all liability or responsibility for any and all claims, damages, losses, costs or expenses, including attorney fees arising either directly or indirectly from the use of this system, whether or not caused, in whole or in part, by alleged negligence of the County of Brazoria, its officers, agents, servants, employees, volunteers, representatives or advisors.*

Approved by Commissioners' Court 09/21/2022

Wi-Fi access

The Brazoria County Library System provides computer access in order to meet the informational, educational, and recreational needs of our citizens. Wireless network and Internet access are available in compliance with all pertinent federal, state, and local regulations. Misuse of library equipment or software, including and not limited to all malicious or illegal activities, is prohibited. The library reserves the right to terminate any customer's computer session and to suspend access to the library's computer services.

Wi-Fi access:

- Wi-Fi is available to anyone with a wireless ready device.
- The library does not assume responsibility for damage to patrons' personal devices while utilizing the library's Wifi access.
- Accessing obscene, illegal, or inappropriate sites will result in disciplinary action including and not limited to termination of the customer's library privileges.
- Access to library printing services may be available through Wi-Fi access. A library card is required. If the patron does not have a card, a guest card may be used.

Tablet circulation

The library may make tablets available to the public for use in-house. The following guidelines apply to tablets checked out for in-house use

Tablets may be checked out by

- Patrons 18 year or older presenting the BCLS card in good standing, or
- By children over the age of 12 who have a parent/guardian-signed financial agreement on file,
- Non-network tablets pre-loaded with children's content may be checked out by patrons of any age,
- For 2 hours at a time which may be renewed for an additional 2 hours if no one is waiting for a device

Patrons are allowed one tablet/library account.

Tablets are loaned on a first-come first-served basis.

Tablets should be returned to the circulation desk no later than 30 minutes prior to the library's closing. If a tablet is lost or damaged while on loan, the patron or parent/guardian agrees to reimburse the library for the costs of repair or replacement of the item.

Patron security

Tablets should never be left unattended. When the tablet is returned, user files will not be retained for future use. The patron is responsible for clearing any personal information before returning the device.

General Services

Interlibrary loan

The interlibrary loan (ILL) service provides Brazoria County Library cardholders an opportunity to obtain library materials not owned by the Brazoria County Library System (BCLS).

Guidelines

- Only patrons in good standing may request ILLs.
- Patrons may request renewals unless otherwise noted. Renewals must be requested four (4) days in advance of the original due date.
- Overdue ILLs are subject to fines.
- Cardholders may submit ILL requests at a branch library or by logging into their BCLS account online.
- BCLS makes every effort to obtain materials free of charge. If fees do occur, patrons will be contacted for approval before ordering the item. Fees charged will be the patron's responsibility.

- BCLS will not request books with a copyright date fewer than six months old.
- All loans are subject to the lending libraries' discretion. Some materials are not available via ILL.
- BCLS honors due dates and enforces all restrictions specified by the lending library. If ILLs are recalled before the due date, the patron is expected to return the item when contacted.
- The patron is responsible for the cost of all lost or damaged ILL materials. That cost is determined by the lending library. Replacement copies will not be accepted. Refunds will not be given.
- ILL services may be denied to those cardholders who routinely misuse the system.
- All ILL materials should be returned to the branch at which they were checked out. When possible, these checkouts should be returned to the circulation desk and not the book drop.

Lost and found

BCLS is not responsible for the security of personal items brought into a library facility. Lost and found items will be stored at the library for a reasonable period of time depending on the type of item and space limitations. Staff will make no attempt to identify ownership of any item lost and found within a library facility. Unclaimed items will be disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Loose money found on library premises will be dealt with in one of the following ways:

- Amounts under \$5, if unclaimed by the end of the day, will be recorded as a donation to the library
- Amounts of \$5 or more will be kept for an appropriate period of time, after which they will be recorded as a donation to the library

Use of library facilities

1. Telephone
 - a. Library telephones are primarily for the use of the Library staff for business purposes. The public may use Library phones:
 - i. In case of emergency, i.e. children phoning for a ride home, or as determined by Library staff.
 - ii. To communicate with the Brazoria County Library System administrative offices.
 - b. All phone calls made by the public shall be under one minute in duration.
2. Study Rooms
 - a. In branches with study rooms, rooms will be made available to the public on a first-come-first-served basis for up to four hours depending on branch resources.

- b. In the event no one else needs the room the patron can remain until the room is needed or closing time.
 - c. The rooms will not be used for commercial purposes.
 - d. Public code of conduct still applies to behavior in the study room.
3. Meeting Rooms and Conference Rooms
- a. Library meeting rooms and/or conference rooms may be reserved in advance according to the guidelines and procedures of the branch in question.
 - b. Library meeting rooms and/or conference rooms without prior reservations will be made available to the public on a first come first served basis for up to four hours.
 - i. In the event no one else needs the room the patron can remain until the room is needed or closing time.
 - ii. The rooms will not be used for commercial purposes.
 - iii. Public code of conduct still applies to behavior in the study room.
 - c. See section 12 for individual library meeting room policies.

VIP access

Policy

VIP access allows registered patrons limited and monitored access to library facilities outside of normal business hours. This service is available to patrons 18 or older in good standing who sign the acceptable use statement. Those seeking VIP access agree to be financially responsible for damage to the building or the equipment while their card has been used to gain access. The parameters of the VIP Access Program may change at the library's discretion.

Acceptable use statement

I agree to abide by the policies and guidelines of the Brazoria County Library System and the VIP Access Program. I acknowledge that I will be held legally and financially responsible for any damage to the building and/or equipment while my card has been used to gain access and my VIP Access may be revoked at the library's discretion.

Patron rules

- The patron is responsible for any damage to building or equipment while their account is being used to access the building.
- The patron may be accompanied by no more than two minor children of whom they are the legal guardian.
- The patron may not open the door for anyone else.
- The patron must not be in the building outside of VIP Access hours.

- The patron must comply with all messages including to exit the building. Anyone remaining in the building after the closing message will be considered trespassing and may be subject to legal ramifications, including arrest.
- The patron acknowledges that security cameras monitor the space.

Endorsed by BCLS Advisory Board, 06/13/2021

Approved by Commissioners' Court, 09/21/2022

Proctoring tests

In support of the BCLS mission to serve “the educational needs of library users, the library will, at no charge, proctor exams for BCLS card holders in good standing.

- This is not one-on-one proctoring. Testing is done while library staff performs regular duties. The library cannot guarantee that the patron will be monitored continuously, nor can the library provide a private, completely distraction-free setting. The patron is responsible for ensuring that the facilities meet test-taking requirements.
- To have an exam proctored, the patron must first contact the library branch to determine availability and schedule an appointment. Appointments must be scheduled at least 3 business days prior to the exam.
- The patron is responsible for making all arrangements to ensure the test can be administered.
- Library staff will verify the patron’s identity by requiring presentation of a photo ID before administering the exam. In case of a minor, a parent or guardian’s photo ID will be accepted.
- For online exams, the library recommends that the patron bring their own laptop; otherwise the patron is responsible for ensuring that the library’s computer resources are adequate for their test-taking requirements.
- For paper exams that must be returned by mail, the school or patron shall provide a return envelope and adequate postage.
- The library will not assume responsibility for completed exams that are not received by the educational institution.
- The library will discard exams not completed within 30 days of receipt unless the patron has made prior arrangements.
- The library reserves the right to substitute a proctor in the event the original proctor becomes unavailable.
- Patrons arriving late may be asked to reschedule depending on the exam’s length and the proctor’s schedule.

Makerspaces

BCLS provides access to emerging technology through its makerspaces, available in select branches. Makerspaces provide the opportunity to gain hands-on experience, knowledge and skills, and to make stuff. Socialization, creativity, and tinkering are encouraged in these areas.

Guidelines

- Patrons will not modify the makerspace's hardware or software or install new programs onto the computers.
- Patrons age 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult while using the makerspace.
- Patrons wishing to use makerspace equipment may be asked to complete a training prior to use
- Library staff will be able to assist users of the makerspace as time permits.
- At the library's discretion, patrons may be able to use their own materials with some makerspace equipment.
- When reserving the makerspace or its equipment, scheduled library programs have priority, followed by patrons who have made a reservation. If the makerspace room or its equipment is not reserved, it will be made available on a first come, first served basis.
- The makerspace will be closed 15 minutes prior to the library closing.
- All safety guidelines should be followed and caution exercised when using any makerspace equipment.
- All accidents and/or damage should be immediately reported to a member of the library staff.
- The library is not responsible for the success of a patron's project. Patrons will be charged for library supplies used regardless.
- Patron may be held financially responsible for any damage done to equipment, space or supplies.
- The library is not responsible for any injuries or damage caused by improper use or malfunctioning equipment.
- The library reserves the right to deny makerspace access if a patron violates any part of the makerspace policy or for any other misuse of the space as determined by library staff.

Library of Things

BCLS provides a collection of hobby, gardening and do-it-yourself tools by the public. These items circulate for a three week period with the option of renewing once. This collection is considered equipment and falls under the parameters defined in the Circulation section of this policy manual.

These items will not float and are not eligible for interlibrary loan.

Voter registration

Public libraries are required to provide voter registration applications and to ensure that those applications are promptly and correctly submitted to the county for processing.

Anyone wishing to register to vote, renew their registration or update voter information may request a form at any BCLS branch.

Chapter 18: Volunteers

Adult volunteers

Volunteers contribute to the effectiveness of the Brazoria County Library System and are a welcome addition to a branch's workforce. They are unpaid staff, 18 years of age or older, who assist the Brazoria County Library System's branches in performing work of a clerical and non-professional nature during the normal hours of operation or for special projects as approved by the director. Volunteers are accepted and scheduled at the discretion of the branch manager. These duties are performed under the supervision of the librarian in charge. Suggested duties include:

- Shelving returned materials.
- Reading and straightening shelves.
- Assisting the branch in story hours, special programs and in community outreach.
- Other duties as determined necessary by the branch librarian and approved by the library director.

Duties reserved for the regular paid staff and not to be undertaken by a volunteer unless approved by the director include:

- Answering informational questions.
- Working at the circulation desk (Volunteers may never accept payments.).

Volunteers do not supplant or displace established staff positions and should not assume or be given the impression that their present status will ensure a future position as a paid staff member. When on their assigned duties, they are expected to follow all policies set forth in the BCLS Policy and Procedure Manual and to adhere to the dress guidelines as found in the Employee Code of Conduct. All volunteers must complete the Volunteer Information Sheet annually for retention by the department supervisor. Volunteers are not eligible for benefits such as insurance, hospitalization or Workman's Compensation. Brazoria County, Brazoria County Library System and the city where the volunteer is working cannot assume any responsibility for loss or bodily injury as a volunteer in the library. No adult volunteers may work alone or unassisted around minor library patrons.

We value the potential contribution of former employees as volunteers. Former employees may volunteer at their assigned branch after a hiatus of 1 year or 1 year for every 10 years of employment. There is no restriction to volunteer at another branch.

Employees who have been terminated for cause are prohibited from volunteering at any branch.

Minor volunteers

Volunteers under the age of 18 have long been an important source of additional help especially during the summer months. Important sources for young volunteers include church youth groups, scout groups, home schooled children, and students on summer vacation.

1. Any group of volunteers, such as the Scouts, must be led by an adult organization member. Group leaders are encouraged to approach the library to discuss potential volunteer activities prior to scheduled event. The organization is required to provide adequate supervision.
2. When working with minor volunteers, two adults, either staff or staff and adult volunteer, must always be present.
3. Children under 14, not volunteering through an organization, may only volunteer during the summer reading program and the week preceding. For exceptions, see Community Service in this section.
4. All minor volunteers' duties are covered by the strict regulations of the Child Labor Laws:
 - a. Fourteen and fifteen year old volunteers may not:
 - i. Begin work before 7 a.m. or end work not later than 7 p.m.
 - ii. Work more than 3 hours a day.
 - iii. Work more than 8 hours in one (1) week.
 - iv. Drive.
 - v. Get on a stepladder, scaffold or roof.
 - vi. Operate any power equipment.
 - vii. Do any kind of construction work.
 - viii. Use any type of insecticide or pesticide.
 - b. Sixteen and seventeen year old volunteers may not:
 - i. Drive.
 - ii. Get on a roof.
 - iii. Dismantle or demolish a building.
 - iv. Use any type of insecticide or pesticide.
 - v. Operate powered equipment with open cutting surfaces.
 - c. Sixteen and seventeen year old volunteers may:
 - i. Get on a stepladder or scaffold.
 - ii. Use powered lawnmowers and powered equipment such as sanders or weed eaters.

- iii. Work until 9 p.m. on school nights.
- 5. All minor volunteers must complete the Volunteer Information Sheet and have the emergency release form (some hospitals require a notarized copy) signed by a parent or guardian and a witness to participate. The department head should consult with the closest hospital on whether or not the emergency medical release form needs to be notarized.
- 6. Minor volunteers working through other organizations must have proper emergency releases through their group.

Summer reading program volunteers

It has been a practice in some branches to use minor volunteers during the months of June and July to assist with the annual summer reading program.

1. Volunteers over the age of 11 may be used for the duration of the summer reading program and the week preceding.
2. They may not work more than two hours per day and not more than six hours per week and only during the library's normal hours of operation. Their duties are restricted to:
 - a. Light filing and clerical work associated with the summer reading program.
 - b. Assisting with summer reading program events.
 - c. Shelving easy books.
3. All prior restrictions and requirements for other minor volunteers will apply to summer reading program volunteers.

Community service workers

Community service workers are adults or teens, 16 years of age or older, who are required by a court order to complete a specific number of hours of service in the community.

Children under 16 years of age may complete community service while accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Community service workers are considered volunteers and must fill out all volunteer forms. The library reserves the right to refuse any community service worker the opportunity to work in the library.

Community service workers who refuse the assigned duties, behave inappropriately or fail to show as scheduled may forfeit their volunteer opportunity.

Community service workers who ask to volunteer from a court outside of Brazoria County may be refused.

No referrals will be accepted unless an agreement has been made between the library director and the referring agency. The branch manager will accept or refuse community service workers according to branch needs.

All volunteer work must be completed within normal library hours and under library supervision. It is the responsibility of the community service worker to maintain his or her required records. It is the responsibility of the branch manager or designee to accurately reflect time worked.

When on their assigned duties, community service workers are expected to follow all policies set forth in the BCLS Policy & Procedure Manual and to adhere to the dress guidelines as found in the chapter on Employee Code of Conduct.

Please note that community service assigned by a Brazoria County court must be scheduled through Adult Probation