

Fine Free Policy

In an effort to remove barriers to access, Henderson County Public Library District has joined a growing number of public libraries across the U.S. in adopting a fine-free policy. Starting May 10, 2021, patrons will no longer be charged for returning items past the due date, and past overdue fines have been forgiven. This change is in accordance with the American Library Association's recommendations to remove barriers to social equity. Henderson County Public Library's administration and board believe access to the library's multimillion-dollar collection is the most important thing.

How does this work?

Only one thing is changing, but it is big news. Henderson County Public Library District will no longer charge you if you return items late. At the same time, HCPLD encourages our patrons to return items in a timely manner so they can be enjoyed by all.

- Items checked out from Henderson County Public Library District will continue to have a two-week loan period and can be renewed for two more weeks or for a total of four weeks.
- Patrons who have signed up for email or text alerts will be notified with a reminder three days before items are due.
- However, if items are NOT renewed, patrons will continue to receive successive overdue notices.
- First notice when items are five days overdue
- Second notice when items are ten days overdue
- A bill when items are two weeks overdue
- If items are returned at this point, any late fees will be waived.

So if people don't owe fines what incentive is there to return things?

Eliminating overdue fines doesn't mean people can keep things forever. Fees still stand for lost/unreturned or damaged items.

In 2019, the American Library Association passed a resolution determining that library fines are a form of social inequity, and they urged libraries nationwide to "actively move towards eliminating them."

Since then, more than 200 libraries have eliminated overdue fines. Henderson County Public Library District has scrutinized how the fine-free policy has impacted early adopters, as well as how fines impact our patrons. We determined that fines disproportionately impact our lower-income families.

Henderson County Public Library District is now fine free, but I still have fines on my record?

As of May 10, 2021, no new overdue fines will be assessed. Past overdue fines have also been erased from your account. If you still show a balance, it is because you have held onto materials so long past the due date that they are now deemed lost.

In 2019, Henderson County Public Library District collected \$555.04 in fines (that includes copies, faxes and sales).

Some patrons see late fees as a supplemental way to support library operations. Moving forward, we invite patrons to continue to donate to the library through donations.

What's the difference between a fine and a fee?

Henderson County Public Library District has eliminated fines, the daily penalty assessed for returning items late. These fines have ranged from 05 cents a day.

Fees are for costs incurred by the library for:

- Replacing materials that are lost, unreturned or returned damaged.
- All patrons are still responsible for paying fees as part of the library's return policy per inter-library loan materials.

Will the loss of revenue from fines impact the library and its services?

Henderson County Public Library District does not operate to make a profit. Our goal is to invest our funds into creating a collection of resources that meets our community's needs – from research databases for students to children's books to engage new readers to books, movies and music to keep lifelong learners engaged.

Henderson County Public Library's physical collection is worth an estimated \$1.2 million and includes books, audiobooks, movies, music and more. Our digital collection, which includes all those categories as well as multiple research databases, is worth an estimated \$10 million.

Our entire community helped build this valuable asset; our entire community should have access.

While we do not operate to make a profit, the library is always seeking ways to serve our community better and a healthy budget allows us to hire trained staff, offer compelling programming and acquire new books and other materials for all Henderson County residents.

For those who wish to help us with our mission with a financial contribution, we say thank you and encourage you to make a donation to Henderson County Public Library District.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees: 6-5-23