



Public Librarians' Chat

DEVELOPING CONDUCT POLICIES

GUEST PRESENTER: ANDREW MURPHY

Denver Public Library Works to Improve Library Safety

- ▶ City records revealed a sharp increase in 911 service calls from the Denver Library. Denver 911 received 18 calls for assaults and fights at the in the library in just four months in 2017.
- ▶ Sexual assault calls from the library have also increased by 83 percent
- ▶ But the highest increase in calls was for overdoses. There were 44 calls for overdoses in the first four months in 2017. Last year there were zero
- ▶ Library responded with increased police presence and narcan kits

New Trends in Library Security

- ▶ Vaping and marijuana
- ▶ "Religious" panhandlers
- ▶ Religious-centered confrontations
- ▶ Unsatisfied tax advice seekers
- ▶ Ransomware attacks
- ▶ Legal concealed weapons
- ▶ Service animals vs. emotional comfort animal



<http://www.kentucky.com/news/local/counties/fayette-county/article146067504.html>

Safe Environment Begins with...

- ▶ Designated Person-in-Charge
- ▶ Post emergency phone list at all service desks
- ▶ Have a Code of Conduct Policy
- ▶ Post "Rules of Conduct"



Wasilla Public Library

Speaking of signs,....



“Problem patron” or patron with a problem?



Handling Confrontation




Proactive Outreach

The social work intern can help answer these questions!



**MONDAYS
& FRIDAYS
10AM-6PM**

- Available for questions on the 3rd floor
- OR stop by the table at the front entrance from 12pm-2pm (Mon. & Fri.)
- OR call or e-mail to schedule a time to talk!


907-343-2911
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School of Social Work
A part of the University of Alaska Anchorage

Where can I find **HOUSING**?  → 

Where can I find **FOOD**?  → 

Where can I find **COUNSELING**?  → 

Where can I find **A JOB**?  → 

Information on **ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**?  → 

Policies, Procedures, and Practice



[Loud Eating in the Library!](https://youtu.be/mPh9JZIVUK0)
<https://youtu.be/mPh9JZIVUK0>

Why are polices are important?

- ▶ Support the mission, service roles, goals, and objectives of the library;
- ▶ Clarify relationships and responsibilities within the organization;
- ▶ Delegate authority by transferring decision making to lower levels of the organization;
- ▶ Guide acquisitions of library materials;
- ▶ Protect the rights of individuals inside and outside the organization and;
- ▶ Protect the organization and its legal authority in case of litigation

Policy Process

- ▶ Policy development often originates with the library director
- ▶ Policy making process should involve all levels of staff
- ▶ Library Board reviews, if necessary revises, and approves
 - ▶ Advisory
 - ▶ Governing
- ▶ Library Director informs staff and public of the policy
- ▶ Library Board reviews policy periodically

Validity Tests for Policies

- ▶ Legality: Does the policy conform to current law? Changes in the law often precipitate policy review.
- ▶ Reasonableness: Is the policy reasonable? Many policies, although legal on the surface, could be successfully challenged if they are unreasonable.
- ▶ Nondiscriminatory application: Can the policy be enforced in a nondiscriminatory manner? Policies must be applied fairly to all patron.
- ▶ Measurability: Is the enforcement of the policy measurable? It is difficult to enforce a policy fairly if the behavior specified or prohibited by the policy is not quantifiable.

Effective Policies

- ▶ Reflective of the mission, roles and objectives of the organization
- ▶ Consistent, in order to maintain efficiency and fairness
- ▶ Flexible, to allow some latitude in interpretation
- ▶ Supported by procedures and rules,
- ▶ Clearly written
- ▶ Fully discussed with staff
- ▶ Appealable through an established mechanism.

Resources

- Horrigan, John B. "Libraries 2016." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech*, 9 Sept. 2016, www.pewinternet.org/2016/09/09/libraries-2016/.
- "Denver Public Library Works to Improve Library Safety." *Public Libraries Online Denver Public Library Works to Improve Library Safety Comments*, publiclibrariesonline.org/2017/08/denver-public-library-works-to-improve-library-safety/.
- "New Trends in Library Security." *American Libraries Magazine*, 26 May 2017, americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2017/06/01/new-trends-library-security/.
- "City Aims Services at a Place That's Already an Unofficial Refuge for the Homeless -- the Loussac Library." *Alaska Dispatch News*, Alaska Dispatch News, www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2016/06/19/city-aims-services-at-a-place-thats-already-an-unofficial-refuge-for-the-homeless-the-loussac-library/.

Resources

- “Safety First | Library Security.” *Library Journal*, 23 May 2016, lj.libraryjournal.com/2016/05/managing-libraries/safety-first-library-security/#_.
- “Signage: Better None Than Bad.” *American Libraries Magazine*, 12 July 2010, americanlibrariesmagazine.org/2010/07/12/signage-better-none-than-bad/.
- “Positive Signs | The User Experience.” *Library Journal*, 2 Sept. 2015, lj.libraryjournal.com/2015/09/opinion/aaron-schmidt/positive-signs-the-user-experience/.
- Sarkodie-Mensah, Kwasi. *Helping the Difficult Library Patron: New Approaches to Examining and Resolving a Long-Standing and Ongoing Problem*. Haworth Information Press, 2002.

Resources

- ▶ Larson, Jeanette, and Herman L. Totten. *The Public Library Policy Writer: a Guidebook with Model Policies on CD-ROM*. Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2008.
- ▶ "You Are HereLibrary of Michigan For Libraries Library Administration Trustee Information." *Library of Michigan - Four Tests for A Legally-Enforceable Library Policy*, www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan/0,2351,7-160-18668_69405_18689-54454--,00.html.
- ▶ brianlouiefilm. "A Librarian's Guide to Homelessness - HomelessLibrary.com." *YouTube*, YouTube, 20 May 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYiEEhhrFh4.

Writing new policies: background

Library values

- ▶ Libraries are for everyone
- ▶ Libraries have an ethical obligation to make library resources available to everyone
- ▶ The ALA promotes removing all barriers to library and information services for people living in poverty

Writing new policies: background

Kreimer V. Morristown

- ▶ Kreimer sued Free Public Library of Morristown, NJ in 1990
- ▶ A Federal court ruled the Library violated Kreimer's First Amendment rights by denying him access to information for poor hygiene
- ▶ Judge Sarokin said, "Society has survived not banning books which it finds offensive from its libraries; it will survive not banning persons whom it likewise finds offensive from its libraries."
- ▶ The ruling was reversed by a Federal appeals panel recognizing the Library as a limited public forum
- ▶ The different views of the Judge and Appeals panel centered around the vague language of the policy

Writing new policies: research

- ▶ Bardoff, Corina. 2015. "Homelessness and the Ethics of Information Access" *The Serials Librarian*. (69. 347-360)
- ▶ Kelleher, Angie. 2013 "Not Just a Place to Sleep: Homeless Perspectives on Libraries in Central Michigan" *Library Review* (Vol. 62, Iss. ½ pp. 19-33)
- ▶ Analysis of Code of Conduct library policies from 100 most populated cities in USA
- ▶ Analysis of public records of incident reports from 40 public libraries when people were evicted for odor issues

Writing new policies: findings

Sleeping

- ▶ 90% of libraries prohibit sleeping as 'disruptive behavior'
- ▶ Anaheim Public Library prohibits snoring but not sleeping
- ▶ 'Sleeping that impedes others from using library spaces or resources' that violates 'courteous' behavior – Minneapolis
- ▶ 'Placing head on table for prolonged periods of time' - Nashville
- ▶ Austin Public Library allows people under the age of 10 to sleep
- ▶ No library specifically make exceptions for elderly or people with Narcolepsy

Writing new policies: findings

Using restrooms for hygiene

- ▶ 79% of libraries forbid 'Bathing, shaving or washing clothes on the premises'
- ▶ Charlotte and Dallas explicitly prohibit people changing clothes in the restroom
- ▶ 'Use restroom facilities properly' – vague language from Omaha
- ▶ 'Use public restroom for intended purpose only' – San Antonio
- ▶ 'Restroom sinks shall be used for washing hands and face only' – San Diego

Writing new policies: findings

Bags & bulky items

- ▶ Chicago's policy asks customers to not 'Bring in more than two bags or any bag exceeding 36"X18"X12"' addressing two common traits of the varied policies regarding bags: quantity and size
- ▶ 61% of all libraries prohibit bags of some type and 47% of all libraries have a policy related to bags blocking access or taking space
- ▶ Wichita Public Library prohibits 'bags of clothing'
- ▶ Orlando and Colorado Springs prohibit 'garbage bags'
- ▶ Nine libraries prohibit plastic bags and three prohibit boxes
- ▶ Long Beach Public Library does not allow customers to unpack bags inside the library

Writing new policies: findings

Bedrolls, blankets & sleeping bags

- ▶ 30% prohibit bedrolls, blankets & sleeping bags
- ▶ Four of these libraries, all located in Texas, do not have a policy regarding bulky bags
- ▶ Phoenix prevents people from 'laying out blankets'
- ▶ Orlando allows blankets for children but not adults

Writing new policies: findings

Shopping carts

- ▶ 30% forbid shopping carts from library property
- ▶ 'Wheeled conveyances such as wheelchairs and baby strollers/carriages, walkers used for the actual transport of a person or child, as well as wheeled backpacks, book carriers, or other implements for the transport of research and reading material are permitted' – Santa Ana
- ▶ Most libraries use the word 'grocery' or 'shopping' cart within the policy

Writing new policies: findings

Personal hygiene & odor

- ▶ 79% of libraries have a policy regarding odor
- ▶ 'Having personal hygiene that is offensive so as to constitute a nuisance to others' is most common language
- ▶ 11% prohibit clothing odor or 'unclean clothing' as Tulsa worded it
- ▶ Pima County & Austin include 'perfume' as an offensive odor
- ▶ Phoenix and Boston forbid 'unsanitary items' and 'garbage, articles with foul odor'

Writing new policies: findings

Monopolizing space & loitering

- ▶ 35% of libraries prohibit loitering
- ▶ 16% of libraries prohibit 'monopolizing space'
- ▶ Fort Wayne, IN defines loitering as, 'Individuals who are not using library resources or services'
- ▶ San Bernardino Public Library includes 'walking aimlessly' in their definition of loitering
- ▶ Miami Public Library defines loitering as 'remaining in the Library without being engaged in purposes for which the Library was opened, such as reading, writing and quiet contemplation'
- ▶ 'Monopolizing library space, seating, tables, stairways or equipment to the exclusion of other patrons.' – Colorado Springs

Writing new policies: findings

Begging & panhandling

- ▶ 85% of libraries prohibit solicitation of any kind
- ▶ 32% of libraries use the word 'begging' or 'panhandling'

Writing new policies: findings

Anomalies

- ▶ Five libraries prohibit camping or living on property
- ▶ Houston Public Library prevents customers from 'spreading out personal belongings'
- ▶ Maricopa County Library District's Statement of Conduct reads 'Customers are encouraged to enjoy our libraries while behaving in a manner that does not interfere with the enjoyment of the library by others. Any behavior that is deemed disruptive or destructive to the library and/or the library environment is unacceptable.'
- ▶ Memphis deliberately chose not to publicly post policies to make the space more welcoming

Writing new policies: takeaways

- ▶ Be mindful of language when writing policies
- ▶ Be explicit to avoid disputed interpretation
- ▶ Be positive when able and say what is allowed instead of what isn't allowed
- ▶ Always give Library staff authority to make judgment for all policies to avoid subjective interpretation
- ▶ Avoid discriminatory language – and try to avoid discriminatory policies!