

Compassionate Accountability: Dealing with Problem Behaviors in the Library

Emily Rogers & Karla Giraldéz - Brown County Library

Who we are...



Emily Rogers
Deputy Director
Brown County Library
Emily.Rogers@BrownCountyWi.Gov

Karla Giraldéz
Ashwaubenon/Southwest Branch Manager
Brown County Library
Karla.Giraldez@BrownCountyWi.Gov



Overview



- What to do before an issue arises
- How to prepare for a difficult conversation
- Build relationships with local partners
- Get to know your customers
- Know your own mindset
- How to present yourself in a difficult conversation
- Know what to say and how to say it
- Progressive discipline in action
- Maintain safety for you and the patron
- Document concerns and sharing information with other staff
- Self-care

Before an Issue Arises...

Administration needs to:

- Develop a clear policy for staff to follow
 - Review other policies (DPI)
 - Consider the language
 - Don't worry about the grey areas
- Include elements of progressive discipline
 - Be consistent
 - Have steps/levels
- Have a code word
 - Make sure everyone knows it and what it means

COVID

- Develop policy "guidelines"
- Prepare spaces/signage

BCL Library Behavior Policy Cheat Sheet

Any staff member may give a warning or ban a patron for one day or up to one week based on the violations listed. The Deputy Director (or Admin) will review all reports and notify patrons of any adjustments to the ban period.

Violation Level: High	
Staff Action: Ban for 1 day or up to 1 week	Administrative Action: Ban for up to 1 Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ordinance/Statute Violation (federal, state, or local)• Theft of library materials• Threatening harm to a person, group, or property	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging in sexual conduct/contact• Selling, or distributing legal or illegal drugs, or alcohol• Public intoxication by a legal or illegal drug

Violation Level: Medium	
Staff Action: 1 warning then ban for 1 day or up to 1 week	Administrative Action: Ban for up to 1 Year
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disruptive conduct (threatening gestures or behaviors, prolonged staring, unauthorized following of a customer or staff member).• Destructive, abusive or damaging use of library materials, furniture, fixtures• Running, Skating, Skateboarding, or other similar activities in the Library• Disobeying reasonable direction of staff• Soliciting, petitioning, or distributing written materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leaving belongings unattended• Using tobacco and nicotine products or vaping within 20 feet of grounds. No visible tobacco/nicotine products on grounds.• Consuming food or drink that creates a nuisance (smell, garbage, spills)• Bringing a non-service animal into the library• Violating the Public Computer Use Policy• Bringing weapons into the Library• Parking on the premises for non-library business

Violation Level: Low	
Staff Action: 2 warning then ban for 1 day or up to 1 week	Administrative Action: Ban for up to 6 months
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Entering staff workspace• Loitering or sleeping• Improperly using restrooms or other facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volume disturbance from personal electronic devices• Leaving children unsupervised under age of 9• Inappropriate displays of affection

Banned until corrected
Bare feet, chest, or inappropriate attire Offensive odor Improper handling or behavior of service animal

Appeals to Library Bans can be made to the Deputy Director. Persons banned from the Library will be deemed as trespassing if they visit any BCL facility during a ban. Law enforcement should be contacted in this situation.

Communicate, Train, Practice

Staff Training

- Onboarding/Initial
- Ongoing - multiple opportunities to be exposed to concepts

Role play

- Practice how to handle a variety of situations
- Increase comfort level in a safe space with people you know and trust

Communicate

- Share pertinent information among staff about issues or problem behaviors
- Have a system for communicating
- Patrons can't manipulate staff or get away with behaviors due to lack of information

EVERYONE is a valuable part of the team and has a role to play

Transparency - Consistency

Communicate about policies with customers

- Written in clear language for patrons; avoid jargon
- Posted where they can see
- Enforced consistently
 - Everyone is treated fairly
 - Customers can't play staff one against the other

COVID - Communicate about "new normal" expectations

- Signage
- Social media & media outlets
- Staff cues

Get to Know Your Partners



Community Resources

- Law Enforcement
- Social Workers
- Job Center
- Shelters

How?

- Set up regular meetings
- Share information
- Share training

COVID

- DPI
- Library systems
- Local government

Get to Know Your Customers

- Build a positive relationship BEFORE issues arise
 - Welcoming
 - Greet with a smile
 - Shake hand??
 - Know people by name
- Need FIVE positive interactions to balance ONE “negative” interactions



Walk a mile...

Come from a Place of Compassion

- You don't know what's going on in their life or even on that day
- Yours may be the only kind words they hear today
- The person in front of you is someone's precious child
- **COVID** - We are all experiencing the same storm but we are not in the same boat
- Be kind

You can hold people accountable *and* be compassionate.

Understand Others' Mindsets



- Consider differences in how the other person might:
 - Speak
 - Understand
 - Cope
- Exposure to training or have an awareness of:
 - Trauma
 - Poverty
 - Homelessness
 - Drug and alcohol issues
 - Mental health issues
 - Cultural differences
 - Neurodiversity
 - Health conditions(i.e. compromised immune system)

Understand Your Own Mindset

- What are your personal biases?
- What is your comfort level with dealing with behaviors?
- What is your tolerance level for certain behaviors?
- Where are you at emotionally right now?
- Are you feeling safe?
- **COVID** - Where are you on the continuum?

We are paid to be professional, *and* we are human.

Step away if you need to.

Start with Heart

Ask yourself:

1. What am I behaving like I want?
2. What do I *really* want
 - For myself?
 - For the customer?
 - For the relationship?
 - For the Library?
- How would I behave if I really did?



“Get your heart right by learning to focus on what you really want.”

- Crucial Conversations

Why We Address an Issue



Don't be the policy police!

- Why we address issues:
 - Legal issues
 - Personal safety
 - Public safety
- Be aware of personal bias

Time for a Tough Talk



Things to consider before you approach someone to address an issue:

- Body Language
- Tone of Voice/Volume
- Privacy
- Physical proximity
- Word choices



What to say - Part 1

1. Greet patron and introduce yourself
2. Start with the facts
 - I noticed...
 - I heard...
 - I saw...
3. Explain the policy/rule

“You probably aren’t aware but ...”
“This is important because...”
State what you *can* do for them.
4. Invite their input/Listen actively
 - “Is there something I’m missing?”



What to Say - Part 2

“Every time you enforce the rules be sad about it.” ~ Ryan Dowd



“I’m really sorry, but - unfortunately- we don’t allow eating by the computers. I know it’s really inconvenient, but it helps us keep the computers clean. Sorry about that, but thank you for helping us.”

“I’m sorry, but I’m going to have to ask you to leave. I know it’s really cold outside. I’m sorry, but that rule you broke is very important, so I do have to ask you to leave today and try again tomorrow.”

What to say - COVID



“We understand your frustration/disappointment and **appreciate your support and patience in this time**. With so many circumstances out of our control, we are making the safest decisions that we can to protect the health and well-being of library customers and staff. Would you like to share your concerns or questions with our Library Director?”

What else could you say with a customer?

With a co-worker?

Progressive Discipline in Action



- Remember your policy!
- Provide warnings
- Be clear with expectations and consequences
- Always be consistent
- Don't debate your rules/policies
- Engaging law enforcement

Make It Safe for Yourself



- Be aware of physical layout in the building; where are your exits?
- Talk away from others, but not so private that it isn't safe for you
- Have backup ready
- Use your code word if needed

Make it Safe for Them

- Do not corner a patron
- Never touch a customer
- If they get loud, you get soft
- Use Active Listening skills:
 - Ask
 - Mirror
 - Paraphrase
 - Prime - get them talking by making an educated guess as to the problem



Making it safe for them, ultimately makes it safe for YOU!

After the conversation....

- Breathe
- Step away
- Vent appropriately
- Reflect
 - What worked?
 - What didn't
 - What could I have done differently or better?
 - What will I do next time?
- Be gentle with yourself



Document, Document, Document



Create a System for Documenting

- Possible Problem Log
- Violation Reports

Communication

- Who needs to know?
- How to share?
- Maintain privacy

How to Document

- Specifics
- Factual
- Objective
- Concise
- Organized

VIOLATION REPORT

Name of staff completing this form: _____

Violation Date: _____ Violation Time: _____ AM PM

Violation Level: High Medium Low

How would you categorize the violation?

Low: <input type="checkbox"/> Entering Staff Workspace <input type="checkbox"/> Improperly Using Restrooms <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate Attire <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate Display of Affection <input type="checkbox"/> Offensive Odor (body, belongings, food) <input type="checkbox"/> Service Animal Issue <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping <input type="checkbox"/> Unattended Child <input type="checkbox"/> Volume Disturbance <input type="checkbox"/> Other: Please indicate: _____	Medium: <input type="checkbox"/> Disruptive Behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Food/Drink <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment <input type="checkbox"/> Public Computer Violation <input type="checkbox"/> Soliciting <input type="checkbox"/> Tobacco Products <input type="checkbox"/> Unattended Items Left in Library <input type="checkbox"/> Vandalism <input type="checkbox"/> Weapons	High: <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression/Threats <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol/Drugs <input type="checkbox"/> Inappropriate Sexual Contact <input type="checkbox"/> Theft <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Trespassing
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Were any of the following called: 911 Law Enforcement 911 Medical
 Non-Emergency Law Enforcement Non-Emergency Medical

Describe situation: *Include location, others involved, description of victim, witnesses, etc.*

Action Taken:

1st Warning 2nd Warning Asked to leave for the day 1 Week Ban

Other: *Describe.*

Documentation Examples

- I found Sally Smith asleep in a chair. She was rude and condescending when I woke her up to tell her she was violating our sleeping policy. She was also drunk. I told her to leave for the day. She rolled her eyes to let me know I was annoying her. I waited for her to gather her items and then made sure she left.



- Sally Smith was asleep at a table by the first floor audio books. I knocked on the table to wake her up. I then introduced myself and asked for her name. I asked if she was okay. When responding I could smell alcohol on her breath and she slurred her words. I explained to her that sleeping in the library wasn't safe and I would need her to stay awake. I asked if she had been drinking and she said she had been drinking earlier. She then cursed at me and told me to leave her alone. I told her she would need to leave for the day because she was drinking. I stepped away to let her gather her things. After 5 minutes she exited out of the parking lot doors.



Self Care

Manage your stress- it is real!

- Take a break
- Meditate
- Vent
- Compassion burnout
- Balance- use your leave
- Employee Assistance Program





New Skills Training

Role Play!

Wrap Up

In review:

- Be proactive - have a plan
- Be transparent
- Be consistent
- Build relationships with customers and with partners
- Be aware of yourself and others
- Respect differences
- Be compassionate
- Keep it safe
- Communicate with staff before and after incidents
- Make time for self-care

Additional Resources



- Candid Culture- Shari Harley (<https://candidculture.com/>)
- Crucial Conversations- Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, et al.
- Library Security: Better Communication, Safer Facilities- Steve Albrecht
- Black Belt Librarians: Every Librarian's Real World Guide to a Safer Workplace - Warren Graham
- Librarian Guide to Homelessness- Ryan Dowd
 - Book
 - Training
 - Weekly Tips

Contact Us



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