Safety in Libraries

Joy Worland,

Continuing Education and Small and Rural Libraries Consultant,

Vermont Department of Libraries

July 28, 2023

Primary goals

General Safety Tips

Safety at One-Person Libraries

Resources on Safety in Libraries

Training Providers

General Safety Tips

- Be aware of who is in the building at all times.
- Create sightlines throughout the building as much as possible.
- Never allow yourself to be "trapped." Have more than one way to get out from behind the desk or out of your office and the building.
- Never count money out in public
- Lock away your purse/valuables. Never leave them where they can be seen
- Share the library key only as needed and be aware of who has keys
- Establish "code words" that you can use with other staff that let them know you need help.
- Document every incident
  - Sample Incident Report Form: https://westhurleylibrary.org/CircBlog/Templates/Incident%20Report.pdf
- Seek training to understand warning signs and potentially problematic behaviors, how to de-escalate situations, and tips for talking with people when they're agitated
  - VT League of Cities and Towns: https://www.vlct.org
  - Howard Center (or similar mental health agency): https://howardcenter.org/

Safety at One-Person Libraries

- Never work alone. Schedule a volunteer at times when only 1 staff member is working during open hours:
  - Recruit a list of volunteers
  - Have at least 1 scheduled to be at the library whenever only 1 staff person is scheduled
  - Have back-ups available
  - Have 1 trustee assigned to each day as a back-up
  - Keep the door locked if you are working alone before or after hours
  - Have contacts at nearby businesses that are open when library is
- Self-Defense Training – see local parks & rec, local police, local martial arts classes, etc.
- Engage a security expert to do a safety evaluation at your library & staff education
  - Local Police
  - State Police: http://vsp.vermont.gov/stations
- Consider adding security cameras - Have a clear policy around use, viewing footage, disposal of footage, etc.
  - Sample Police, Brownell Library: https://brownelllibrary.org/the-library/policies/security-camera-policy
- Consider installing an alarm system for building
- Install outdoor lighting to make evening building exits more safe
- Panic Button – Rings through to a security company or the local police. Consider having a panic button you can carry with you.
- Have a list of local people you can call during emergency situations.

Resources on Safety in Libraries

BOOKS

- *The Safe Library*, by Steve Albrecht. Copyright 2023. Rowan & Littlefield Publishers. ISBN: 9781538169605
- *Library Security: Better Communication, Safer Facilities*, by Steve Albrecht. Copyright 2015. ALA. ISBN: 9780838913307
- *The Black Belt Librarian: Real-World Safety & Security* by Warren Graham. Copyright 2012. ALA. ISBN: 9780838911372
- *The Library Security and Safety Guide to Prevention, Planning, and Response* by Miriam B. Kahn. Copyright 2008. ALA. ISBN: 9780838909492
- *How to Thrive as a Solo Librarian* edited by Carol Smallwood and Melissa J. Clapp. Copyright 2012. Scarecrow Press, Inc. ISBN: 9780810882133
- *Managing the One-Person Library* by Larry Cooperman. Copyright 2015. Chandos Information Professional Series. ISBN: 978843346715

WEBSITES

- PLA recorded Virtual Town Hall: Spotlight on Safety: Addressing Threats in Public Libraries: https://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/webinars/ondemand/spotlight
- PLA recorded webinar: Violence Prevention in the Public Library: https://www.ala.org/pla/education/onlinelearning/webinars/archive/prevention
- De-Escalation Tips from CPI (PDF): http://bit.ly/DeEscalation
- ALA Live Security Videos (on YouTube):
  - http://bit.ly/LibrarySecurity (60 min.) – Hosted by Dan Freeman. 5/8/14. Topics include: code of conduct, working with youth, safety training, banning patrons, guns in libraries.
  - http://bit.ly/LibrarySafetySecurity (30 min.) – Hosted by Dan Freeman. 3/20/13. More a general discussion of the types of issues faced by libraries of various sizes, importance of staff development/training, simplifying code of conduct, building a culture of safety, using outside institutions (police, mental health facility) as part of security policy, banning patrons.
  - *Library Journal Article* - Safety First: Library Security (by Jennifer A. Dixon) – *Library Journal*. May 24, 2016 - http://bit.ly/LJSafetyFirst
- Active Shooter Training – DHS – Run, Hide, Fight: http://bit.ly/ActiveShooterRHF
- ALICE Training: https://www.alicetraining.com/

Safety Training Providers

VTLIB

- Niche Academy: Content from VTLIB and other providers, requires creating a free account
- Topic has been covered in core administration courses, Directors Summit, and trustee trainings
- August 2022 webinar on Library Security
- Working on a fall 2023 training with Washington County Mental Health

OTHER

- Library Journal & School Library Journal Professional Development: courses and webcasts
- Library 2.0: Synchronous trainings and recordings on security, patron interactions, mental health
- Public Library Association: courses and webinars
- University of Wisconsin iSchool Continuing Education program: https://ischool.wisc.edu/continuing-education/