



Risk Bulletin
January 2024

This month's Risk Bulletin focuses on Library Safety. It supports the upcoming University Session on Library Safety. Safety in public spaces, including libraries, has always been a concern, but may be more keenly felt in light of certain recent events. A productive and effective library is one in which its staff and patrons feel secure. "Today, more than ever, security in your library is every staff member's responsibility.



20 Library Service, Safety, And Security Guidelines

1. Take care of yourself first; then take care of each other; then take care of the patrons. It may be just another day for you, but it may be a very important service day for the patron.
2. Enforce your code of conduct firmly, fairly, consistently, legally, assertively, patiently, empathically, and reasonably (known as "The Essential Eight").
3. Protect yourself – Manage your stress and anger by slow, deep, and controlled breathing; work smartly and get help when you need it; and quit taking it personally (QTIP) – they are not mad at you; they are mad at the situation.
4. Use your intuition. If you see something, say something. Tell your boss, co-workers, or the police / sheriff. Do not wait for things to escalate or talk yourself out of what you have seen.
5. Read people's facial expressions and body language quickly and accurately. Watch your tone and body language for condescension.
6. Crucial conversations - remember conversations can turn "crucial" in the library: high stakes, strong emotions, differing opinions. Recognize when they do and use good talking and service skills.
7. Be a professional witness and provide accurate information to your boss and first responders. Help prepare a Security Incident Report for those events that qualify for it.
8. Introduce yourself – Explain why you are there – Ask for compliance.
9. GREAT tool: Greet the patron with eye contact; Reassure you are there to help; Explain what you will do; Act; accordingly, Thank the patron.
10. LEAPS Verbal Judo tool: Listen; Empathize; Ask more open-ended questions than closed ones; Paraphrase what you heard; Seek solutions that will satisfy the patron and stay within your policies.
11. Be careful around alcohol and stimulant drug users. They can be erratic.
12. Stay in "condition yellow" (safety and security awareness mode) when you are face-to-face, or over the counter. Do not assume because they were cooperative before they cannot be uncooperative now.
13. Use space and distance, proxemic barriers, and venting and validation. Use the assertive whisper

and physical movement to move patrons to a quieter area. If necessary, change the ratios of confrontation, by bringing over a colleague or a boss.

14. Set boundaries over the telephone. If they curse at you, warn them and if it happens again, hang up. Document the exact words they used.

15. Stop saying, “Calm down!” Use other phrases that allow venting and validation to show empathy. If it feels right, offer to sit with the patron, if you can, and/or offer to shake hands. These can lower the emotional temperature.

16. Call 9-1-1. We are all in charge of safety and security here, not just the Police. You do not have to confront bad people doing or getting ready to do bad things; just call 9-1-1 or 9-9-1-1 when it appears necessary.

17. Use “secret service hands” around potentially violent people. Use code words to send your co-workers to call 9-1-1 from a safe place immediately.

18. **Run – Hide – Fight:** remember the three elements of the well-known video. Evacuate far away from the building, and not to a staging area. Shelter in place in a room you can lock or barricade. Protect yourself as best as you can. Do a 15-minute run-hide drill at least once per year.

19. Have the COURAGE to tell your library leaders when you need help with any safety or security issue. You can make a difference.

Thank you for being a library professional!

An electronic version of this handout is available at www.TheSafeLibrary.com and can be distributed freely. For customized copies of this handout email admin@thesafelibrary.com. Order the book from Amazon here.

More information on library service, safety, and security programs (free and paid) join the 50,000+ members at the www.Library20.com community.

The next University Session will be January 18, 2024 - The Safe and Secure Library. This University Session will be virtual. Please consult the ICRMA 2023-24 Risk Control Plan for added trainings and webinars.