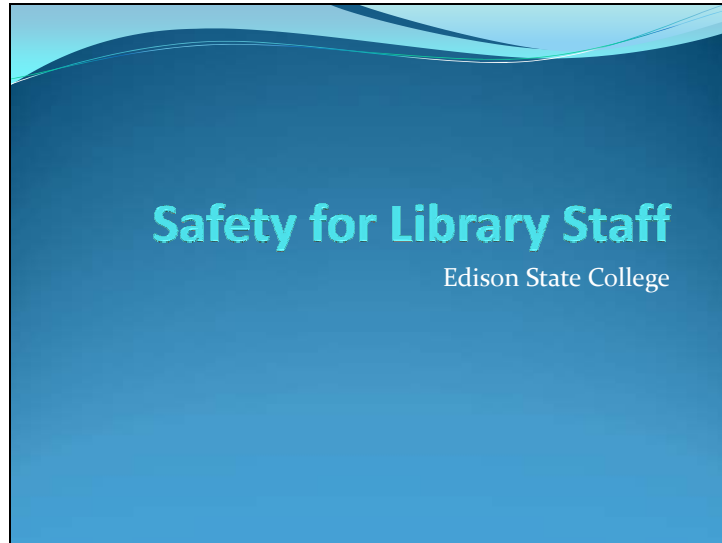
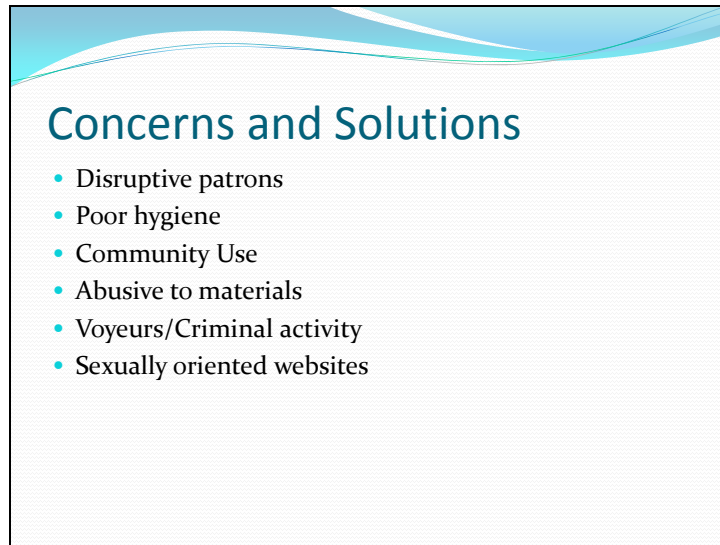


Slide 1



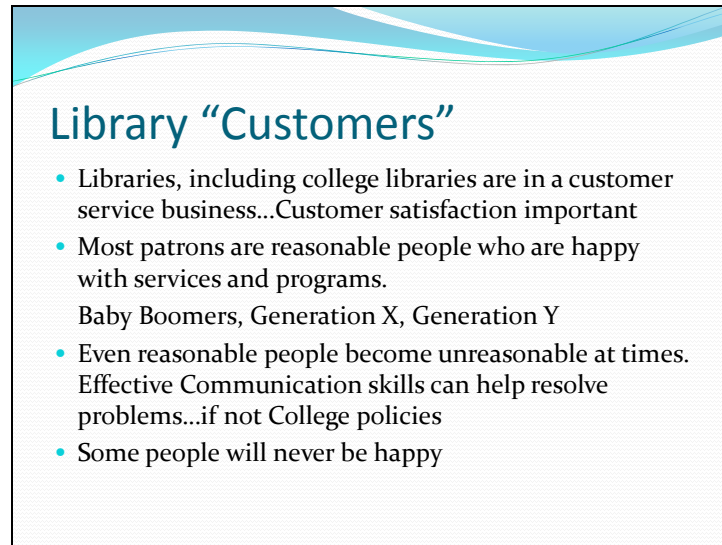
Safety for Library Staff of Edison State College  
Presentation by: Chief Rick Parfitt, Public Safety  
September 28, 2010



## Concerns and Solutions

- Disruptive patrons
- Poor hygiene
- Community Use
- Abusive to materials
- Voyeurs/Criminal activity
- Sexually oriented websites

Please alert a staff member for any of the above patron activities or concerns. Library Staff will either handle the situation directly or call Public Safety for assistance with the patron and situation.



## Library “Customers”

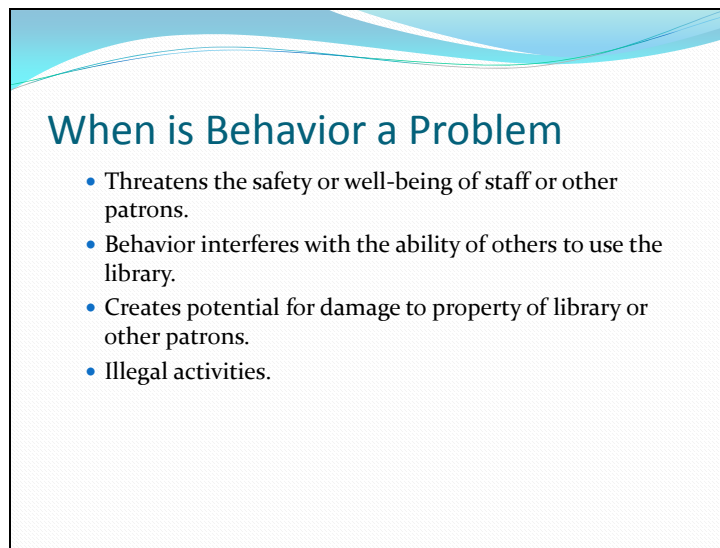
- Libraries, including college libraries are in a customer service business...Customer satisfaction important
- Most patrons are reasonable people who are happy with services and programs.  
Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y
- Even reasonable people become unreasonable at times. Effective Communication skills can help resolve problems...if not College policies
- Some people will never be happy

The Edison State College Libraries serve a varied population of people from all cultures and age ranges. We wish to serve all patrons courteously. As stated in the above slide our patrons are usually reasonable and happy with our services and technology; but certain aspects about the Library, the way courses are offered, the service they received in a different department, or the way their day is going may cause a reasonable regular patron to become unreasonable.

Please keep age in mind; for example, patrons from the Baby Boomer Generation may be a little more apprehensive about the use of technology than younger students from Generations X and Y. Conversely, patrons from Generations X and Y may be confused or need assistance with copy machines and manual reference works.

Communication is essential in properly identifying what the patron is having a problem with and ultimately trying to accomplish while visiting the Library. Repeating key phrases and asking follow-up questions will ensure you are listening to the patron and will help in identifying the type of assistance they need. Proper listening will help in reducing frustration and assure the patron receives the proper assistance and quality of service. If they are still not pleased with the provided assistance turn them over to a Library Staff member for further assistance or a referral for assistance.

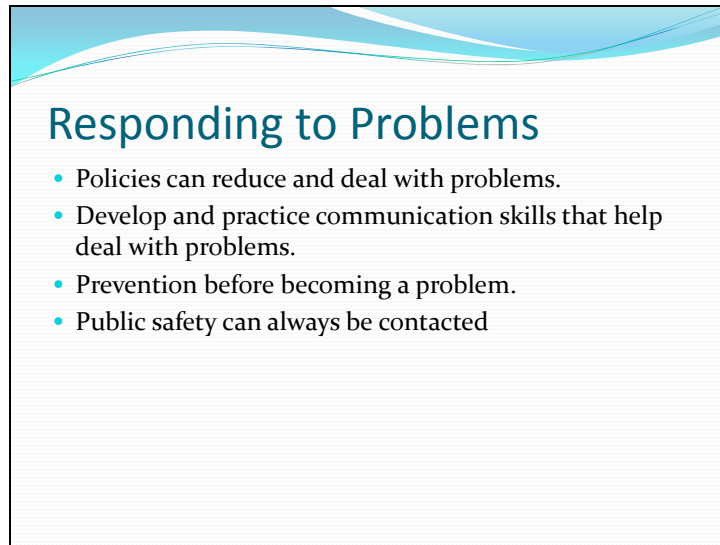
Not everyone will be completely satisfied with the service they received, but if the steps explained above have been followed you have done everything in your power to ensure that you tried to assist our patrons courteously and to the best of your ability.



### When is Behavior a Problem

- Threatens the safety or well-being of staff or other patrons.
- Behavior interferes with the ability of others to use the library.
- Creates potential for damage to property of library or other patrons.
- Illegal activities.

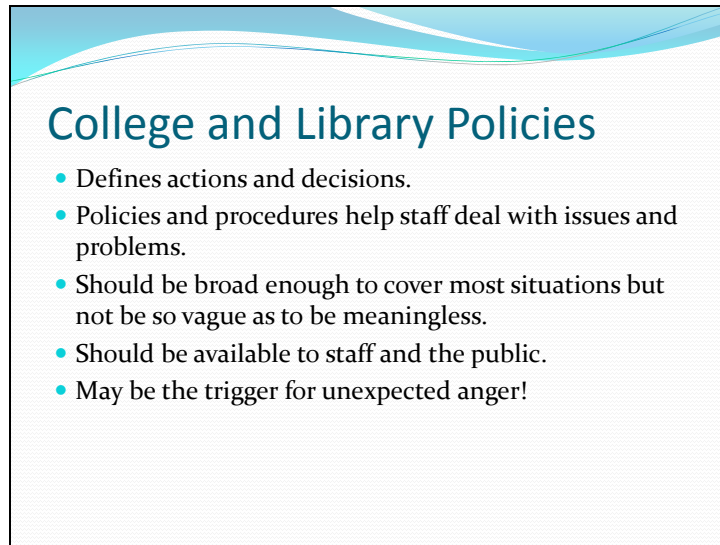
Always inform a Library Staff member when a patron is behaving improperly. Improper conduct is defined as any action that is in direct opposition to College or Library policies and/or the Law. The Library Staff member will either handle the situation or patron or call Public Safety for assistance.



## Responding to Problems

- Policies can reduce and deal with problems.
- Develop and practice communication skills that help deal with problems.
- Prevention before becoming a problem.
- Public safety can always be contacted

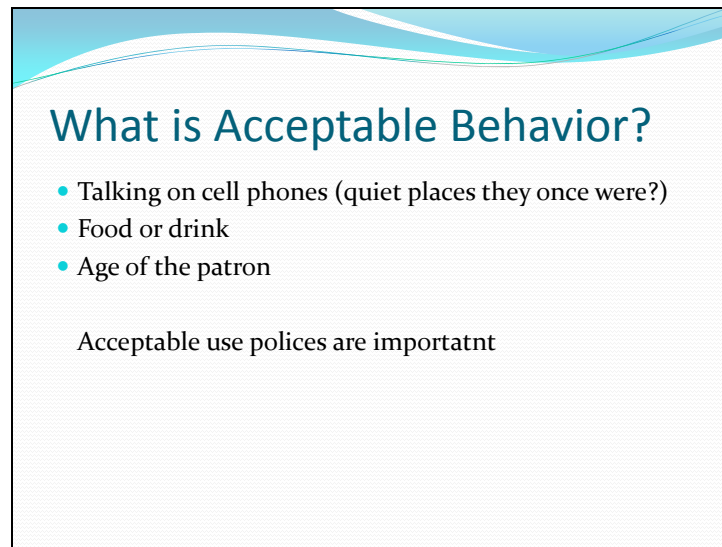
In most cases, problems can be resolved by clearly and calmly explaining what has happened and what our policy states. Sometimes alerting patrons to certain actions before they happen and what our policy is may help to prevent an action before it is performed. For example: if patrons are bringing in food from outside or an open can of soda alert them to our food and drink policy. If a problem escalates get a Library Staff member or call Public Safety.



## College and Library Policies

- Defines actions and decisions.
- Policies and procedures help staff deal with issues and problems.
- Should be broad enough to cover most situations but not be so vague as to be meaningless.
- Should be available to staff and the public.
- May be the trigger for unexpected anger!

The Library and College do have policies regarding proper conduct in the Library and on the Library Computers as well as on the rest of the campus. Please consult the Student Assistant training Module/Manual to refresh yourself on the Library's policies or ask a Library Staff Member.



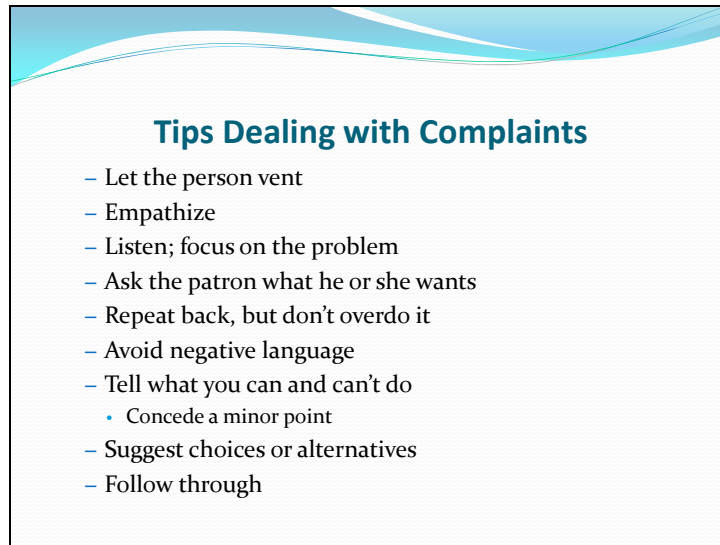
## What is Acceptable Behavior?

- Talking on cell phones (quiet places they once were?)
- Food or drink
- Age of the patron

Acceptable use polices are importatnt

What is the acceptable behavior or response for the three above situations?

- Talking on Cell Phones:
  - Please politely ask the patron, who may be disrupting other patrons, to take their cell phone call outside of the Library.
- Food and Drink:
  - If you notice a patron eating a sandwich, pizza, or other messy foods and/or drinking from a non-sealable container, please politely ask them to take it outside to finish or discard it. Acceptable food would include a candy bar or trail mix and acceptable drinks would be inside a container with a lid or seal.
- Age of Patron:
  - The Library's policy on children is the following: "Children under the age of 13 may not use Edison computers even when accompanied by parent or guardian. Students will be discouraged from bringing young children to the Libraries for extended time periods. If your child is creating a disturbance you will be asked to leave. Under no circumstances will children be allowed to remain unattended."

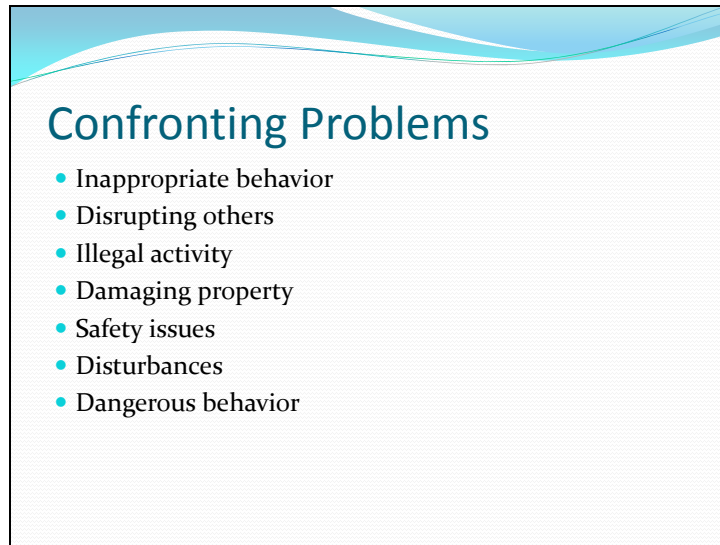


### Tips Dealing with Complaints

- Let the person vent
- Empathize
- Listen; focus on the problem
- Ask the patron what he or she wants
- Repeat back, but don't overdo it
- Avoid negative language
- Tell what you can and can't do
  - Concede a minor point
- Suggest choices or alternatives
- Follow through

For most dealings with an upset patron please direct them to a staff member for assistance.



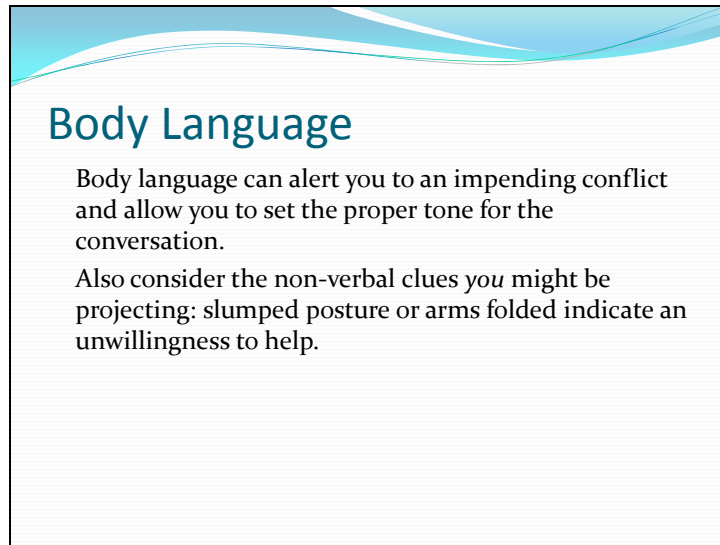


## Confronting Problems

- Inappropriate behavior
- Disrupting others
- Illegal activity
- Damaging property
- Safety issues
- Disturbances
- Dangerous behavior

If you do not feel comfortable in handling a disruptive patron get a staff member. Also, If you are working alone on the third floor and are confronted with a patron who makes you feel uncomfortable, either call the front desk requesting a break or leave the desk and come to the front desk immediately to be replaced upstairs.

Ask the public safety officer closing the Library if they would give you a ride to your car if you feel uncomfortable. Call Public Safety if you notice any suspicious activity on campus via one of the campus Emergency Blue Poles or Yellow Emergency Phones on campus. Public Safety's phone number is (239) 489-9203 or on-campus ext 1203 for the Lee Campus.



## Body Language

Body language can alert you to an impending conflict and allow you to set the proper tone for the conversation.

Also consider the non-verbal clues *you* might be projecting: slumped posture or arms folded indicate an unwillingness to help.

Body language is very important in identifying the severity of a situation and how to react to it. Look for “Closed” body language from the patron to determine if they are being aggressive or defensive. We want to try very hard to bring our patrons away from anger and find out their problem to assist them and leave happy. Below are some visual body language cues of aggression and defensiveness to look for:

### **Aggressive Body Language Cues**

- Hands on Hips
- Widened Stance [Displaying Dominance]
- Invading your Personal Space by Getting Too Close
- Aggressive Gesturing such as Finger Pointing, Lip Biting, Clenching Fists, and Quick Shifting Movements.
- Standing ‘Over’ Someone [Invading Personal Space]
- Overly-Firm Handshake
- ‘Eye Balling’ [Usually with a Pensive Stare]

### **Defensive Body Language Cues**

- Crossed Arms or Tightly Crossed Legs
- Hunched Shoulders
- Poor or No Eye Contact

- Leaning Away
- Tight, Coarse, or Overly Quiet Voice

When dealing with upset or unsatisfied customers be sure to avoid giving off cues of aggression yourself. Show empathy, “Open” or Interested body language, and display that you are actively listening to them. Other “Closed” cues to avoid displaying are nervous or bored body language. These closed messages may be interpreted as “you do not care about their problem,” “you don’t want to help me,” or may lead to the patron feeling they can take advantage of your nervousness.

### **Nervous Body Language Cues**

- Biting your Nails
- Playing with your Hair
- Dry Throat [Clearing your Throat, Swallowing Often, Coughing]
- Blushing
- Sweating
- Weak Handshake
- Avoiding Eye Contact

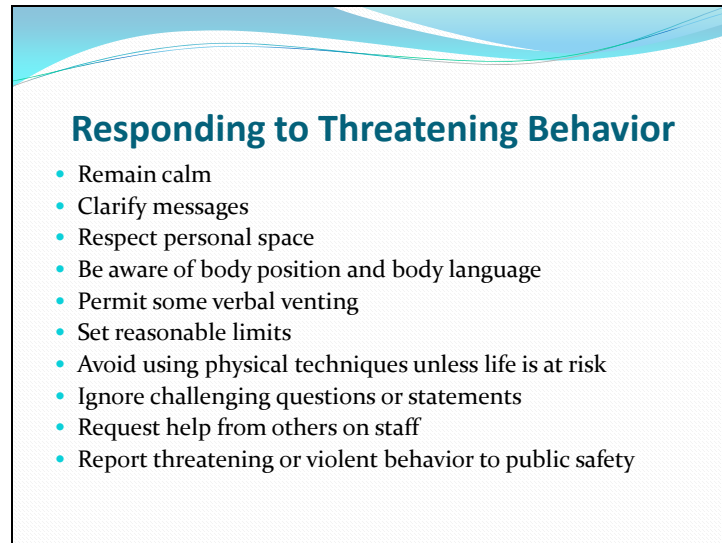
### **Bored Body Language Cues**

- Looking Around the Room when spoken to or addressed
- Looking at Watch or other accessories
- Drumming Fingers on the counter or desk
- Yawning
- Shifting Weight
- Rubbing Face, Twirling Hair, and/or Sighing

When dealing with upset or unsatisfied customers be sure to show empathy, “Open” or Interested body language, and display that you are actively listening to them. You can change your body language to show empathy by slowing down your movements and/or taking away any unintended aggressive body language of your own. It is easy to relax, calm, and excite other people by the way you conduct yourself and interact with others. Also, a smile and a sincere tone will go a long way.

### **Interested Body Language Cues**

- Firm Handshake
- Good and Appropriate Eye Contact [Do not stare at them]
- On the Same Level [Do Not Use Fancy or Esoteric Language]
- Confident Stance
- Confident Gestures
- Showing Interest by Head Nodding and Moving Near



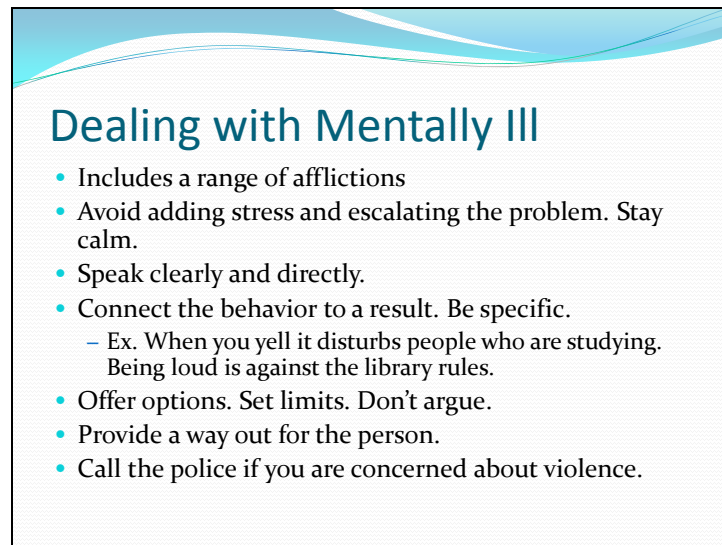
### Responding to Threatening Behavior

- Remain calm
- Clarify messages
- Respect personal space
- Be aware of body position and body language
- Permit some verbal venting
- Set reasonable limits
- Avoid using physical techniques unless life is at risk
- Ignore challenging questions or statements
- Request help from others on staff
- Report threatening or violent behavior to public safety

When a patron is upset or angry, try to clarify what the issue is and repeat it back. “This machine won’t work!” can be clarified to, “So the computer has frozen?” which is a problem you can then address. Remember, though, sometimes a patron just wants to vent a bit; so long as the patron isn’t abusive, letting him or her vent can actually help the process. While there may be some flexibility in our policies, the best thing to do is call a staff member to approve any exceptions to a rule.

If a patron challenges you or says something insulting, stay calm and don’t react. Try to avoid getting into someone’s personal space, and do not physically respond to someone unless your life is at risk.

The most important thing to remember is to stay calm, and if you feel threatened, out of your depth, or the situation escalates, get a staff member. If a patron’s behavior is violent, call Public Safety.



### Dealing with Mentally III

- Includes a range of afflictions
- Avoid adding stress and escalating the problem. Stay calm.
- Speak clearly and directly.
- Connect the behavior to a result. Be specific.
  - Ex. When you yell it disturbs people who are studying. Being loud is against the library rules.
- Offer options. Set limits. Don't argue.
- Provide a way out for the person.
- Call the police if you are concerned about violence.

When dealing with any patron it is always important to stay calm and try to find out what the problem is by asking simple questions. Give enough time for response so the patron will not feel stressed. Try not to stress them out with your tone of voice or body language.

Offer possibilities that are allowed in policy and stick to those options. For example:

Situation: *Patron is speaking loudly on their cell phone on the computers.*

Action: Politely ask them to not take their call inside the Library.

Options:

- Ask them to *End their conversation*. **OR**
- Take the conversation outside of the Library. **OR**
- Speak in a lower voice and move to a non-populated area.

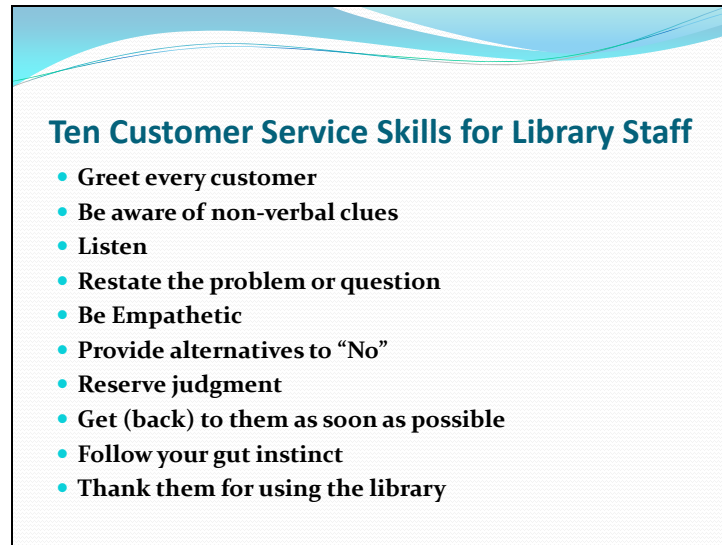
All of the above options provide a way out of being in violation of the policy or library code of conduct. The options are short, specific, and easy to follow. The patron now has the ability to choose how they want to handle their behavior in an appropriate manner.

If the violation of policy is severe enough or it is a possible/clear violation of the law alert a staff member. The Staff member will handle the situation or call Public Safety or Emergency Services if necessary.

## Sexual Harassment

- Inappropriate behavior, whether reported by staff or patrons.
- Library may have legal liability if not dealt with.
- May include illegal actions—exhibitionism, voyeurism, stalking, abuse.
- Pay attention to the victim.
- Get information—about the incident, the perpetrator, etc. Document the incident.
- Call public safety to allow the victim to file a complaint, if they wish

If you come across a situation involving sexual harassment, report it to a staff member right away, so that Public Safety will be notified right away. Be courteous and calm when staying with and speaking with the victim. Public Safety will interview the victim and document the situation.



### Ten Customer Service Skills for Library Staff

- Greet every customer
- Be aware of non-verbal clues
- Listen
- Restate the problem or question
- Be Empathetic
- Provide alternatives to “No”
- Reserve judgment
- Get (back) to them as soon as possible
- Follow your gut instinct
- Thank them for using the library

To avoid conflict or any escalation of any patron inquiries follow the above 10 steps to ensure proper and quality assistance.

- Greet each customer with a hello and a smile as they walk into the Library or up to a service desk for assistance.
- Be aware of non-verbal cues such as hand gestures and body language [a look of confusion as they “aimlessly” walk] as a sign that they may need help.
- If the patron asks you a question or for an item, listen closely.
- You should almost always repeat back to the patron what they asked for or a more focused version of their question.
- Be kind and understanding of their situation or need. Think about how we can assist with their problem. If you are not sure what options we have available to assist them, ask a staff member.
- We should have options available to help, but when we don’t, try to refer the patron to another department on campus [for example: Send them to K-121 for scanning and technical assistance], or even businesses off-campus [for example: the public library].
- Try not to place judgment on a problem. Initially you may tell them what you think the problem is but remember, some problems [mainly with technology] sound similar but are very different. Be confident you can try to help.
- If an issue is taking longer than expected, write down their contact information and let them know approximately when you would be able to contact them with any sort of resolution to

their issue. Be sure the contact information is the correct information to easily get in touch with them.

- Assist the patron as much as you are able, but let them know there are limitations to our services. If you feel they are starting to take advantage of you: alert the patron of the limitations to our services, try to end your contact with them by letting them know you have to do something, and alert a supervisor.
- Always thank our patrons for using the Library and/or alerting us to a problem. Thanking them will show the patron we are able to be approached and are willing to help.