

Managing Library Safety

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Don't Avoid - Approach

- A Library is a safe place to work
- Distressed or dysfunctional people need to be approached, not avoided
- Limit setting is part of maintaining our learning environment
- Addressing an issue will not cause someone to "snap"
- Responding generally increases visibility of problems and safety.

Conceptualization for a Safer Library

- Every Library Should have a Team Approach to Develop a Specific Safety Plan
- Train All Library Staff on the Plan
- This is an Overview of typical Training!

Overview

- Approach – Unless Danger is Obvious
- If Distressed – Engage and Assist
- If Discourteous – De-escalate and Set Limits
- If Dangerous – Distance
- In Every Case: Consult – you are not expected to be an expert

Mental Illness Boogeyman

- About 25% of us experience mental health problems
- People with mental health problems are not typically violent
- Mental health problems are a poor predictor of violence
- Violating the rights of those with mental health concerns will make us less safe

Techniques for Engaging in Difficult Situations



Be Assertive and Confident



Assertiveness in voice
warm, calm,
not fearful or hostile

Assertive in Posture
reasonable distance
and eye contact

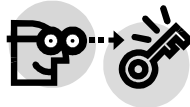
Acknowledge the Person's Feelings



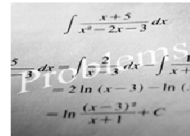
An empathic response such as:
"I can understand why this is upsetting for you..." will often break hostility.

Engage in Mutual Problem-Solving

"I can understand..., let's see what we can do together to resolve this situation."
You become an ally, not an adversary.



Clarify the Problem



This serves three purposes:

- Gives you time to accurately assess the problem to avoid misunderstandings and hasty decisions;
- Gives you time to think;
- Allows the person a chance to think out loud and ventilate their feelings.

Accept Valid Part of Criticism

"I can understand why this procedure is upsetting for you, it took me years to learn it too (smiling), so let's see what we can do to make it..."



Broken Record



Persistently repeat your question, request or statement without getting angry, loud, or irritated.

When is it Time to De-escalate?

When:

Person becomes verbally abusive or profane, or is just "stuck".



De-escalation Techniques: Set Limits

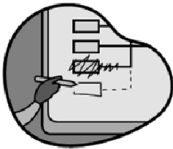
Ultimately there are some things we cannot ceaselessly debate.

State clearly:

"I can understand this is upsetting for you, but ..."



De-escalation Techniques: Change the Record



When the broken record is not working, completely start over. Suggesting, "let's start over" is a good way to do this.

De-escalation Techniques: Time Out

Ask the highly upset person to come back later (not my favorite response, because it may engender greater hostility)

Have a good reason, e.g. I will x so we can y when you return.



De-escalation Techniques: Get a Supervisor

Tell the person you need to talk with your supervisor and, perhaps, have your supervisor talk to them. This functions as a time out, but makes the angry person feel important.

If Person Escalates to Derogatory Abuse or Threats: **DISENGAGE**

- ◆ Get *space* between you and the person
- ◆ Involve other resources
- ◆ Act on your safety plan



Placing “Threat” in Context

- ◆ This is not threat assessment training
- ◆ Profiling does not work
- ◆ Warning signs exist
- ◆ A single warning sign should sharpen attention
 - Gather further information
 - Pass it along to Police... – *someone!*

Red Flags for Safety Concerns



- ◆ Current Behavior
 - Verbal Threats to harm self or others
 - Verbal Abuse
 - Physical Abuse
 - Practicing
- ◆ Historical Flags

Types of Verbal Threats to Harm Self or Others



- ◆ May be written or verbal
- ◆ Direct – I am going to...
- ◆ Conditional – watch for “if” “or”
- ◆ Veiled – hard to interpret, vague, easily minimized by the sender

Verbal Abuse Continuum

- ◆ Verbal Abuse continuum
 - Negative – pessimistic (common)
 - Abusive – intense, name calling, blaming; watch for “you” (unacceptable, not predictive by itself)
 - Derogatory - vulgar, offensive, sexist, objectifying (violence risk increases)
 - Verbally assaulting - threatening and intimidating; more bizarre and sadistic = greater risk.

Physical Abuse Continuum

- ◆ Passive resistance – slow to respond, miss meetings, not leave office, encroach your space
- ◆ Active resistance – direct defiance of rules, slamming doors, ripping papers, vandalism
- ◆ Assault – touching or causing something to touch you
- ◆ Relationship violence, stalking, obsession

Practicing

- ◆ When there is premeditation, there is often practice
- ◆ Purpose: to test own courage and test out the system
- ◆ In fantasy – writing, on-line
- ◆ Physically against lower level targets, e.g. animals, property
- ◆ Active resistance – direct defiance of rules to test your response.

Historical Flags for Safety Concerns – Less Predictive

History of:

- Violence/cruelty
- Poor impulse control
- Poor reality contact/extreme paranoia
- Extreme antisocial or narcissistic traits
 - Lying, manipulative

Historical Flags for Safety Concerns

History of:

- Substance abuse
- Fascination/proficiency with violence
- Unsuccessful personal history
- Perceived injustice history

Reasons For Having An Office Safety Plan

- To increase physical safety
- To increase psychological security – vague thoughts are scary, specific plans are reassuring
- In crisis, we **DO** what we **KNOW**

The Best Office Safety Plans Are:

- Practiced until familiar – review twice/year
- Safety focused – not perception focused
- Tailored to your Library

The Best Office Safety Plans Are:

- Easy to remember
- Simple and behavioral
- Clear appropriate in assigned roles
- Supported by all staff levels
- Inclusive of all staff

Developing an Office Safety Plan

- Evaluate potential crises that might occur in your area
- Plan for most likely scenarios
- Consider how your physical space would impact events
- Determine other areas that might be affected

Developing an Office Safety Plan

- ◆ Give staff permission to take action without hesitation if they feel it is necessary
- ◆ Develop responses that are scaled to different levels of concern
- ◆ Specifically identify who takes what actions
- ◆ – plan for appointments of concern

Developing a Library Safety Plan

- ◆ Address how to move out of harm's way
 - Identify physical areas that could be used to isolate a person in crisis
 - Decide where staff could go to increase safety
 - Try not to be isolated with a potentially dangerous person
 - Review individual office layout, enhance egress
 - High risk areas should remove things that could be thrown and injure someone

Developing a Library Safety Plan

- ◆ Address how and when employees will communicate with one another
- ◆ Plan for communicating when the situation is “all clear”
- ◆ Contacting Police
 - Have specific requests for police action
 - Be as prepared as possible to provide details to dispatcher
 - Remember: it is o.k. to consult with police about potential situations

Library Considerations

- ◆ You have the right and responsibility to manage your Library
- ◆ Respond to disruptive behavior in a timely manner
- ◆ Unique Library issues
- ◆ Access is more loosely controlled
- ◆ Responsibility for patrons - CHILDREN
- ◆ Assistance from students

Library Considerations

- ◆ Options for significant disruption
 - Ask disruptive patron to leave
 - Don't argue - disengage
 - Isolate or Clear/Close the Library
 - Call 911

Document Inappropriate Behavior

- ◆ Include an objective, specific description (who, what, when, where, why)
- ◆ Avoid making subjective comments or assumptions
- ◆ Include quotes of statements the person made
- ◆ Understand that the person could read your statement
- ◆ Feel free to call Police with questions
- ◆ Sign and date the report/statement

Survival Strategies in The Event of an Active Shooter or Other Violent Act

Violence Risk By Occupation

<u>JOB</u>	<u>RATE PER 1,000 WORKERS</u>
POLICE OFFICERS	306
PRIVATE SECURITY GUARDS	218
TAXI DRIVERS	184
PRISON GUARDS	117
BARTENDERS	91
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS	80
GAS STATION ATTENDANTS	79
CONVENIENCE, LIQUOR STORE CLERKS	68
MENTAL HEALTH CUSTODIAL WORKERS	63
JUNIOR HIGH/MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS	45
BUS DRIVERS	45
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS	41
HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS	29
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS	26
COLLEGE TEACHERS	3

OUT !

If You Remember One Word, It Should Be OUT!!!!

- Research shows that if you have thought in advance about what you would do in the event of an incident, your chances of survival are greatly improved.

Get Out !

Your best option is ALWAYS to run, get out, get away. Think in advance about how you'd get out, including the possibility of jumping from the windows.

Call Out !

- ◆ **Call 911**
- ◆ If possible, take care of your safety first. Run first, hide first, barricade or lock the door first, then call 911. If it's safe, stay on the line and give the police the best information you can.

Hide Out !

- ◆ If you're not able to get out, find a safe place to hide. If there's no way to get out or hide, playing dead could save your life. If you are hiding when the police come, realize that they will not know if you're a victim or a shooter. Follow their instructions.
- ◆ Play Dead

Keep Out !

- If you can't get out, lock or barricade the door. Make sure the barricade stays in place, holding it from a safe position if necessary. Many at Virginia Tech survived by barricading doors, keeping the shooter out.

Take Out !

Fight or Flight? Flight, running, getting out, is always your best option. But if flight is removed as an option, your only choice may be to fight, to try to take the shooter out.

Before Something Happens

- Study your surroundings. Where are the exits?
- Can the door be locked? What would work as a barricade?
- Do the windows open?

Have a Plan of Action

- Where would you run?
- How would you hold a barricade?
- Would you live if you jumped out a window?

REMEMBER

GET OUT
CALL OUT
HIDE OUT
KEEP OUT
TAKE OUT

Source: Center for Personal Protection & Safety 2007

Developing a Library Safety Plan

- I am available for limited individual follow-up with libraries. Use your local resources... Police, Sheriff, Schools.
- Questions