Saint Paul Public Library

# Library Safety Model and Strategy Update

Saint Paul Public Library Board

March 5, 2025

# Context

- Safety of our staff is our highest priority.
- Library's unique role
  - Place, space, content
  - A place to do life
  - A place the community goes for help
- In 2024 we were open over 32,000 hours and had 1.2 million in-person visits.

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# Context

- Everything that shows up in our communities shows up in our libraries, including the challenges.
- Library staff serve on the front lines, providing critical resources. Their work evolves as the needs of our community evolves.
    - Pandemic service and visit changes, opioid epidemic
    - Complement the city's work with optimal response and community-first public safety
    - Trauma-sensitive library, library social worker
    - Bias-aware strategies

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# SPPL past practice

- Code of Conduct
- Incidents and incident reports
- Banning process and guidelines
- Contracted security and some community ambassador support

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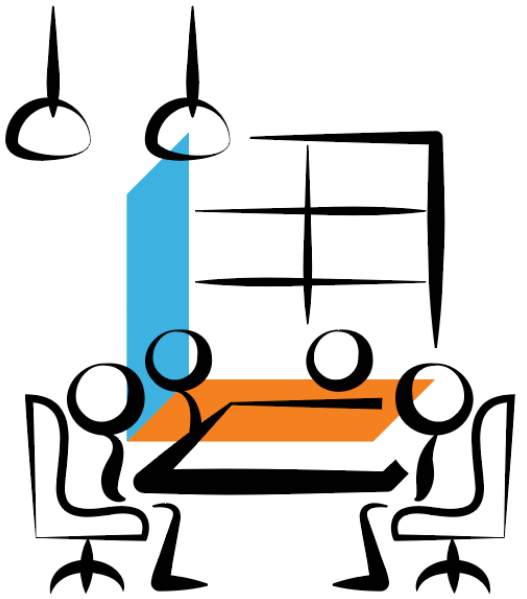
# Safety plan and strategy

- The City invested $1.5 million in ARP funds to evolve the Library's approach to safety in their public spaces.

- The updated Library Safety plan is a key addition to the City's community-first public safety approach aimed at creating a safe and welcoming city that works for everyone.



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# Community feedback

- A large majority of Saint Paul residents feel welcome, safe, and comfortable in the library.
  - BIPOC patrons reported feeling less safe, less welcome, and less comfortable in the library than white patrons.
- Community members' highest priority is for the library to be a welcoming, respectful space
  - Being greeted, able to identify library staff, having a comfortable place to sit, knowing the library is cleaned regularly

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# Safety plan and strategy

Three pillars:

- Build a culture of safety
  - Welcoming environment
  - Safe space
- Optimal, appropriate response
  - Consistent management
  - Clear roles
- Restore service and connection
  - Restorative alternatives to banning
  - Practices for staff well-being

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# Build a culture of safety

- Welcome everyone; set a positive tone.
- Display and use Community Agreements.
- Cultivate relationships with neighbors and community.
- Make staff identifiable—lanyards, name tags.
- Everyone plays a part; new staff add capacity

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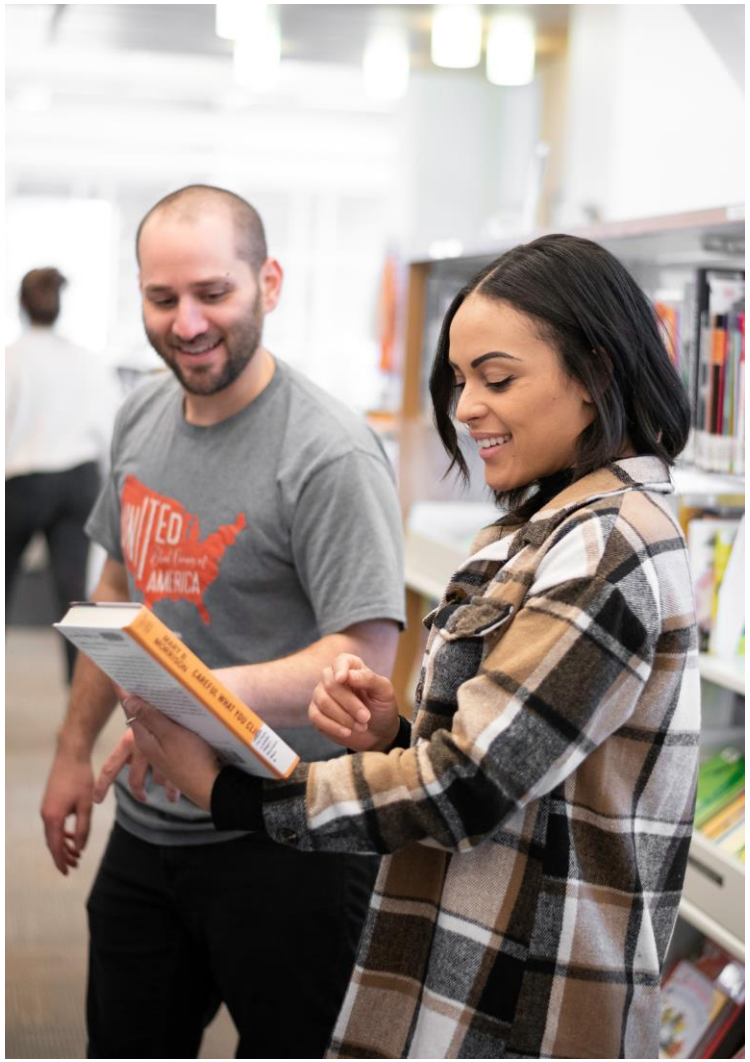
# Consistently respond to safety challenges

- Make Safety Roles Internal Staff Positions
- Respond to Incidents Consistently
- Document and Learn from incidents
- Create Site-Specific Playbooks



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# New safety roles

- Library Safety Manager — Alex Corey

- Safety Specialists
  - Six positions
  - System-wide resources, serve in specific locations
    - Currently deployed at Rondo, George Latimer Central, and Rice Street

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# Safety strategy implementation

- Safety playbooks

- Training
  - Welle Behavior Management
  - First Aid/CPR
  - Narcan/Naloxone for Safety Specialists
  - Standard Response Protocol

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# The Standard Response Protocol

Universal, building-wide responses to significant incidents in and around our spaces

All locations follow the same procedures.  (Parks, SPPS too)

Playbook articulates how each building achieves those goals.

Lockdown

Hold

Secure

Shelter

Evacuate

# Safety specialists

- **The purpose of Library Safety Specialists is to help support the Library Safety Strategy.**
- Support a warm and welcoming environment
- Help develop and contribute to a standard, coordinated, and safe response to incidents and emergencies.
- Find and develop strategies to resolve issues alternative to bannings (when appropriate)

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# What does the work look like?

- **Building relationships and providing connections to the community.**
  - Become familiar with the community and find opportunities to connect with patrons.
- **Addressing behaviors in the space and setting boundaries when needed**
  - Talk to patrons, ask patrons to leave, or work with managers on issuing a ban
- **Expanding safety knowledge base and providing site-level expertise to our fellow staff.**

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# What to expect from safety specialists

- **Our Visibility**
- Our job is to be out and about on the library floor. We do take breaks, but our main work is with patrons.
- **Our Response**
- Our goal is to help address safety work and behaviors in the space. Reach out if you want a helping hand.
- **Communication**
- The library safety strategy is new, and we are seeking understanding how our work best fits into SPPL. We also want to work with you to optimally respond to situations in buildings.

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# Restorative practices

- Working towards full implementation in 2025
  - Use restorative tools across the incident management continuum
  - Apply a restorative lens to rethink banning process and language
  - Dedicate time and resources to support staff and community well-being

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# KPIs

| Measure | Data point |
|---|---|
| Equity, inclusion, anti-racism | BIPOC patrons report feeling welcome / safe / comfortable at a rate more equal to Librarypatrons overall (Annual survey) |
| Community connection | Number of events and visitors to library increases (Quarterly); Patrons report feeling welcome/ safe / comfortable rate holds steady or increases (Annual survey) |
| Staff safety and role clarity | Staff increase understanding of how to contribute to safe libraries (Annual survey)<br>Incidents are managed consistently across locations, based on analysis of After Action Reviews (Quarterly) |
| Incidents reported | Consistency of incidents reported increases; number and level of incidents reported decreases (Quarterly) |
| Restorative chat/healing circle | The percentage of Level A / B incidents referred to a restorative chat or healing circle increases.<br>The percentage of Level A / B incidents referred for banning decreases. |
| 30-day bans | Decrease number issued (Quarterly) |
| "Re-bans" and appeals | Decrease the number of bans extended for a ban violation (Quarterly)<br>Increase number of appeals (Quarterly) |

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# SPPL work for 2025

- **Full implementation of safety model**
  - Add to existing team; launch restorative practices; finish playbook process with all locations
- **Partner with others in city's goal of Community-First Public Safety**
  - ONS, SPPD, Parks, CAO, Ramsey County, community members
- **Evaluate model**
  - Gather qualitative and quantitative data; identify sustainable funding
- **Welcoming and safe Rondo Community Library project**
  - Library has identified an architectural partner and is developing a timeline for engagement of staff and community

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# Questions?

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