

Inclusive Services Assessment and Guide for Wisconsin Public Libraries

The Inclusive Services Statement

“Wisconsin public libraries are places where everyone should be safe, welcomed, and respected in experiences such as (but not limited to):

- Arrival at the building (transportation, physical accessibility, signage, hours of service, greetings by library staff)
- Intersections with library policies (getting a library card, using a computer, paying a fine)
- Perusal, use, and request of library materials (navigating the aisles, accessing Wi-Fi, individual privacy, diversity of collection)
- Participation in library-sponsored or library-located events (marketing of events, time and location, transportation, registration, room set-up, novice-friendly vs. designed for frequent users)
- Interactions with library staff (body language, tone, diversity of library staff, proactive/reactive engagement)
- Passive and virtual interactions through library signage, webpages, displays, and marketing (readability, tone, diversity, accommodations).”

“The practice of providing inclusive services requires continuous reflection and ongoing dialog with and between library administration, staff, and members of the community, with particular emphasis on including the voices of those who are underserved, underrepresented, and underrecognized within the community. Efforts should respond to the assets and needs of non-library users and users alike. Attention to actual, versus perceived, assets and needs is paramount; i.e., a barrier perceived by library staff may or may not be an actual barrier experienced by the user.

On a concrete level, inclusive services should be visibly incorporated into all library services. The concept that libraries are for everyone should be evident through every point of access or interaction with the library. A person’s race, ethnicity, age, citizenship, literacy level, ability, family structure, income level, health status, gender identity, sexuality, style of dress, familiarity with public libraries - or any other dimension of identity - should neither negatively influence nor interfere with access to library services.”

Assessment Opportunities for Trustees

- Library Board members reflect the demographics of the community
- Bylaws and policies available in the languages spoken in the community
- Community members who reflect the population demographics are involved in revising the Library Director’s position description, which includes inclusive statements
- Regularly reviewing policies with attention toward whether they are creating unnecessary barriers
- Allocating funds for Board training on cultural competency and anti-bias

- Learn about the impact of fines on low-incomes families and patrons
- Creation of a written programming policy
- Understanding of the importance of devices that promote accessibility for technology in the library, including lending wifi units and computers and providing assistive technologies in the library
- Help in populating Advisory Boards that allow the library to better understand the needs and interests of various populations, such as seniors and underrepresented populations
- Approval of core values of creating an inclusive environment at the library

Staff and leadership also have opportunities in the assessment to grow and change, learning more about inclusivity and ensuring that our facility, programs and services meet the high standards we expect in this area.

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