Staff Expertise and Customer Assistance Policy

Library Services Policy

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Purpose

This policy explains how Burlington Public Library (BPL) staff use their knowledge, professional judgement, and guidance to help customers find and use library and community resources. We work within the scope of our expertise and support you to build knowledge, skills, and confidence to navigate resources independently.

Scope

This policy applies to all BPL employees, volunteers, students, and contractors who provide direct support to customers.

Definitions

Intellectual freedom: The right to seek, receive, explore, and express information and ideas, within the limits of the law, while respecting each person's privacy and freedom of choice.

Personal information: Recorded information about an identifiable person, such as name, address, telephone number, email address, date of birth, account activity, or correspondence.

Professional judgement: A staff member's ability to make informed decisions based on their role, training, BPL policies, reliable information, and the circumstances of the customer's request.

Referral: Providing information or personal introduction that helps a customer connect directly with an appropriate community organization, public service, or other resource.

Staff expertise: The knowledge, skills, and professional judgement staff use to help customers navigate information, collections, technology, library services, and community resources.

Statement of Policy

BPL staff provide knowledgeable, impartial, and courteous service that respects each customer's dignity, privacy, abilities, and choices. We:

- Listen to customers
- Help you identify what you need
- Connect you with suitable resources
- And guide you to use those resources on your own.

We use professional judgement, follow BPL policies, and seek help or make referrals when your request is beyond our role or expertise. BPL provides the training, information, and tools staff need to deliver consistent service and address gaps.

We use customer feedback, service trends, and community needs to improve and evolve our customer assistance.

Policy Details

Our approach to staff expertise and customer assistance focuses on guidance that builds skills. We work with customers, explaining and demonstrating steps when practical so they can build skills and handle similar tasks independently. We tailor support to customer needs, the service setting, available time, staff expertise, and operational demands.

- We offer tools that help customers explore resources and learn independently.
- You are responsible for your choices, accounts, devices, documents, transactions, and shared information.

Respectful and Inclusive Service

We welcome every customer and treat them with dignity, respect, empathy, and fairness. We listen to what each customer needs, and consider barriers related to accessibility, communication, language, technology, or other factors when we offer help.

- We serve customers without making assumptions about or judging their interests, choices, abilities, backgrounds, or information needs.
- We clearly explain what we can provide, and when other community resources may be more helpful.

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Customer Choice

We protect the privacy and confidentiality of each customer's questions, reading and viewing choices, account activity, and use of library services. We access, collect, use, or share personal information only as needed to provide library service. We obtain consent and follow law and BPL policy when collecting personal information.

- We only view or record personal information needed to provide service.
- We require customers to enter their own passwords and sign out of devices when finished.
- We do not assist with tasks that may expose a customer's private and sensitive information, including banking and personal health information.
- You may accept, decline, or stop help at any time.

Intellectual Freedom, Information, and Collections

We help customers explore BPL collections and resources through research support, reading recommendations, displays, and book lists. We provide impartial access to information, offer a range of viewpoints when relevant, and respect each customer's choices. One person's objection does not restrict another person's access.

- We use reliable sources to help customers navigate our collections, noting limitations,
- Access or assistance does not imply BPL or staff endorsement.

Technology Assistance

We help customers improve their digital literacy. We guide you through the basic functions and principles of library technology and services so you can build confidence, adaptability, and online safety awareness.

We provide guidance based on BPL services, approved tools, staff training, and available resources. When a request falls outside our scope, we connect customers with self-directed resources, learning opportunities, or other options in the community.

- We work alongside you to troubleshoot issues within our scope of service and knowledge.
- We show you how you can use technology independently rather than doing it for you.

Community Information and Referral

We maintain and use current, reliable sources and our knowledge of the local community to help customers find services that may meet their needs. We offer information, guidance, and referrals to help customers connect directly with community organizations and public services.

- We provide information and referral in a variety of formats that customers can access independently and with staff assistance.
- We do not act as counsellors, case workers, legal representatives, health professionals, financial advisors, or agents for another organization unless that work is part of an authorized BPL service and the staff member is qualified and assigned to provide it.
- A referral does not endorse or guarantee a service, eligibility, availability, quality, or outcome. Each organization sets its own services and requirements.

Outreach and Community Connection

We connect new and underserved audiences with BPL resources and services through outreach in the community and at library locations. We tailor information and support to each audience while upholding dignity, privacy, accessibility, intellectual freedom, and impartial service.

Document Information	Details
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Associated Documents	Related Policies: • Example Other Documents: • Customer Experience Standards