Youth Services Guidelines

Endorsed by:

Wisconsin Library Association
Wisconsin Association of Public Libraries
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Youth Services Section
Wisconsin Library Association
2012 Guidelines Revision Committee
Rhonda Putney Gould, chair
Claudia Backus
Roxane Bartelt
Jeni Schomber

2001 Guidelines Revision Committee
Claudia Backus, Chair
Carole DeJardin
Marge Loch-Wouters
Rob Reid
Mary Whittington

1995 Guidelines Committee
Claudia Backus, co-chair
Carole DeJardin, co-chair
Barbara Dimick
Miriam Hansen
Marge Loch-Wouters
Kathy Mitchell
Lillian Nolan
Elizabeth Vollrath
Gloria Waity
Mary Whittington

1995 Project Consultant
Debra Wilcox Johnson
A VISION FOR YOUTH IN WISCONSIN

The Wisconsin Library Association’s Youth Services Section developed the following vision statement for youth in Wisconsin. It is a hopeful statement meant to inspire and to reflect the desired future for youth. The vision can be shared, not just among librarians, but also with the community and other organizations, agencies and individuals.

● Wisconsin’s youth will have equal access to materials to meet their informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs.

● Wisconsin's youth will have an awareness of the diverse society in which they live and respect the rights and dignity of all people.

● Wisconsin’s youth will have the opportunity to develop the skills to locate and use information in a changing technological world.

● Wisconsin’s youth will be prepared for and have the opportunity to be successful in school, leading to lifelong learning.

● Wisconsin’s youth will have a safe and healthy environment that fosters a positive self-image.

● Wisconsin's youth will have the opportunity to creatively dream and design a better world.

● Youth and their families will have access to a coordinated network of quality library services.

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDELINES

The Youth Services Section of the Wisconsin Library Association supports quality youth services in Wisconsin public libraries. As a first step toward this excellence, the vision statement above articulates the ideal world for children and young adults, and can serve as a guiding light for those who work with and support youth services in libraries. In this document, the term “youth” encompasses both children and young adults. Services for youth also include service to people who work with youth, such as parents, teachers and care providers.

The guidelines are written to include public libraries of all sizes. Each library should consider the guidelines in light of its overall mission and service priorities. Core statements applicable to every library are highlighted with boldface type throughout this document. Some libraries may find that meeting these key guidelines fulfills their missions and goals.
The guidelines serve as a planning and evaluation tool on many different levels. These are the levels:

- Library directors and boards can use the guidelines to work with staff in developing long-range plans for youth services.
- Library directors and boards can use the guidelines to advocate the need for youth services staff and resources to the governmental units responsible for funding the library.
- Library systems, state organizations, and institutions will be able to develop topics for continuing education programs, information and library studies classes, workshops and conferences by using these guidelines.
- Library system youth services consultants can encourage member libraries to use the guidelines regularly to evaluate local children’s and young adult services.
- Library system youth services consultants can use the guidelines to evaluate the status and quality of youth services in their systems as part of the planning process at the system level.

The goal of these guidelines is to facilitate better library service for youth in Wisconsin, leading to better lives for children of all ages.

ADMINISTRATION

PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Planning involves many activities and is an ongoing process. Evaluation is more than counting and reporting the number of children who come to library programs. It is a continuing assessment of the response of the community to the library’s services and programs.

- The library’s long-range strategic plan includes youth services goals, specific measurable objectives, a timetable for services and a means of regular evaluation.

Youth services staff are involved in the collection and reporting of statistics and information required by the local library, the library system, the municipal governing body and the Wisconsin Division for Libraries and Technology.

- Youth services staff:
  - are involved in developing the library’s long-range strategic plan
  - have access to the final approved plan
  - have written goals, objectives and strategies specific to youth services that are reviewed and updated annually and that parallel the direction set for the library.

- Youth services are prioritized based on an ongoing analysis of community needs.
Youth services staff evaluate services and collections on an ongoing basis to support the planning process.

Youth services staff prepare an annual report of public library services for the director, staff and the board.

Youth services staff keep the director, staff and board apprised of information about children and families that may have budget or programmatic implications or that may affect the way the community uses the library.

Youth services staff participate in system and county level planning for library services to young users.

Youth services staff identify non-users and develop services that encourage them to become library users.

FUNDING

Budget responsibilities for youth services may include full departmental accounting, materials expenditure accounts or specific grant project oversight. Funding for youth services may include public monies, private monies and grant monies.

The library allocates budget monies for youth services and staff based on usage statistics, and the needs of the community.

- The library adequately funds purchase of youth materials based on:
  - the size of the youth population in the service area
  - the percentage of total circulation accounted for by youth materials
  - the need to maintain a current collection including replacing lost, worn and damaged materials
  - the need for technologies and electronic resources

- Youth services programming is supported by a separate line item in the library’s budget.

- Accurate and current data on usage and needs are gathered and reports prepared as necessary in order to affect youth services budget allocation discussions.

- Monetary gifts from Friends groups and Foundation groups, and grants for youth services programs and activities are supplemental to the portion of the library’s budget allocated to youth services. They do not supplant that local support.

STAFFING

A well-trained, competent staff is a vital community resource. Administration is responsible for developing and nurturing staff providing youth services. This means creating an empowering work environment that encourages participation and teamwork. In order to do this, administration establishes clearly defined policies and procedures, recognizes and rewards
accomplishments and encourages continuous improvement and good internal communication. It is an administrative function to assess staffing needs based on service priorities to support and encourage continuing education and training, community networking and staff involvement in professional organizations and the larger community.

- The library seeks and hires people to work with youth who have grounding in customer service, child development and children’s literature, as well as general library principles and procedures.

  - http://www.alala.org/alsc/edcareeers/alsccorecomps
  - http://www.njla.org/resources/childrens.html
  - http://www.alala.org/Template.cfm?Section=professiondev&Template=/ContentManagement/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=8141

- Youth services staff receive salaries and benefits commensurate with other library employees and with positions in the community requiring similar educational preparation.

- The library financially supports continuing education, conference and professional opportunities for youth services staff, including paid work time for attendance.

  - The library annually provides opportunities for at least ten (10) contact hours of continuing education for each full-time employee in youth services, prorated for part-time employees.

- Staff who work with youth have clear, written descriptions of job responsibilities, which are part of the library’s personnel classification plan.

- Non-youth services staff participate in continuing education opportunities about the unique service needs of children and young adults.

- Training is provided for youth services staff in existing and emerging technologies.

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers can contribute to youth services by supporting the efforts of library staff. If volunteers are used in youth services, the following guidelines apply:

- Volunteers are supplemental to youth services staffing. They do not replace trained employees in youth services.

  - There is a planned approach to working with volunteers that includes written procedures, training and evaluation.
FACILITIES

Adequate, accessible and safe areas that reflect the physical needs of youth must be an integral part of a building housing youth services.

- The facilities provide:
  - A safe and secure environment
  - Adequate space for housing and displaying materials
  - A programming area
  - A separate workspace for youth services staff

The youth services areas are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- The facilities reflect the physical needs of children and their families, including:
  - Age-appropriate restroom fixtures
  - A diaper changing area
  - Age-appropriate furniture
  - Controlled entrance and exits
  - Shelving at an appropriate height
  - Durable furniture and floor coverings
  - Bubblers/water fountains
  - An accessible service desk

- The facility includes an area specifically for young adults.

- Areas dedicated to youth services are visible to staff at all times.

- Youth services areas are designed to adapt to the demands of changing technology.

- The facility includes an area for art and educational displays of interest to youth.

- The facility includes space for individual youth and group activities, such as study rooms and quiet reading areas.

COLLABORATION AND OUTREACH

Youth services librarians develop cooperative relationships with their library system, neighboring libraries of all types, and within their own library to meet the needs of youth and families. Outreach provides extension of library services and resources in the community, and helps to address special needs and attract new users.

- Partnerships are created with the child care and education community, social service agencies, homeschoolers, community organizations and businesses to promote youth services.

- Staff schedules allow time to implement community collaboration.
Youth services staff collaborates with other groups to write grants or seek other funding for projects that benefit youth and their families.

Youth services staff evaluates its collaborative and outreach activities.

INFORMATION SERVICES

Youth services staff offer information services, including reference, readers advisory services and instruction in library use.

Reference is defined as personal assistance provided to users in the pursuit of information.

Readers advisory service is defined as knowledgeable assistance in providing guidance for a patron or potential patron to material which is appropriate to the interests, skills and desires of the patron.

Instruction in library use occurs formally and informally.

Libraries need to provide the same level of information service for youth as is provided for adults. The young patrons of today are the users and library supporters of the future.

INFORMATION SERVICES

- Written policies insure that youth have access to all library resources.
- Staff are trained in helping youth find information.
- Information services are accessible to youth with disabilities.
- Services are in place to meet the needs of English language learners.
- The library encourages communication with teachers and school library media specialists.

REFERENCE

- Reference service is available to youth in person or via electronic communication.
- Staff are trained to use reference interviewing skills that are age, grade and ability appropriate.
- Reference resources for youth are age, grade and ability appropriate.
- Staff are trained to identify electronic sources of reliable, accurate information.
• Age-appropriate materials are available to support homework information needs of students.

• Staff has access to accurate and current information on community resources and services for families and youth.

READERS ADVISORY

• Staff provides readers advisory, including booktalks, to youth.

• Bibliographies are available in a variety of formats and distributed to youth, parents, teachers, caregivers and other adults who interact with young people.

• Displays and exhibits are created and updated on an ongoing basis.

• Readers advisory service is offered to adults to aid them in finding material appropriate to the interests and reading ability of youth.

LIBRARY INSTRUCTION

• Instruction on library skills and the use of resources and technology is available to youth.

• Signage facilitates access to library services and resources with appropriate grade, age and ability considerations.

• Tours are offered to youth and parents, teachers, caregivers and others working with young people to familiarize them with library information resources and promote the skilled use of these resources.

PROGRAMMING

Programming promotes reading and the use of the library as well as helping to develop a love of lifelong learning. Programming allows staff to model the use of print and non-print library materials and storytelling techniques.

• Based on community needs, the library provides programs for:
  • Infants
  • Toddlers
  • Preschoolers
  • Elementary school-aged children
  • Middle school-aged youth
  • High school-aged youth
  • Parents and other caregivers
  • Families
All youth programs are regularly evaluated.

The library’s budget supports youth services programming.

Reasonable accommodations are provided to enable persons with disabilities to participate in programs.

The availability of reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities is noted in program publicity per ADA requirements. See www.ada.gov for more information.

The library promotes and markets its programs to the community to reach diverse populations.

The library partners with local agencies and organizations to provide programming for youth.

Programs reflect an awareness of a diverse society.

COLLECTIONS

The library provides a wide range of materials for youth. Collections for youth include a variety of reading levels appropriate to the individual regardless of physical or cognitive abilities. Youth have free, equal and unrestricted access to information and materials, regardless of physical abilities or socio-economic, geographic, language or cultural factors.

Youth services staff will uphold the American Library Association’s Library Bill of Rights and the American Library Association’s Freedom to Read Statement. A child’s right to free and unrestricted access to library resources is reflected in the library’s Collection Development Policy.

The library has a regularly reviewed and approved written collection policy for youth print, non-print and electronic resources collections.

The collection policy encompasses:
- materials selection
- collection evaluation
- retention, replacement and withdrawal of materials intellectual freedom and materials reconsideration procedures
- materials in a variety of formats

The library supports the inclusion of materials from diverse sources, including small and alternative publishers.

The library’s youth collection:
- includes print and nonprint materials
- reflects a diverse society
- represents a historical perspective
- meets and anticipates community needs
- is current
● All youth materials are evaluated for retention, replacement or withdrawal regularly based on accuracy, currency, condition and usefulness.

● Staff seeks and considers input from the community, including youth, concerning materials selection.

● The youth services collection includes electronic content.

● Staff uses a variety of bibliographic resources for selection.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND ADVOCACY

Public relations and advocacy is communicating and promoting youth services to patrons, non-users, board members, political leaders, schools, social service agencies, municipal departments, businesses, the arts community, professional organizations, churches and other non-profit organizations. In addition, staff are also sensitive to internal public relations and establish good working relationships with other library employees.

● Youth services staff cooperate with the library administration in planning, budgeting and implementing public relations strategies.

● Youth services staff regularly notify the media about library activities.

● Youth Services staff advocate for the library in these ways:
  ● seek input from special needs populations when choosing publicity methods.
  ● help increase the visibility of the library by giving presentations to community groups.
  ● participate in community events.
  ● promote its services with effective publicity material.
  ● promote its programs and services via regular reports to the library board.
  ● promote the library to public officials.
  ● utilize technology, including the library’s website and social media, to promote its programs and services.