

## **Reference and Readers' Advisory Service Policy**

(Adopted May 2014; revised July 2017; revised March 2018; revised February 2021)

### **Purpose**

Reference and readers' advisory service is one of the most important functions of the Stickney-Forest View Public Library District, and covers a wide range of services including computer assistance, research assistance, materials selection, interlibrary loan assistance, and referral services. The following policy is designed to ensure that all patrons receive the highest possible level of this service.

### **Goals**

The goal of reference and readers' advisory service is to provide accurate answers to Library patrons' questions by trained staff members during all hours that the Library is open.

This is accomplished by:

- Conducting reference interviews to determine the reference/research needs of the library patron.
- Providing materials and services to meet users' needs for timely, accurate, and useful information.
- Providing trained staff to assist patrons and facilitate access to the Library's collections and cooperative resources.
- Responding to all requests for information, whether submitted in person, by phone, email or any other form of communication that the library uses.
- Assisting patrons in the use of reference resources, Library materials and in the development of research strategies.
- Providing readers' advisory service.
- Providing efficient referral and effective follow-through including interlibrary loan, resource sharing and supplementary reference services to Stickney-Forest View Public Library District cardholders.
- Keeping the community well-informed about the reference services and resources that are available and encourage their use.

### **Ethics and Standards**

The informational needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and facilitated with objectivity, respect, and confidentiality. Staff does not discriminate based on age, gender, race, sexual preference, disability, or appearance in providing reference services. Library staff will assist patrons until questions are answered to the best of their ability, or until patrons are referred to another agency for further assistance. There may be times where staff will need to limit time spent with one patron. Staff will be available to assist patrons with basic computer operations and applications. If a patron needs further assistance, staff may schedule a one-on-one session to work with the patron for up to one hour, as well as referring patrons to online tutorials or classes. When assisting with computer resources, staff will not enter personal information for patrons. The library is not liable for how patrons choose to use the information they are given from staff members.

Providing advice and suggestions for recreational reading is an essential service in a public library. Each patron's reading tastes will be taken seriously and without judgement, however, when performing Readers' Advisory services, personal interpretation and recommendation are unavoidable.

Service is provided in a manner consistent with the Library Bill of Rights, the American Library Association Code of Ethics, and copyright law.

### **Availability of Service**

The Stickney-Forest View Public Library District provides reference and readers' advisory assistance to any patron requesting it, regardless of residency. Reference and readers' advisory service is provided by trained staff during all hours that the Library is open. The entire collection -- juvenile and adult, circulating and non-circulating -- is available to patrons of all ages.

Inquiries are accepted in person, by telephone, digitally, and through the mail. Priority is given to in-person requests, however, staff will complete a telephone question and/or online chat question that is already in progress before attending to an in-person request.

Staff will attempt to answer a patron's question within the patron's required deadline. Otherwise, questions usually will be answered, referred, or a status report given within 24 hours. A longer response time will be negotiated with the patron when staff needs additional time to locate the needed information.

### **Providing Service**

Every attempt is made to provide accurate answers to all questions. Reference staff will use all available sources of information to answer questions. This includes, but is not limited to print materials, books, periodicals, electronic databases, authoritative websites, government agencies, associations, and organizations. Long-distance telephone calls and/or email may be used to answer questions. Citations to sources of information will be given when questions are answered.

The Librarian's personal opinion will never be given as fact. While the Librarian will provide sources of information, information will not be interpreted and the Librarian will not offer legal, medical, or tax advice. If it is not possible to answer a question by the above means, questions will be referred to another agency, when appropriate.

Staff will guide people doing extensive research or compiling large amounts of information to appropriate sources. Reading and interpretation of materials is the patron's responsibility.

Monetary compensation is not required or accepted for Library services provided. General donations may be made to the Library in compliance with the Gifts and Donations Policy.

### **Limitations**

Editorial, typing, tutoring, translation services, and other secretarial tasks are not a regular part of reference service. Staff are not required to perform these tasks, but may do so on a case-by-case basis. In those instances,

every attempt should be made to schedule a one-on-one session with a librarian at least 24 hours in advance, and are to last no more than 30 minutes. Patrons should not expect to receive regular secretarial services, and staff may discontinue providing such services if they interfere with their regularly scheduled work or if any privacy concerns arise. Staff are not responsible for any errors made while providing secretarial services.

Other limitations include:

- Information, particularly in the subject areas of law, medicine, consumer information, religion, politics, and personal finance/tax information, is presented without interpretation, advice, analysis, or personal recommendation.
- Staff will not engage in conversation or debate of a personal nature, including but not limited to religious or political beliefs, or their personal lives.
- Patrons may not request to work exclusively with a particular staff member.
- Staff set reasonable limits on the amount of time and level of response given to patron requests for information in order to ensure equal and fair access to reference services for all patrons.
- When it is not possible to answer a question by traditional means, staff may refer questions to another agency when appropriate.
- Patrons must comply with the Library's Code of Conduct Policy when engaging in reference services.

### **Service to Non Stickney-Forest View Public Library District Cardholders**

The following services are restricted to Stickney-Forest View Public Library District cardholders only:

- Remote access to databases
- Museum passes
- Electronic equipment
- Electronic resources (restricted to Stickney-Forest View Public Library cardholders and SWAN member library cardholders)

Most other services are available to non-card holders. Available services are subject to change.

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### **Related**

SFVPLD Gifts and Donations Policy

SFVPLD Homework Help Policy

SFVPLD Patron Code of Conduct Policy

SFVPLD Patron Confidentiality Policy

SFVPLD Tutoring Policy