

**Dealing With Unruly, Protesting Patrons**

* Treat everyone with dignity and respect.
* Acknowledge the patron’s concern; let them know that you appreciate the call/point of view.
* Emphasize that libraries do not promote or condemn points of view.
	+ Libraries provide safe places for communication and education in order for people to make informed decisions.
	+ The constitution guarantees everyone’s right to express their views.
* Reinforce library patron behavior guidelines, as applicable
* After a respectful time (suggested maximum: 10 minutes), say “*I appreciated the opportunity to talk through this with you. Now, I really do need to get back to work.*”
* Invite them to complete a written complaint form if such a form exists, or direct an email with “LIBRARY COMPLAINT” in the subject line directed to [WHOM?]

If the issue escalates and increasing numbers join the protest:

* With library leadership, contact the library board of trustees to request a special meeting to discuss a response.
* Communicate the issue and steps you are taking to address it to key internal stakeholders (library staff, board members, volunteers)
* Invite protesters to the special meeting called to address their concerns.
* Invite school and community partners, political and community leaders, media to the meeting as well.
* Identify protest group leader(s) and open a line of communication.
	+ Ask leader(s) to establish a tone of respect and civil discourse during the program.
	+ Inform them that libraries are not required to allow protests inside the library. [IF TRUE WITH YOUR LIBRARY] People have a constitutional right to protest on the public sidewalk and other public spaces not controlled by the library.
	+ Remind group leaders to consult with local government regarding the permitting process for any organized protest/demonstration.
* Create and distribute guidelines for respectful dialogue to attendees (in advance whenever possible).
* If there is an indication of multiple protest groups attending, local law enforcement should be consulted about proper procedure.
	+ If there is any question of safety or sign that groups will clash, library administrators should request local law enforcement support. It is not the library’s responsibility to supervise or control the behavior of protesters on spaces that are considered traditional public forums.
	+ If protesters impede access to the library, local law enforcement should be notified.