

Beyond Barriers: Rethinking Policies for Inclusive Library Services

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Agenda



Introduction

Methods

Background



Findings

Recommendations



Context

Libraries facing high needs patrons is a ***global*** issue. With the increased prevalence, staff must be better equipped to serve with initiatives such as ***staff training***, and ***collaboration*** within the community network. Deinstitutionalization combined with the Great Recession during the first decade of the 21st century brought new challenges for patrons experiencing ***poverty, food deserts, and lack of health care*** into libraries.



Context

- Deinstitutionalization of services in 1960's
- Increasing housing costs
- Increase in individuals faced with economic hardships like homelessness across the United States
- Librarians are having to play multiple roles, and are not adequately trained
 - Must address safety concerns, hygiene issues, as well as disruptions from other library services
 - Internal attitudes and behaviors toward the changing role of librarians

Project Purpose

Promote an inclusive and safe environment for all library patrons and address the increasing needs of vulnerable and traditionally underserved individuals

Focus areas

- support for vulnerable populations
- staff capacity and wellbeing
- positive library atmosphere
- internal policies and procedures

Research Questions & Methods



1: What is the frequency and impact of staff encountering disruptive patrons who are experiencing crises?

Method: Staff Survey

2: To what degree do library staff feel equipped to serve patrons experiencing crisis?

Method: Staff Survey

3: What are examples of best policies and practices for library staff to employ when presented with the challenge of assisting high needs patrons?

Methods: Case studies, Expert interviews

Research Questions & Methods



4: What existing local community resources does Dubuque Library have to assist vulnerable patrons?

Method: Staff Interview

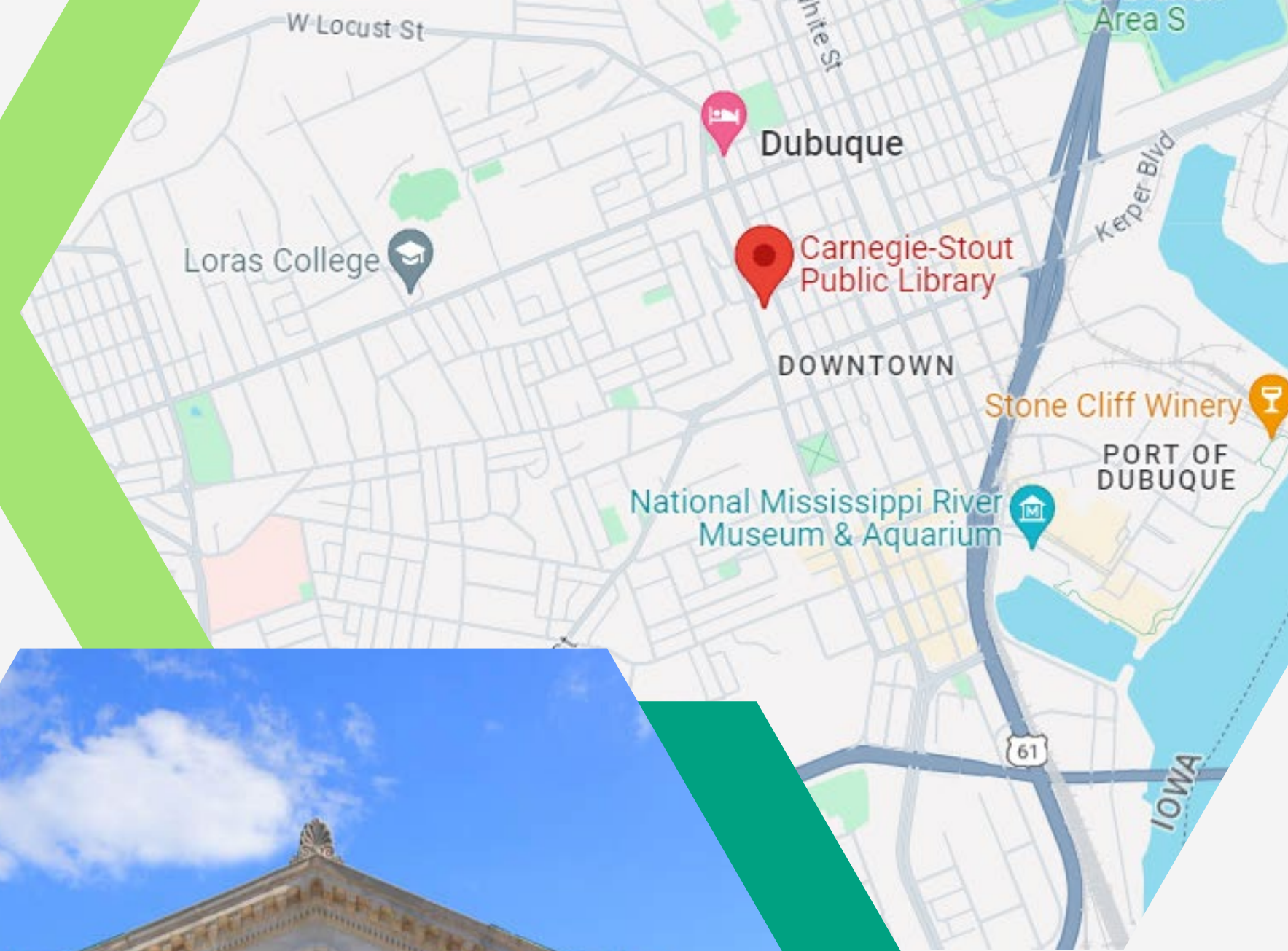
5: What policies should the Dubuque Public Library staff implement which help staff guide patrons who need assistance?

Methods: Expert interview, Case study

6: How does the political profile of Dubuque allow for suggested policy solutions to be implemented?

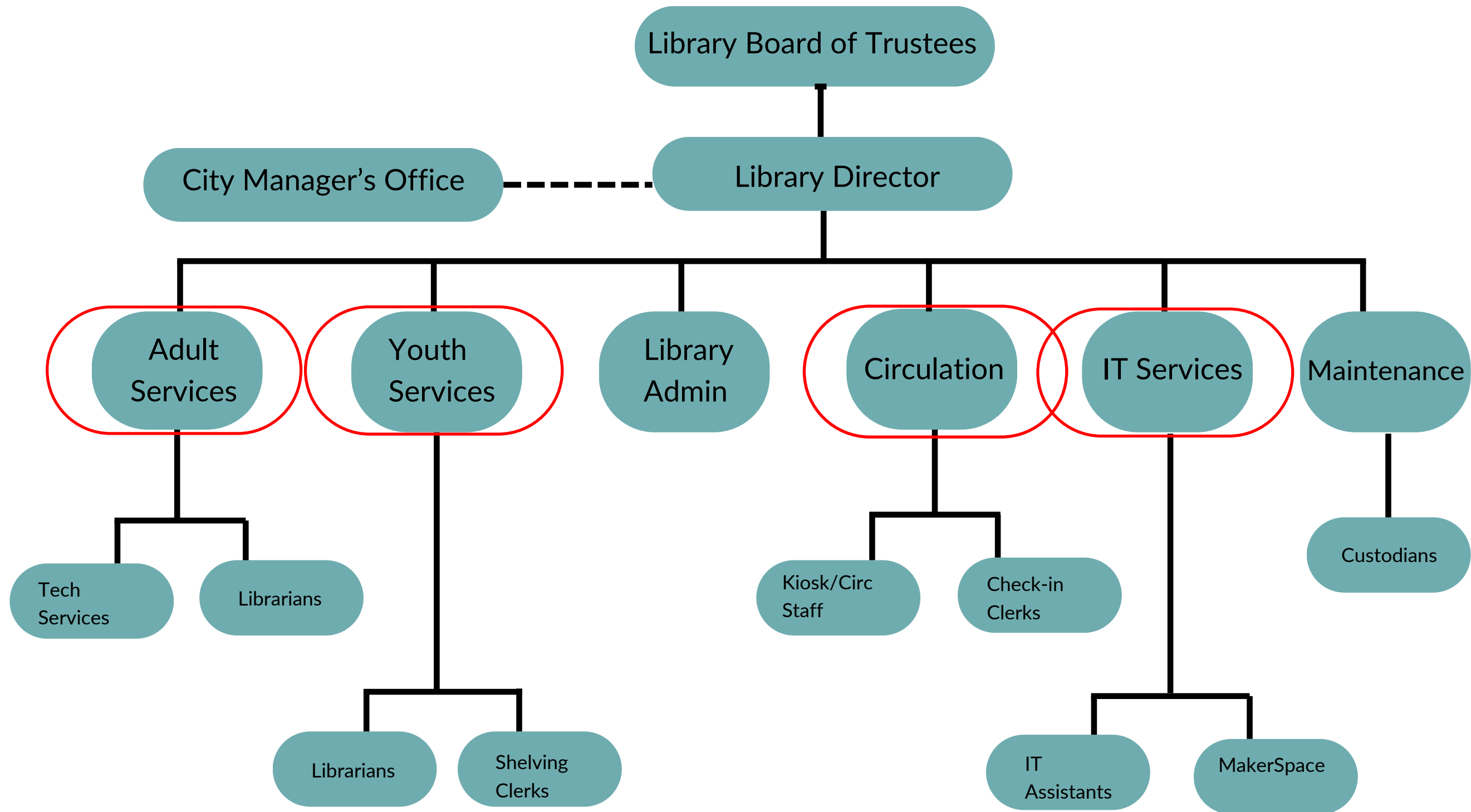
Method: Literature review

Carnegie Stout Public Library



Figures	Stats
Visits annually	162,223
Open Hours	M-Th- 9am-7pm F, Sat- 9am-5pm Sun- 12pm-5pm
Square feet of building	54,000
Staff	50





Carnegie-Stout Public Library Org Chart



Community Profile



	Dubuque	Iowa
Population	59,315	3.19 Million
White:	85.1%	87.9%
Black or African American:	6.3%	3.74%
Hispanic or Latino:	3.7%	3.89%
Asian:	1.2%	2.49%
Native Hawaiian & other Pacific Islander:	1.3%	0.13%
American Indian & Alaskan Native:	0.4%	0.34%
Average Household Income	\$58,691	\$64,499
Total Housing Units	27,174	1,438,565
Renter Owner	35.5% 65.5%	28.5% 71.5%
Disability Status (under 65)	8.9%	8.4%
% below the poverty line	13%	11%

Dubuque County

1,478 individuals experienced homelessness = 967 households

Unemployment rate: 4.4%

8.4% spend more than 50% of their income on housing

20% of unhoused individuals are or were involved in domestic violence

More than half have been diagnosed with a disability

5% were veterans in the US Army

8% were considered chronically homeless

(Institute for Community Alliance, Iowa Homeless County Level Data Book) 2022)



Recent Developments

6: How does the political profile of Dubuque allow for suggested policy solutions to be implemented?

Changes made in 2022

Issuing citations

Working on a caseworker model who will help individuals connect with resources

Johnson v. City of Grants Pass

Originated in Grants Pass, Oregon in 2018

Highlights the nationwide housing shortage contributing to homelessness

Heard by the supreme court on April 22, 2024

Addresses the rights of homeless individuals sleeping outdoors challenging city ordinances

Decision by June 30, 2024-- potentially impacting cities nationwide

Can cities penalize sleeping outside when shelter options are inadequate?

Advocates are arguing for housing solutions over criminalizing homelessness

Findings - Case Studies

Des Moines Case Study

Community outreach event- The Des Moines Public Library effectively serves on average 70 patrons twice a week at this event

Social work in the library- Des Moines Public Library hired a social worker in September 2023. In only two months, Ashlan Lippert has assisted 135 individuals.

3: What are examples of best policies and practices for library staff to employ when presented with the challenge of assisting high needs patrons?

5: What policies should the Dubuque Public Library staff implement which help staff guide patrons who need assistance?

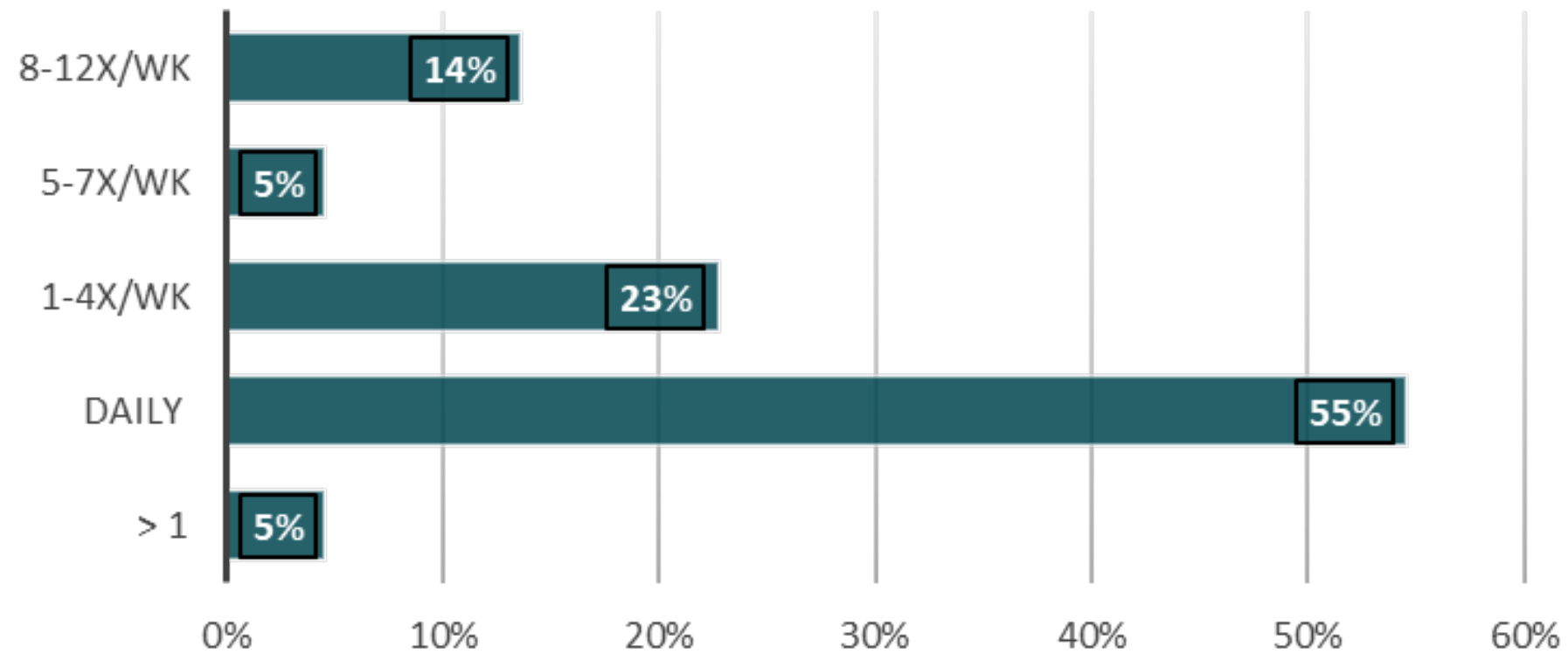
Iowa City Case Study

Examples of patron behavior policies- Iowa City Public Library employed a comprehensive and streamlined solution mitigating stress from library staff using a tiered response system for common violations of patron behavior guidelines.

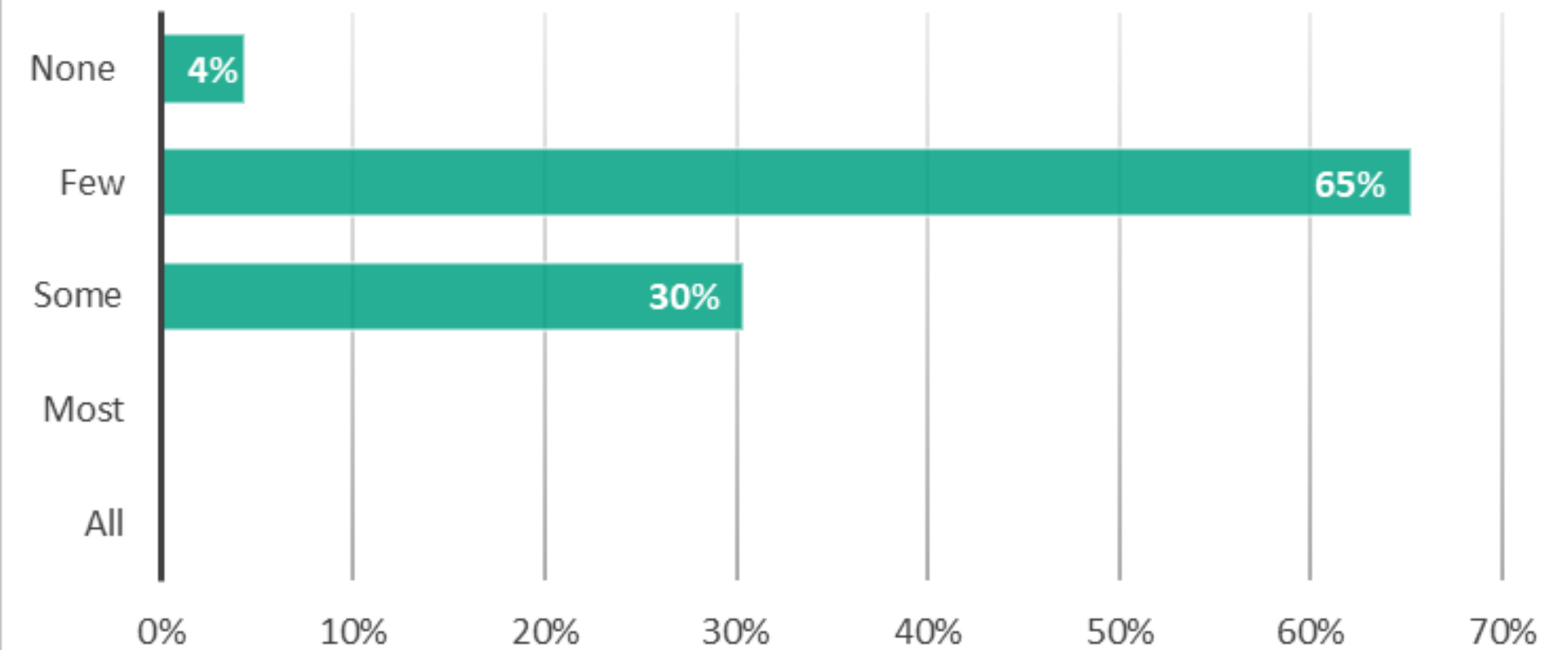
1: What is the frequency and impact of staff encountering disruptive patrons who are experiencing crises?

Findings - Staff Survey

How often do you assist or encounter patrons w/ brain health challenges?



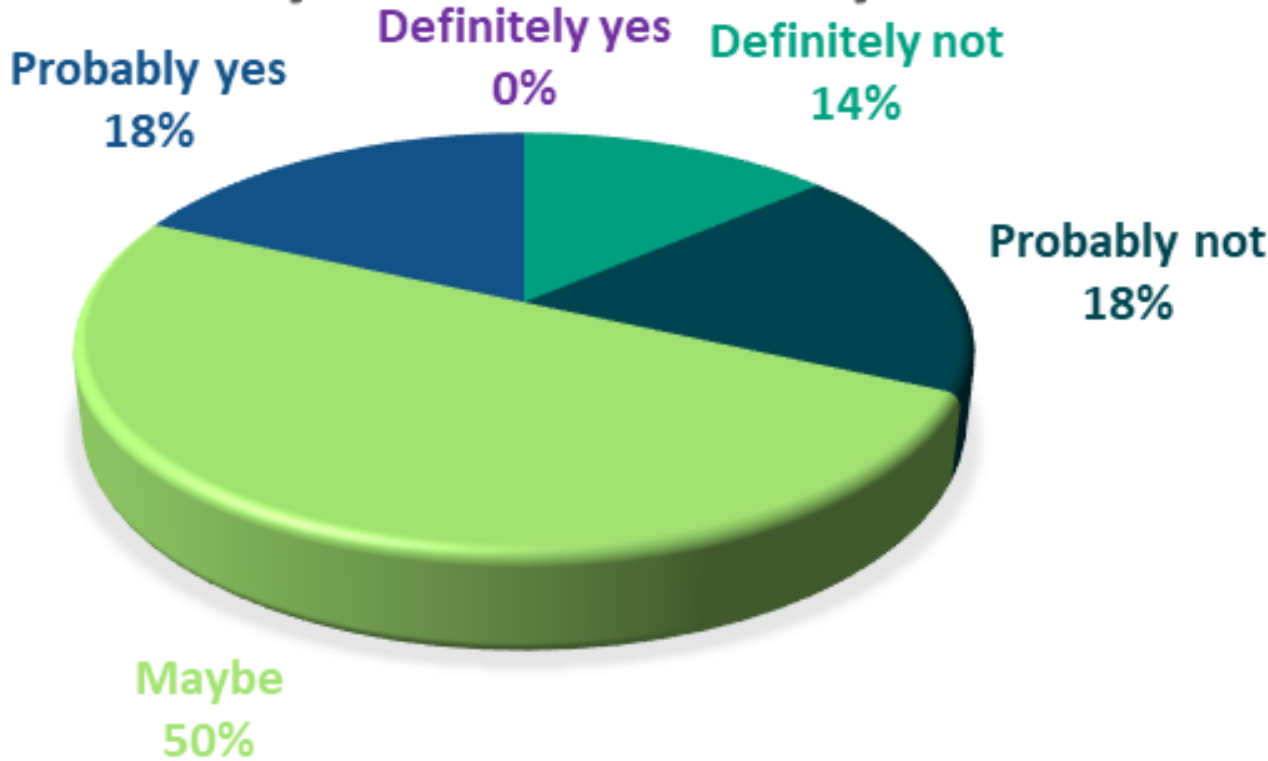
How often do these encounters become disruptive?



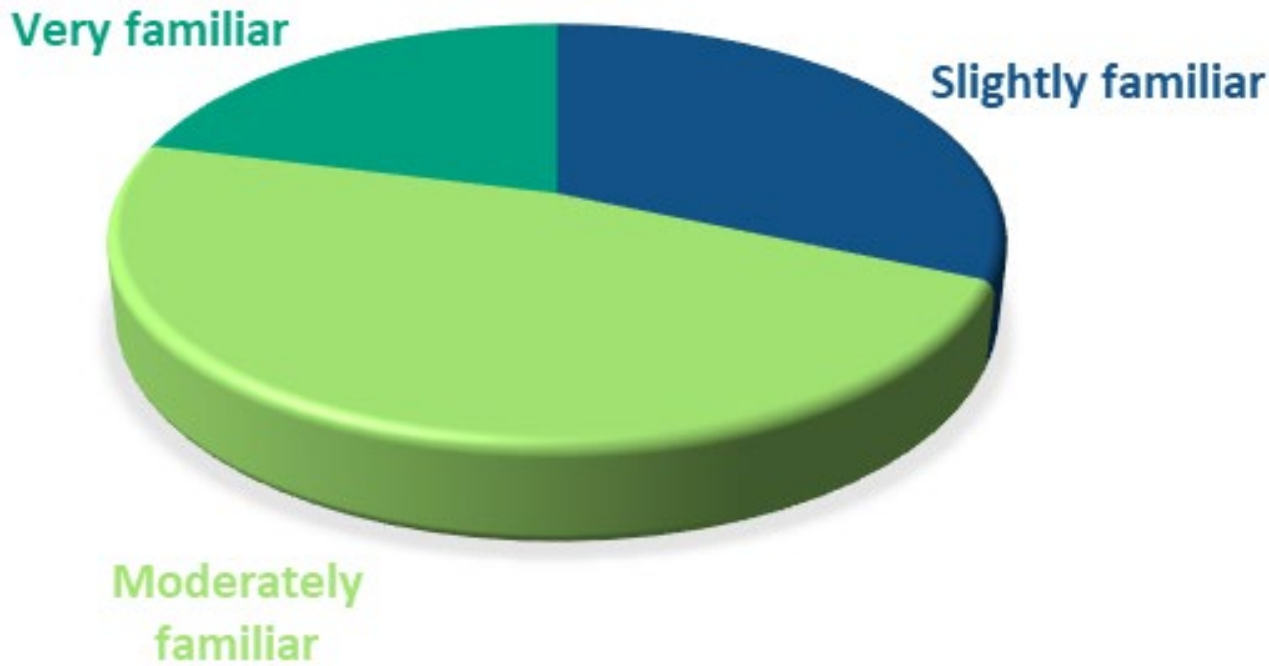
Findings - Staff Survey

2: To what degree do library staff feel equipped to serve patrons experiencing crisis?

Do you feel that you are able to navigate situations where patrons require social assistance beyond basic library services?



How familiar are you with the local community resources available to assist patrons facing challenges?



Policy Recommendations

1. Update Patron Behavior Policies- Integrate proposed internal policies into daily use
2. Staff Training- Utilize free training resources online from ALA and Beth Wahler
3. Community Connection event- Connect with social services agencies, bringing them into the library
4. Social Work in CSPL- Add a budget line for the hiring of a social worker through City Council

Conclusion

There is an increased presence of high needs patrons within the CSPL, nationally, and globally

Effective integration of policy solutions will mitigate the unintended outcomes for high needs patrons, and act as a catalyst for nearby libraries to follow suit

Q&A