Practical Tips for Working with Patrons Experiencing Homelessness

Ryan Dowd

www.HomelessLibrary.com
Fact: Homelessness is Exhausting

Imagine:
- Sleeping in a crowded shelter or dangerous street.
- Walking everywhere.
- Eating poorly and sporadically.
- Being stressed out about your survival.

www.homelesslibrary.com
Fact: Space is different when you are homeless

Imagine having absolutely nowhere in the entire world that is completely yours where you can be alone.

Not a bedroom, not a bathroom... nowhere!

www.homelesslibrary.com
Fact: Possessions are different when you are homeless

Imagine owning only one bag. Imagine that everything you own fits in that one bag.
Skill: How to stand

• A few feet away, **at a slight angle**.

• Hands in one of the following positions:
  • In pockets
  • Behind back
  • “Praying” position
Skill: Explain, Don’t Debate or Dictate

- Explain = 1 sentence explanation about rule

- Debate = round and round and round and round

- Dictate = no explanation for the rule
Skill: Have Your Phrases Ready

• “Would you mind turning the volume down a notch or two?”

• “You probably didn’t realize we have a rule about this, but...”

• “I would let you do that, but the bosses would probably fire me.”

• 1 sentence answer for every major rule
For a full continuing education training course:

www.HomelessLibrary.com