

Libraries and Community Homelessness

Inspiration for serving library users who have no safe, reliable place to sleep each night

People who are experiencing homelessness are forced to live their private lives in public. Libraries can provide a safe, welcoming space of relative privacy.

	<p>Community Needs Assessment Gather data to determine the extent and nature of homelessness in your community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local & federal statistics ✓ Educational institutions ✓ Faith communities ✓ NGOs ✓ Local agencies ✓ Ask those affected
	<p>Library Assessment Review library policies, staff attitudes, collections, resources, services, and trainings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Address issues ✓ Luggage, sleeping and odour policies ✓ Design training program ✓ Fines and fees
	<p>Build Partnerships Identify potential partner organizations, reach out, meet regularly, and share ideas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Invite local service providers to library meetings ✓ Explain library services and elicit ideas ✓ Include homeless youth-serving organizations
	<p>Professional Education Provide staff education about the lives of refugees & people affected by homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Include causes of homelessness & effects of trauma ✓ Include education on LGBTQ+ homeless youth ✓ Invite presenters with relevant life experience
	<p>Update Language Post, share, and discuss respectful language around homelessness and refugee status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use appropriate gender pronouns ✓ Provide resources in your community's languages ✓ Use person-first language e.g. "person experiencing..."
	<p>Develop Needed Services Develop new services for refugees and those experiencing homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Invite partner agencies to offer services on-site ✓ Community resource referrals ✓ Extra Internet time ✓ Free printing
	<p>Marketing Update your website, create easy-to-read pamphlets, publicize your services locally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Local agencies ✓ Churches ✓ Social media ✓ Food banks ✓ Community centers ✓ Shelters
	<p>Funding Organize a group to apply for grants from government and NGOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create a library fundraising group ✓ Reach out to local sources

Libraries Around the World Uphold Human Rights

The human rights that libraries are particularly responsible for upholding are the right to information, education and cultural participation.

The Vancouver Public Library, Carnegie Branch, in Canada is open 365 days a year, from 10 am – 10 pm, and receives city funding to serve people experiencing homelessness.

The library at the University of Salzburg, Austria participates in More4Refugees to provide access to academic education for asylum seekers and recipients.

The Columbus Metropolitan Library's Ready to Read Corps in Ohio, USA regularly visits family shelters with their Bookmobile and provides programming and resources.

The BNICE organization in Buwenda, Uganda has developed libraries and programs at local schools to help youth develop job skills and avoid homelessness.

There are no fines or fees in Chiyoda City's Hibiya Library and Museum in Tokyo, Japan.

The Public Library Pablo Neruda in Santiago, Chile offers Spanish classes and French language materials at the library for Haitian immigrants.

The Romain Rolland Mobile Library in Pondicherry, India has provided recreational activities and informal education to street, working, and at-risk children.

The State Library of Queensland in South Brisbane, Australia provides a cloakroom as a safe place to store belongings.

SOURCES

IFLA LSN (2017). "IFLA Guidelines for Library Services to People Experiencing Homelessness." <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/12642>

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