

Rules of Conduct – 2012 Annual Report

Date:	June 24, 2013
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of 2012 activities related to the Rules of Conduct in supporting the provision of a safe and welcoming environment in Library branches across the city, and providing a safe work environment for staff. A summary of incidents in 2012 and a comparison of types of incidents are provided.

In 2012, there were 18,872,588 million visits to branches and there were 1,382 incidents reported. The category of violent behavior represented 5% of overall reported incidents in 2012. Over the past five years, the number of incidents reported has remained relatively stable and represents approximately .008% of visits to branches. A continued focus on staff training, bulletins, procedures, committee activities and security measures all contribute to maintaining an environment that is welcoming and safe for all within the context of a complex and diverse urban environment.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact to the 2013 operating budget resulting from this report.

The Director, Finance & Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

The Toronto Public Library's Rules of Conduct Policy and related Rules of Conduct – Exclusion, Reinstatement and Appeals Policy support the Library's mission *to provide free and equitable access to services which meet the changing needs of Torontonians. The Library preserves and promotes universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas in a welcoming and supportive environment.* The policies set out expectations for public behaviour to support equitable access to library service with consequences for violations of the rules and a related appeals process. Effective review, communication, implementation and administration of the Rules of Conduct and appeals process ensure that the Toronto Public Library balances residents' right of access to library

service with the Library's responsibility to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for the public and staff.

The rules, policies and related procedures have been effective in ensuring staff maintain a safe and welcoming environment for the public and Library staff. The Library has detailed procedures, training and security measures to support staff in dealing with incidents effectively.

COMMENTS

A strong policy framework and effective application of the policies and procedures by staff establish and support a safe and welcoming environment. Toronto Public Library (TPL) provides service in a complex, diverse, urban environment to residents of all ages, backgrounds, abilities and walks of life in 98 branches and facilities across the City.

Toronto Public Library focuses on both local and system training on the effective application of the Rules of Conduct, particularly with a focus to engage staff in developing proactive strategies to deal with issues significant to their locations.

Overall, 222 staff attended Rules of Conduct training sessions in 2012.

To augment staff training, Rules of Conduct Bulletins are regularly created that provide staff with additional tips, strategies and appropriate language to deal effectively with issues that arise and to ensure a safe and welcoming environment. The consistent effort to train and support staff has continued to result in more consistent handling and reporting of incidents across the system. The Central Joint Health and Safety Committee is involved in the review of the Rules of Conduct policies, training, procedures, bulletins and receives all Incident Reports.

All staff are responsible for being familiar with the Rules of Conduct. Staff use an Incident Report Form to document violations of the rules as well as to document service disruptions and emergency situations. The Incident Report Form provides categories to describe incidents such as: Violent Behaviour, Harassing/Threatening Behaviour, Disruptive Behaviour, Vandalism, Theft - Personal, Theft - Library Materials, Injury/Illness, Fire, Flood, Near Miss and Other. Violent Behaviour includes any behaviour intended to injure or harm others or damage property. Harassing/Threatening Behaviour includes offensive behaviours, gestures, comments such as unwelcome remarks about a person's body, age, gender, ethnic/racial origin. Disruptive Behaviour includes creating a disturbance or interfering with other people's enjoyment of the Library through such activities as talking loudly, using offensive language, running. Vandalism includes reports of deliberate damage to library materials or property, including graffiti, plugged toilets and sinks, pulled false fire alarms. Near Miss describes a situation having the potential to cause a serious accident/injury that did not occur. For example, a heavy shelf falling off the wall in a well traveled area with no injuries is a Near Miss Incident. The "Other" Category captures a broad collection of miscellaneous reports on incidents of power outages, children left unattended, customers entering the Library while under exclusion.

Staff in all departments play a role in creating a safe and welcoming environment in the branches. Joint Health and Safety Committees and the Central Joint Health and Safety Workplace Violence Prevention Sub-Group provide an opportunity for the Union and Management to work together to promote and improve practices in the workplace and all Incident Reports are reviewed in these forums. Contracted security guard service complements the effective role of staff, providing a security guard presence in situations where volume and activity levels, problems with disruptive, violent or abusive behaviour, vandalism and theft have created concerns for staff and public safety.

Staff across the Library are effective in communicating the Rules of Conduct to customers and de-escalating issues. Staff are aware of the importance of dealing with issues as they occur, providing customers the opportunity to understand the policy and modify their behaviour. Overall, staff are well trained and branch supervisors spend time discussing issues, providing guidance and reinforcing common approaches and practices.

With an emphasis on fairness and service equity, staff are exploring ways to better assist people with mental health issues. Two pilot sessions presented by the Canadian Mental Health Association were launched in 2012 and will be offered again in 2013. A total of 26 staff attended the two pilot sessions offered in the fall. Increasing staff's awareness and sensitivity in this area will build staff capacity to work effectively with customers experiencing mental health issues in our libraries across the City.

The following are highlights in regards to incidents reported in 2012 (Attachment 1):

- 1,382 incidents were reported in 2012. Compared to 2011, the total number of incidents for 2012 decreased by 11%. A total of 1,548 incident reports were reported in 2011.
- Reports of Disruptive Behaviour represent 31% of the system total of reported incidents, representing the highest percentage of reported incidents, as has been the case in previous years. There is a slight decrease from the 33% noted in 2011 and 2010 to 31% noted in 2012. In numbers, 423 incidents of disruptive behaviour were reported in 2012, compared to 515 reported incidents in 2011, 424 in 2010 and 472 reported incidents in 2009. Overall there has been an 18% drop in the number of reports of Disruptive Behaviour.
- Countering the decrease in the number of reports of Disruptive Behaviour, Incidents of Harassing/Threatening Behaviour, a category that was changed in 2011 from Threatening Behaviour, e.g. Verbal Threat has continued to rise by 11% from 2011. This category represented 8% of the total incidents reported in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and it rose to 17% of all reported incidents in 2011. In 2012, this category rose to 21% of all reports submitted. In numbers, 291 reports completed were to report incidents of Harassing/Threatening Behaviour in 2012 as compared to 262 reports in 2011 and 107 reported in 2010. As in previous years, this continues to be the second highest percentage of reported incidents. This year 21% of all reports were to note incidents of Harassing/Threatening Behaviour.

- The complexities inherent in the delivery of library service in a diverse urban environment coupled with enhanced staff awareness of Toronto Public Library's Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Policy may indicate higher overall reporting in this category of Harassing/Threatening Behaviour. Separating Abusive Behaviour from Violent Behaviour on the 2011 revised incident report form and categorizing Harassing Behaviour together with Threatening Behaviour may have also resulted in more accurate reporting of these types of behaviours under its revised category of Harassing/Threatening Behaviour. This may indicate why the number of reports of violent acts decreased once again in 2012 by 32% and the number of incidents that report harassing and threatening behaviors increased from 107 in 2010 to 262 in 2011 and to 291 reports in 2012, an 11% increase.
- Incidents of Violent Behaviour, a category which was changed in 2011 from Violent and/or Abusive Behaviour decreased from 12% of the total incidents reported in 2010 to 7% of all reported incidents in 2011 and further to 5% of all reported incidents in 2012. In numbers, 70 reports were to report incidents of Violent Behaviour in 2012 as compared to 103 reported in 2011 and 154 reported in 2010. Again, it is likely that as Abusive Behaviour was separated from Violent Behaviour on the 2011 revised incident report form that resulted in a more accurate count of fewer reports of violence and an increase in behaviours categorized as harassing and threatening behaviours.
- In 2012 incidents of Violent Behaviour represented the sixth highest category of reported incidents in the system, as it also did in 2011. This is in contrast to 2010 in which this category was the third highest number of reported incidents in the system. It was the fourth highest percentage for the preceding number of years.
- After Disruptive Behaviour and Harassing/Threatening Behaviour, once again the "Other" category represents the third highest percentage of reported incidents, 19% of the system total, an increase from 16% in 2011 and an almost match to the 18% in 2010. This category reflects a broad collection of miscellaneous reports on everything from power outages, unattended children to customers entering the Library while under exclusion. In numbers, this is recorded as a slight increase from 253 reports in 2011 to 261 reports in 2012.
- Reports of "Theft of Personal Belongings" dropped by 11% in 2012. There were 128 reports in 2012 compared to 144 reports in 2011. This number has continued to drop over the years and remains the fourth highest percentage of reported incidents, representing 9% of the annual system total in 2012.
- Across the system reports of Vandalism have decreased from 73 reports in 2011 to 40 reports in 2012, a 45% drop.
- Staff are remembering to use the Incident Report Form to document Floods and Fires. Both categories have risen slightly in 2012. A total of 11 incidents of fire were reported in 2012 compared to eight reports in 2011 and 13 reports of flooding were reported in 2012 compared to nine reports in 2011.
- Reports of Theft of Library Materials decreased slightly from 35 reports in 2011 to 31 reports in 2012. As well, reports of Injury/Illness decreased from 127 incidents in 2011

to 110 reports in 2012 and reports of Near Miss decreased from 19 reports in 2011 to four reports in 2012.

- In 2012 there were 45 System-wide Twelve-Month Exclusions. In comparison, in 2011 there were 62 System-wide Twelve-Month Exclusions.
- In 2012 a total of 19 System-wide Six-Month Exclusions dealing with incidents with extenuating circumstances were issued. In comparison, in 2011 a total of 15 Six-Month Exclusions were issued.

CONCLUSION

The Rules of Conduct policies and related procedures support TPL in fulfilling its mission of providing residents with equitable access to public library service while maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for the public and staff. Where infractions of the rules of conduct occur, TPL's detailed procedures, training and security measures support staff in dealing with incidents effectively.

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SIGNATURE

Jane Pyper
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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Rules of Conduct – Incident Summary 2008 - 2012