

In-Library Social Work

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Sussex County Library System
inform, inspire, imagine...

Core Values of Social Work

- Access
- Service
- Social Justice
- Dignity and Worth of the person
- Importance of Human Relationships
- Integrity
- Competence

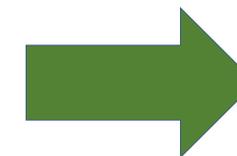
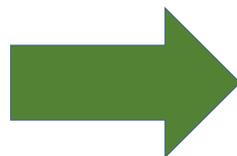
ABSTRACT

Traditionally, people visited public libraries to check out books, access information, and, more recently, use the free internet. Over the last decade, libraries have become an essential resource as the community's needs shifted to include information about and access to social services. Patrons with limited incomes and educations regularly access the public computers in the library to apply for jobs, obtain health information and connect to government services and benefits. Patrons are often comfortable at their local library and bring their questions about their social services needs directly to librarians and staff. Others say little, but their needs may be apparent to the library staff, who cannot support these patrons in the capacity they require. Social workers have not traditionally been part of the library staff, but trends include full-time, part-time social workers and many social work interns.

In 2009, the San Francisco Public Library became the first to hire a full-time social worker; more than forty other libraries have hired social workers over the next ten years. Social Workers are trained to assess and intervene with mental health, substance use, basic needs, and poverty-related needs. This project examines the needs of the patrons in three libraries in Sussex County, New Jersey. The unemployment rate in Sussex County is 5.11%, and 5.4% of the population live below the poverty line. The COVID 19 Pandemic closed most local government agencies in Sussex County for in-person support, causing an immense backlog in obtaining services and assistance via phone. As the library branches reopened, they became a resource where patrons could speak to someone in person. Although the librarians and staff offer a wealth of information about life skills, books and reading, job training, educational goals, and personal interests, they are not trained in providing social services. This project will summarize the needs of the patrons in the libraries and suggest program development to meet the requirements.

Core Values of Librarianship

- Confidentiality/Privacy
- Democracy
- Diversity
- Education and Lifelong Learning
- Intellectual Freedom
- The Public Good
- Preservation
- Professionalism
- Service
- Social Responsibility
- Sustainability



Library social workers deliver social service-related support and assistance to the public (library patrons and non-patrons) directly out of the library environment.

Library social worker's efforts are influenced by a library's unique community needs, and community contexts resulting in a range of activities and services being offered across the spectrum of library social work.

Resource/referral to community resources such as:

- Housing, legal, and food
- Homeless and domestic violence safety shelters
- Medicine/prescriptions
- Mental health services, transportation
- Pending eviction, unpaid taxes/foreclosure
- Child support hearing assistance
- Filing or applying for services via online applications
- Crisis Response: Substance Abuse, PTSD/Mental Health Crises, Physical Health/Chronic Health Needs
- Employment applications, Online filing of grievances, complaints and/or service denial appeals
- FAFSA application, Social Security, Unemployment benefits

Library social workers also serve as social service resource liaisons for library employees, and collateral partners of library-based activities.

Library social work is a result of interdisciplinary cooperation between librarians and social workers, who navigate the common ground in public spaces and places in the library environment.

Library social workers can provide training and assistance to staff on various topics.

