



## Suggested Language

Just because you work with the public doesn't mean you have to ignore harassing comments or behaviors. You can address these situations professionally while still establishing personal boundaries. Here are some phrases that might be helpful for you:

- "That's inappropriate."
  - "Your comment/behavior makes me uncomfortable."
  - "We don't do that here."
  - "I am happy to answer questions about the library, but I will not answer questions about my personal life."
  - "I do not discuss my personal life at work."
  - "My name is not honey/baby/sweetheart. What can I assist you with?"
  - "Do you have a question about the library?"
  - "Would you care to speak to a manager about this?"
  - "If this behavior continues, I will have someone else finish assisting you."
- OR
- "If this behavior continues, I will ask you to leave the library."

## How to Help a Coworker

If you notice a coworker being harassed, and you feel comfortable intervening, you can try some of the following strategies:

- Address the patron's behavior directly.
  - "That question was inappropriate."
  - "We don't allow people to speak to employees like that."
- Ask your coworker if they need to step away, or if they would like someone else to step in.
- Get your coworker away from the harasser.
  - The "emergency phone call from the back office" strategy can be useful.

Regardless of who is involved, however, you must inform a manager or security officer and document the incident!

## It's Okay to Walk Away

These strategies are great tools to use, but it's important to remember that you are under no obligation to say something in every uncomfortable situation, and you are under no obligation to assist the person who is making you feel this way. Practice using these lines with your coworkers, but also make sure to practice exit strategies as well.



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## **Addressing Harassing Behaviors With Your Organization**

### **Frontline Staff**

Talking to a manager or supervisor can be extremely helpful. Many times, managers are unaware of the severity or persistence of these types of behaviors, and can offer emotional support or step in if a patron interaction becomes uncomfortable.

Talking to management can feel intimidating, especially about something as uncomfortable and stressful as sexual harassment. If other coworkers feel the same way, consider addressing your manager as a group. It can provide you with emotional support, and you can lend support to each other's experiences.

Remember: you are a professional and you have done nothing to encourage this type of behavior.

### **Managers & Administration**

Emphasize to your staff that their personal safety is important and that you will support them in any instances of sexual harassment.

Make sure that your library has clear procedures in place for documenting problematic behaviors and interactions, and that there is a clearly defined set of consequences for patrons who violate this behavior. In the case of sexual harassment, it can be extremely unnerving and demoralizing for staff to interact with a patron after they've reported the problematic behavior to management.

When addressing sexual harassment, remember that this is not something that will just disappear after a certain amount of time. Continue addressing situations with your staff as they arise, and make sure that your library's administration is kept informed of situations as well.

### **Contact Information**

We'd love to hear from you. Here's how to reach us:

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