

Censorship & Library Practices Task Force

Report to the Medical Library Association Board of Directors
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Scope of Project

Provide librarians with the tools and the resources to keep up with what's happening in their states and how to be proactive/reactive when issues arise.

Recommendations for Maintenance

The Task Force recommends that this toolkit be reviewed annually by a relevant caucus, committee, or task force, which would propose any recommended changes to the Board.

Additional Resources

- Khanna, R. R., Murray, S. G., Wen, T., Salmeen, K., Illangasekare, T., Benfield, N., Adler-Milstein, J., & Savage, L. (2022). [Protecting reproductive health information in the post-Roe era: interoperability strategies for healthcare institutions](https://doi.org/10.1093/jamia/ocac194). *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association : JAMIA*, ocac194. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jamia/ocac194>
- Walker, D. M., Hoffman, S., & Adler-Milstein, J. (2022). [Interoperability in a Post-Roe Era: Sustaining Progress While Protecting Reproductive Health Information](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2022.17204). *JAMA*, 328(17), 1703–1704. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2022.17204>
- NNLM Class: Reproductive Health and the Reference Desk: How libraries can provide information in a post-Roe country <https://www.nlm.gov/training/class/reproductive-health-and->

[reference-desk-how-libraries-can-provide-information-post](#). Webinar recording will be available here after July 18th: <https://www.youtube.com/@NnlmGov>.

Censorship and Library Practices Toolkit

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Introduction/Purpose Statement

A core value of librarianship is to provide accessible and trustworthy health information. However, institutional policies and regional and national laws often place limits on what information can be shared with library users. Navigating this conflict between our professional values and external rules can be a complex and difficult endeavor.

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide resources that can assist health sciences librarians in establishing policies, procedures, and information resources that can help to minimize these potential conflicts and provide a solid basis for dealing with them when they arise.

The Medical Library Association's (MLA) Core Values call for "the use of scientific evidence in making health care decisions" as well as "public awareness of, access to, and use of high-quality health information." As stated in the *Code of Ethics for Health Sciences Librarianship*, the health sciences librarian:

- promotes access to health information for all and creates and maintains conditions of freedom of inquiry, thought, and expression that facilitate informed health care decisions.
- works without prejudice to meet the client's information needs.

- respects the privacy of clients and protects the confidentiality of the client relationship.
- ensures that the best available information is provided to the client.

While providing information services in alignment with these principles, health sciences librarians are of course subject to relevant laws of the jurisdictions in which they work and the policies of their parent institutions. In some cases, adhering to law (e.g., providing information in response to duly authorized warrants or subpoenas) may conflict with these principles (e.g., protecting the confidentiality of users of information services). Providing certain types of information may also conflict with institutional policy. In addition, ensuring the best available information is provided may involve acquisition and provision of information that conflicts with the strongly held beliefs and opinions of some library service users and staff members (e.g., on reproductive services).

This document has been written to assist health sciences librarians with tools and resources to stay current with what's happening in their states and how to be proactive/reactive when issues arise. It is not intended as legal advice and does not serve as a set of rules or procedures. It cannot replace the use of judgment and the application of the test of reason to individual situations. Nor is it the last and final word. MLA will issue additional advisory statements from time to time. Please refer to [MLAConnect](#) for the most current information.

Tools to Track Legislation & Upcoming Issues

- [American Association of Law Libraries Public Library Toolkit](#): This page includes a link to a site or document for almost every state, which shows how to access that state's laws.
- [American Library Association State Legislative Toolkit](#): This page includes tips and guidance for how to stay informed about state legislation, keep track of important session meeting dates, develop advocacy networks, and [address adverse legislation](#).
- [National Conference of State Legislatures Searchable Bill Tracking Databases](#): includes a list of 50 databases of state legislation organized by topic, including topics such as COVID-19, education, emergency medical services, health costs/coverage/delivery, maternal and child health, public health, injury prevention, and health profession scope of practice. Updated July 2022. Legislation on other topics can be searched for through the website's search feature.
- [LegiScan](#): Freemium service that allows users to search for and set up alerts on particular issues or topics. Allows for complex Boolean searching and includes examples of top searches.
- [BillTrack50](#): Another freemium service that allows searching for bills in the current session (no alert feature). Includes a list of trending bills for each state.

Issue-Specific Resources

Privacy

- [ALA Privacy Toolkit](#): designed to assist libraries and librarians in understanding privacy and its relationship to information access in libraries, and to provide action tools that apply to their local circumstances. It pulls together the statements, policies and other documentation previously

prepared by ALA as well as several additional topics, including information on federal and state privacy laws, law enforcement orders, and many sample policies and guidelines.

- [Electronic Frontier Foundation Privacy](#): The Electronic Frontier Foundation is a nonprofit organization defending civil liberties in the digital world. This page on Privacy features a collection of educational articles on a wide variety of issues, such as medical privacy, surveillance technologies, and reproductive justice. Each article contains helpful links, as well as various toolkits and links to other resources.
- [US State Privacy Legislation Tracker](#): A map and detailed chart of the proposed and enacted comprehensive privacy bills from across the United States, identifying key provisions in the legislation.

Intellectual Freedom/Censorship

- [ALA Intellectual Freedom Issues & Resources](#): Explore core documents, guidelines, publications, toolkits, and Q&As about intellectual freedom and privacy in libraries.

Reproductive Health

- [Know Your Rights: Reproductive Health Care](#): Accurate and up-to-date information about access to and coverage of reproductive health care and resources from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Topics include information on rights to emergency care, birth control, medication, abortion access, preventative health services, and what to do if you do not have health insurance.
- [The Guttmacher Institute State Policy Resources](#): The Guttmacher Institute monitors and analyzes state policy developments—including legislative, judicial and executive actions—on a broad range of issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights. These resources, on such issues as access to and availability of abortion, contraceptive services and sex education, are updated regularly to provide a comprehensive picture of the state policy landscape.
- [The Guttmacher State Legislation Tracker on Sexual and Reproductive Health](#): This tracker provides details on state legislation regarding sexual and reproductive health. The legislation is described, explained, and/or summarized in plain language.

Sexual Health

Sexual Health Information for Minors

- [The Guttmacher State Legislation Tracker on Sexual and Reproductive Health \(Teens\)](#): This tracker provides details on state legislation related to Access to Reproductive Health Services, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Education for adolescents.
- [Human Rights Coalition: LGBTQ+ Youth](#): Collection of resources, educational content, news, think-pieces, and other pertinent content for a range of audiences including LGBTQ+ youth, their families, educators, allies, and community activists.
- [Human Rights Coalition: Sexual Health](#): Collection of resources, educational content, news, think-pieces, and other pertinent sexual health information for a range of audiences including

LGBTQ+ and/or BIPOC youth, girls and women, families, educators, allies, and community activists.

- [Healthy People 2030 Objectives: Adolescents](#): Healthy People 2030 is the nation's 10-year plan for addressing our most critical public health priorities and challenges. This section reports on the objectives for adolescents, detailing which goals from the prior Healthy People 2020 initiative were met, improved upon, or not met. It gives an overview of the health of America's youth that takes into account social determinants of health such as ethnicity, race, and income level.

LGBTQ Health Information

- [ACLU Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures](#): Comprehensive tracker of anti-LGBTQ legislation at the state level. The searchable database includes a list of the current bills, links to their full text, and can be sorted by legislative issue, state, and current bill status. The searchable database includes a list of the current bills, links to their full text, and can be sorted by legislative issue, state, and current bill status.
- [HealthyPeople 2030 LGBT Health](#): Healthy People 2030 is the nation's 10-year plan for addressing our most critical public health priorities and challenges. This section reports on the objectives for the LGBTQ community, detailing which goals from the prior Healthy People 2020 initiative were met, improved upon, or not met. It gives an overview of different aspects of physical, sexual, and mental health issues that disproportionately affect the LGBTQ community, taking account social determinants of health such as ethnicity, race, and income level.
- [Human Rights Coalition: LGBTQ Youth](#): Collection of resources, educational content, news, think-pieces, and other pertinent content for a range of audiences including LGBTQ youth, their families, educators, allies, and community activists.

Social Determinants of Health

- [HealthyPeople2030 Social Determinants of Health](#): Healthy People 2030 is the nation's 10-year plan for addressing our most critical public health priorities and challenges. This section reports on the objectives related to the conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.
- [American Public Health Association: Gun Violence](#): Gun violence is a leading cause of premature death in the U.S. This APHA topic page advocates and provides information on a comprehensive public health approach to preventing gun violence.

State-Specific Resources

[American Association of Law Libraries Public Library Toolkit](#): includes general guides to researching legal issues, but may not include health-related legislation or policy. Includes a list of state-specific toolkits with links to state legislation. The below table includes links to organizations that engage in library-related advocacy work; we recommend reaching out directly to the organization for more information and support.

State or Territory	Library Advocacy Groups
Alabama	Alabama Library Association Intellectual Freedom: https://www.allanet.org/intellectual-freedom Alabama Health Libraries Association: https://alhela.org/
Alaska	Alaska Library Association Advocate for Libraries: https://akla.org/advocate-for-libraries/ Alaska Library-Related Laws: https://lam.alaska.gov/library-law
Arizona	Arizona Library Association: https://www.azla.org/ Reproductive Health Impact Study: Arizona Guttmacher Institute ;
Arkansas	Arkansas Library Association Advocacy: https://www.arlib.org/Advocacy
California	California Library Association Advocacy: https://www.cla-net.org/page/A6
Colorado	Colorado Library Laws, Policies, and Standards: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/librarydevelopment/publiclibraries/index Colorado Library Consortium Advocacy: https://www.clicweb.org/about-clic/who-we-are/advocacy-for-clic/
Connecticut	Connecticut Library Association Advocacy: https://ctlibraryassociation.org/Advocacy Connecticut Libraries Help Center: Advocacy: https://libguides.ctstatelibrary.org/dld/help/advocacy Connecticut Association of Health Sciences Librarians: https://nahsl.libguides.com/cahsl
Delaware	Delaware Library Association Advocacy Alerts and News: https://dla.lib.de.us/legislative-action/advocacy-alerts-and-news/
Florida	Florida Library Association Advocacy Action Center: https://www.flalib.org/advocacy-action-center Florida Health Sciences Library Association: https://fhsla.org/index.html
Georgia	Georgia Library Association Advocacy Division: https://gla.georgialibraries.org/divisions/advocacy-division/ Georgia Public Library Standards: https://georgialibraries.org/library-laws/ ; Georgia Health Sciences Library Association: https://ghsla.org/
Hawaii	Hawaii Library Association Legislation: https://www.hawaiilibraryassociation.org/legislation.html
Idaho	Idaho Library Association Legislative News: https://idaholibraries.wildapricot.org/Legislative-News Idaho Commission for Libraries Best Practices: https://libraries.idaho.gov/best-practices/
Illinois	Illinois Library Association Advocacy: https://www.ila.org/advocacy Association of Illinois School Libraries Advocacy: https://sites.google.com/aisled.org/advocacy/ Illinois Library Statutes: https://www.ilsos.gov/departments/library/about/statutesrules.html Health Sciences Librarians of Illinois: https://hsl.org/
Indiana	Indiana Library Federation: https://www.ilfonline.org/advocacy Indiana Health Sciences Library Association: https://www.ihslnet.org/

Iowa	Iowa Library Association Advocacy: https://www.iowalibraryassociation.org/index.php/advocacy ILA Health Science Library Association: https://ilahsla.wordpress.com/
Kansas	Kansas Library Association Advocacy: https://kslibassoc.org/Advocacy Kansas Association of School Libraries Advocacy Presentation: https://abpres.weebly.com/advocacy-for-libraries.html
Kentucky	Kentucky Association of School Librarians Intellectual Freedom & Advocacy: https://www.kasl.us/intellectual-freedom , https://www.kasl.us/advocacy Kentucky Medical Library Association: https://www.kentuckymla.com/
Louisiana	Louisiana Library Association Advocacy: https://llaonline.org/Advocacy Health Sciences Library Association of Louisiana: https://libguides.lsuhs.edu/hsla Louisiana Association of School Librarians Censorship Toolkit: http://laslonline.weebly.com/censorship-toolkits.html
Maine	Maine Library Association Advocacy: https://www.maineribraries.org/Advocacy Maine Association of School Libraries Intellectual Freedom: https://www.maslibraries.org/page-1406225
Maryland	Maryland Library Association Library Advocacy Interest Group: https://www.mdlib.org/content.asp?contentid=324 Maryland Association of School Librarians Advocate: https://www.maslmd.org/advocate
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Health Sciences Libraries Network: http://www.mahsln.org/ Massachusetts Library Association Intellectual Freedom/Social Responsibility Committee: https://www.masslib.org/committees/intfreedom/socialresponsibility Massachusetts Library Association Legislative Committee: https://www.masslib.org/committees/legislative Massachusetts School Libraries Association Advocacy: https://www.maschoolibraries.org/advocacy.html
Michigan	Michigan Library Association Advocacy: https://www.mibraries.org/mla-advocacy Michigan Association of School Librarians Advocacy: http://www.mimasl.org/advocacy.html Michigan Health Sciences Library Association: https://mhsla.wildapricot.org/
Minnesota	Minnesota Library Association Advocacy and Legislation: https://www.mnlibraryassociation.org/page/advocacy_legislation Health Sciences Libraries of Minnesota: https://healthscienceslibsmn.wordpress.com/
Mississippi	Mississippi Library Association Advocacy: https://mla42.wildapricot.org/advocacy Southeastern Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee: https://www.selaonline.org/about/committees/if_committee/ Mississippi Library Commission Intellectual Freedom Resources: https://www.mlc.lib.ms.us/ms-libraries/mcbi/
Missouri	Missouri Library Association Advocacy: https://molib.wildapricot.org/page-18217

Montana	Montana Library Association Handbook (includes Policies and Resolutions): https://www.mtlib.org/Handbook Montana State Library Advocacy: https://msl.mt.gov/libraries/library_development/consulting/advocacy
Nebraska	Nebraska Library Association Advocacy: https://nebraskalibraries.org/Advocacy_Engage_Page
Nevada	Nevada Library Association Advocacy: https://nevadalibraries.org/Advocacy
New Hampshire	New Hampshire Library Association Advocacy/Legislative Committee: https://www.nhlibrarians.org/Pages/Index/225420/advocacy-homepage
New Jersey	New Jersey Library Association Advocacy: https://www.njla.org/advocacy New Jersey State Library: Library Law: https://www.njstatelib.org/services_for_libraries/resources/library_law/ Health Sciences Library Association of New Jersey: https://hslanj.org/
New Mexico	New Mexico Library Association Intellectual Freedom Policy: https://nmla.org/intellectual_freedom_policy/ New Mexico State Library: NM Library Law https://nmstatelibrary.org/services-for-new-mexico-libraries/nm-library-law/ New Mexico State Library: Advocacy: https://nmstatelibrary.org/services-for-new-mexico-libraries/programs-and-services/librarians-toolkit/advocacy-for-your-library/
New York	New York Library Association Advocacy Center: https://www.nyla.org/4DCGI/cms/review.html?Action=CMS_Document&DocID=12&MenuKey=advocacy New York Alliance of Library Systems: https://nyals.org/links/
North Carolina	North Carolina Library Association Advocacy and Legislative Section: https://nclibraryadvocacy.org/ NCLA Advocacy and Legislative Section Mission and Officers: https://nclaonline.org/advocacy Association of North Carolina Health and Science Libraries: https://anchasl.org/
North Dakota	North Dakota State Library Advocacy: https://library-nd.libguides.com/advocacy North Dakota Library Association Legislative Information: https://ndla.info/legislative-information North Dakota Library Association Health Science Information Section: https://ndla.info/Health-Science-and-Information-Section
Ohio	Ohio Library Council Advocacy Tools for Libraries: https://olc.org/resources/advocacy-tools-libraries/ Ohio Health Sciences Library Association: https://www.ohsla.info/
Oklahoma	Oklahoma Library Association Advocacy Tools: https://staging-ola.site-ym.com/page/advocacy_tools Oklahoma Library Association Advocacy Committee: https://www.oklibs.org/page/Advocacy_Committee Oklahoma Health Sciences Library Association: http://ohsla.pbworks.com/w/page/61886926/HomePage

Oregon	<p>Oregon Library Association Advocacy Resources: https://www.olaweb.org/ola-advocacy-resources</p> <p>Oregon Library Association Library Development and Legislation Committee: https://www.olaweb.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=199</p> <p>Oregon Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee: https://www.olaweb.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=159</p>
Pennsylvania	<p>Pennsylvania Citizens for Better Libraries: https://pcbipa.org/advocacy</p> <p>PaLA Advocate for Libraries: https://www.palibraries.org/page/Advocate</p> <p>State Library of Pennsylvania Library Laws: https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Libraries/LawsRegulations/Pages/default.aspx</p>
Rhode Island	<p>Rhode Island Library Association Advocacy: https://www.ribraries.org/advocacy</p> <p>Rhode Island Special Interest Group of the North Atlantic Health Science Librarians: https://nahsl.libguides.com/arihsl</p>
South Carolina	<p>South Carolina Library Association Advocacy Committee: https://www.scla.org/advocacy-committee</p> <p>South Carolina Library Association Advocacy Campaigns: https://uscupstate.libguides.com/SCLibraries</p>
South Dakota	<p>South Dakota Library Association Advocacy: https://www.sdlibraryassociation.org/page/Advocacy</p>
Tennessee	<p>Tennessee Library Association Intellectual Freedom Resources: https://www.tnla.org/page/intellectualfreedom</p> <p>Tennessee Library Association Bill Watch List: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vAHMBN1AfolEq-C_93Rlwz6BXCyKQ8xn-TtC10RbaKc</p> <p>Tennessee Health Science Library Association: https://www.theslatn.org/</p>
Texas	<p>Texas Library Association Advocacy: https://txla.org/advocacy/</p> <p>Texas State Law Library Abortion Law: https://guides.sll.texas.gov/abortion-laws</p> <p>Texas State Law Library LGBT Law: https://guides.sll.texas.gov/lgbt-law</p>
Utah	<p>Utah Library Association Advocacy Committee: https://ula.org/organization/committees/advocacy/</p> <p>Utah Society of Health Sciences Librarians: https://ushsl.org/</p>
Vermont	<p>Vermont Library Association Government Relations and Advocacy Committee: https://vermontlibraries.org/grc</p> <p>Vermont Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee: https://vermontlibraries.org/ifc</p> <p>Vermont Library Association: Report a Challenge: https://vermontlibraries.org/report</p>
Virginia	<p>Virginia Library Association Intellectual Freedom Committee: https://www.vla.org/intellectual-freedom-committee</p> <p>Virginia Library Association Legislative Committee: https://vla.memberclicks.net/legislative-committee</p>
Washington	<p>Washington Library Association Advocacy Center: https://www.wla.org/wla-advocacy-center</p> <p>Washington Library Association Library-Related Legislation: https://www.wla.org/library-related-legislation</p>

	Washington Medical Librarians Association: https://www.wmla.org/
West Virginia	West Virginia Library Association Advocacy: https://wvla.org/advocacy/
Wisconsin	Wisconsin Library Association Intellectual Freedom Resources: https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/intellectual-freedom-resources Wisconsin Library Association State Legislative Agenda: https://www.wisconsinlibraries.org/state-legislative-agenda Wisconsin Health Science Library Association: https://www.whsla.org/
Wyoming	Wyoming Library Association Legislative Committee: https://wyla.org/Legislative-Committee Wyoming State Library Library Statutes: https://library.wyo.gov/services/wyoming-libraries/library-laws/
District of Columbia	District of Columbia Library Association: https://dcla.org/
American Samoa	Library Association of Samoa: www.las.org.ws
Guam	Guam Library Association: https://www.guamlibraryassociation.org/
Northern Mariana Islands	State Library of the Northern Mariana Islands: https://www.cnmilib.org/
Puerto Rico	Sociedad de Bibliotecarios de Puerto Rico: https://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/othergroups/affiliates/Sociedad.htm
U.S. Virgin Islands	Virgin Islands Library Association: https://www.ala.org/ala/ourassociation/chapters/stateandregional/regionalchapters.htm#VI

Designing & Enacting Library Policies

Recommended Policy Elements and Practices

When writing library policies, we recommend including the following elements as applicable, but we also recommend as a best practice keeping institutional administrators informed of user or public complaints about library resources and services, as well as any changes to library policies. They may recommend having the institution's legal department review any new library policies.

- **Introduction/Purpose Statement:** explain to readers the scope of the library's policies and their place in the hierarchy of policy (federal, state, and local laws; institutional policies; library policies), include any necessary legal or institutional disclaimers.
- **Privacy/Use of Patron Information:** keep library users informed about the usage, retention, and disclosures of personal information.
 - Share information about what data are retained about library users, how that information is used by the library, if those data are shared and if so with whom, and what security measures are in place to prevent accidental or malicious disclosure of those data.
 - Report the length of time that user data are retained, and how the retained information is destroyed.

- Explain under what circumstances a library may be obliged to disclose user data to law enforcement or other authorities in order to comply with federal, state, or local laws or institutional policies.
- **Collection Management:** explain how the library makes decisions about what materials to collect and withdraw..
- **Information Referral Services:** explain library practices that refer users to external sources of information outside of the library's collection, with potential disclaimers about patrons' use of those resources.

Example Policies

- **Collections Management:**
 - UF Libraries Withdrawal Request Policy: <https://acquisitions.uflib.ufl.edu/selector-resources/policy-on-withdrawing-materials-on-request/>
 - Simmons College: Materials Challenges in the Academic Library: a policy guide <https://simmonsliis.libguides.com/c.php?q=1230181>
- **Disclosure of User Information:**
 - Indiana University Requests for University Records: <https://vpgc.iu.edu/our-services/records-requests.html>
 - Penn Libraries Privacy Policy: <https://www.library.upenn.edu/page/penn-libraries-privacy-policy>
 - UC Berkeley Library privacy policy <https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/about/privacy-policy>
- **Library Employee Personal Beliefs/Political Activity:**
 - Indiana University Political Activity Policy: <https://policies.iu.edu/policies/hr-07-50-political-activity/index.html#policyStatement>
 - Oregon Health & Science University Political Activity Guidelines: Policy on political activities <https://www.ohsu.edu/government-relations/political-activity-guidelines>

Tips & Tricks for Enforcing Policies/Patron Rights

- [**American Library Association Guide to Addressing Adverse Legislation**](#): recommended steps to take in response to potential/enacted legislation that conflicts with library professional values and principles.
- [**American Library Association: How to Respond to Challenges and Concerns about Library Resources**](#): step-by step suggestions about how to respond to challenged library materials and complaints from patrons.

Note about Currency & Contributions

This resource is intended to be a living document; if you have a suggestion for potential resources to share, please contact mary.langman@mlahq.org.