

# Steps to Policy Development

## Policy vs. Procedure

**Policy** – generally attempts to balance the library’s resources with a patron’s wants and needs. Policies are “philosophical” in nature dealing more with how library staff may respond in a given situation.

**Procedure** – a list that spells out step by step what a library staff member needs to do. Procedures are usually more “practical” in nature by telling staff members exactly what to do in a given situation.

## Why do we need policies?

- Helps library board, director, and staff identify ways to balance library resources with usage of the library
- Encourages consistent reactions
- May protect the library if a patron challenges staff
- Gives the board, director, and staff a chance to look at bigger picture issues.

## Policy Development Steps

1. Answer the questions: Do we need this policy? Why? Why not?
2. Define the issue(s). This is a good time to define any terms that might be vague such as unacceptable use or inappropriate behavior.
3. Brainstorm alternatives for responding to the issue defined above. What are all the different ways that the library could respond to the issue?
4. Identify the possible positive and negative consequences of each alternative.
5. Select an alternative.
6. Fine tune and draft language for your policy. Before formally adopting ask what does this policy say about the library?

## Final Points to Ponder

To provide more protection should the library ever need to defend itself in a court of law consider the following questions:

1. Is our policy legal?
2. Is our policy clear and concise?
3. Does the punishment fit the crime?
4. Is our policy equitable? Does it apply equally to everyone?