

MOUNT VERNON CITY LIBRARY

8. REFERENCE and ADULT SERVICES POLICY

8.01 PURPOSE

8.02 GENERAL POLICY

Reference services include providing information from sources within and outside the Library's collections, reader's advisory service, and referral to libraries and agencies outside of the city when necessary. The Library's collection and resources are drawn upon to fill requests for information. Assistance is provided to the public on a first-come, first-served basis.

In each reference transaction, Library staff initiates and maintains a dialogue with individuals requesting service. The exchange of information related to each request enables staff to better serve the public by ensuring that staff completely understands the nature of the information requested and the individual understands the processes used to supply the information.

Reference service is provided in a timely manner. Whenever an individual requesting information provides a deadline, Library staff makes every attempt to meet it or explain to the individual why the deadline cannot be met. If a question cannot be answered after consulting relevant sources and subject specialists within the library, the customer will be referred to other agencies.

During busy periods, preference may be given to the customer in the Library over the customer on the telephone. The time available to assist any one customer is restricted by the number of customers waiting for help.

Medical and legal answers are given verbatim, citing the source, without interpretation.

No reverse directory information will be provided over the telephone.

8.04 BASIC SERVICE GUIDELINES

8.04.010 Medical Reference

Because Library staff members are not health care professionals, they cannot offer medical advice or an interpretation of medical information. Interpretation is defined as the explanation of what is not immediately plain, explicit, or unmistakable. Prognoses will not be read over the telephone.

- Staff will assist customers in the library to find information about a disease or medical condition in books, pamphlets, periodicals and electronic databases.
- Staff members may read a definition of a medical term over the telephone or description of a disease or condition from an available source. The source will be cited, and quoted verbatim. When the definition is difficult to

understand, staff will define terms used in the definition or description by using other sources, but will not give an interpretation of the term.

- Staff members may read brief information over the telephone about prescription drugs from the Physician's Desk Reference and other drug dictionaries when the name of the drug is given. The source will be cited and quoted verbatim with no interpretation. Terms used in the text will be defined by using another source. Staff will not identify a drug from a physical description, nor give recommended dosage.
- Staff members will advise customers to consult a medical specialist when additional information is needed; however, they will not recommend a specific physician.
- Staff members will refer customers to other health agencies in the area when the resources seem most appropriate to answer the customer's needs.
- Before or after a reference telephone transaction, the customer will be informed of the source of the information.

8.04.020 Legal Reference

Because library staff members are not attorneys they can not offer legal advice or any interpretation of the law or legal terms. Interpretation is defined as the explanation of what is not immediately plain, explicit, or unmistakable. Although staff members will be as helpful as possible in locating and providing necessary legal materials, it is the responsibility of the customer to determine what the law "means".

- Staff members may read over the telephone a definition found in a law dictionary.
- Staff members may assist customers in the use of legal materials, explaining their organization and format.
- Staff members will advise customers to consult an attorney when additional information is needed; however, they will not recommend a specific attorney.
- Staff members will refer customers to the Skagit County Law Library to research specific case law.

8.06 READER'S ADVISORY

Library staff members always enjoy the opportunity to advise both new and experienced readers regarding new or established works. Customers should not hesitate to call upon the readers' advisory skills of the Library staff when needing guidance about what to read next!

8.08 ADULT PROGRAMMING

Periodically the Reference staff prepares and presents programs for the general public. These programs deal with a broad variety of subjects and are intended to educate, entertain and inform adult customers of the Library and their families. Generally, no pre-registration is required and there is no admission fee. Staff will attempt to locate knowledgeable people in the community who will share their area of expertise with Library customers. Every program is free and open to the public. All subjects will be considered. Ideally, programs will be presented on a weekly basis.

Adopted by the Board of Trustees 3/22/2000