
Webinar Recording

- Recorded on February 10, 2026
- [Watch the Video](#)
- [ASPeN Event](#)

Purpose and Context

The session focused on identifying and addressing **policy-related barriers to accessibility in libraries**.

MSL Consultant Corey Sloan – Key Highlights

- **Why Policies Matter:**
 - Policies set expectations, ensure fairness, and maintain safety.
 - Must be **current, comprehensive, consistent, accessible, and legal**; review every 4 years.
- **Questions for Policy Review:**
 - What are the consequences?
 - Are they fair and enforceable?
- **Common Barriers:**
 - **Late Fees & Fines:**
 - Disproportionately impact low-income patrons, block access.
 - Fine revenue is rarely critical; eliminating fines improves access.
 - Strategies: automatic renewals, fine amnesty events, youth fine-free policies.
 - **Cardholder Policies:**
 - ID requirements exclude patrons without permanent addresses.
 - Solutions: limited use cards, partnerships with shelters.
 - **Behavior Policies:**
 - Avoid language that unintentionally discriminates (e.g., noise restrictions affecting disabilities).

- **Best Practices:**
 - Include ADA compliance statements.
 - Offer accommodations for programs and meeting rooms.
 - Service animal policies should clarify expectations.

Former Great Falls Public Library Director Suzi McIntyre – Key Highlights

- **Eliminating Policy Barriers Requires Intentionality:**
 - Libraries often operate on tradition, challenge norms through explicit conversations.
- **Building Open Culture:**
 - Define “fairness” and balance competing values (e.g., customer service vs. fiscal stewardship).
 - Conduct focus groups with underserved groups, review policies through multiple lenses.
- **Staff Training & Buy-In:**
 - Staff must understand policies and their impact.
 - Empower staff to make exceptions and lean toward “yes.”
- **Tough Decisions:**
 - Sleeping policy: prohibited for safety despite impact on unhoused patrons.
 - Displays: adopted “more speech is better”—celebrated multiple perspectives and religious holidays.
- **Practical Steps:**
 - Eliminate late fees.
 - Provide a wide range of programs and displays; invite community voices.
 - Build relationships through outreach and partnerships.

Chat Insights

- Many Montana libraries are **fine-free** and report positive outcomes.
- Creative card access solutions: limited-use cards, mailing postcards, shelter partnerships.
- Emphasis on **understanding patron perspectives** in policymaking.
- Sleeping policies vary; safety concerns drive restrictions.
- Displays can be contentious; strategies range from avoiding them to leaning into all topics.

Key Takeaways

- Policies should **reflect mission, community needs, and principles**.
- Eliminating fines and revising restrictive policies improves access.
- Eliminating barriers requires **intentional outreach and staff training**.
- Libraries must balance safety, fairness, and community expectations through transparent dialogue.

Resources

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- [MSL Learn| Lawful and Fair: Policy Development for Public Libraries](#)
 - [Webjunction: Eliminating Library Fines](#)

Questions?

[Corey Sloan](#), MSL Consultant