

GUIDELINES FOR RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

GOAL

To respond to the complaint in a way that will:

- * Acknowledge the right to complain
- * Show an effort to respond to the challenger's needs
- * Stay within school policies
- * Uphold the First and Fourth Amendment rights of all library users

BE PREPARED

- * Know and understand the U.S. and Oregon Constitutional principles involved
- * Know your library and school policies
- * Know what your responsibility is
- * Know whom to refer to; the appropriate forms, etc.
- * Remember that having a book (or other material) in the collection, or accessible through Internet or interlibrary loan, does not mean that you, the school

or

the library endorses it

- * Seek to understand why people complain about library materials or services
- * Seek to acknowledge what is offensive to ourselves and prepare ourselves to deal with it.

THINGS TO DO (if appropriate & possible)

- * Listen carefully to the complaint
- * Establish a common ground
- * Demonstrate respect for the challenger's values, beliefs, opinions
- * Treat the complaint seriously
- * Be polite - even in response to rudeness or attack
- * Suggest the consequences of granting government (the school district or the library) the right to censor. (complainers rarely consider that someone who would censor what they believe is appropriate for their child to read might take control).
- * Explain the school's complaint policy, procedure & process
- * Thank the person for expressing interest in the library or for being involved with their child's reading and use of the library
- * Provide information about next step available if not satisfactorily resolved

THINGS TO AVOID

- * Attack, intimidation, escalation
- * Defensiveness (words or body language)
- * Overreaction
- * Philosophical debate
- * Defense of literary quality (defend place in collection)
- * Quoting policy as the only response
- * Compromising library or school district policy or the principles of intellectual freedom upon which this country is based

REPORT CHALLENGES

Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse

To report formal challenges to library material at your library complete the [report challenges form](#) and mail it to:

Oregon State Library
c/o Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
250 Winter St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

OIFC Privacy Policy: Names of people, organizations, libraries, and towns identified in challenge reports are not published. Starting in 2007, the Title Index to Challenges will not publish the names of libraries where challenges occurred. The Annual Report identifies the type of library (school, academic, or public) where the challenge occurred. The Oregon State Library is a state agency and therefore subject to Public Records Laws as stated in Oregon Revised Statutes [Chapter 192—Records; Public Reports and Meetings](#).

OIFC will make one copy of your challenge report; black out any information identifying your library, staff, and community to protect your privacy; and send it to ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom with OIFC's Annual Report in December.

American Library Association
Office for Intellectual Freedom

Since 1990, the ALA [Office for Intellectual Freedom](#) has maintained a confidential database on [challenged materials](#). ALA collects information from two sources: media reports and reports submitted by individuals. All challenges are compiled into a database. Reports of challenges culled from media across the country are compiled in the bimonthly [Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom](#); those reports are then compiled in the [Banned Books Week Resource Guide](#). Challenges reported to the ALA by individuals are kept **confidential** and used for statistical purposes only. In these cases, ALA will release only the title of the book being challenged, the state, and the type of institution (school, public library). The name of the institution and its town will not be disclosed. A list of [most frequently challenge books](#) is compiled from these challenges for each annual [Banned Books Week](#).

To report a challenge, please submit an [Online Challenge Database Form](#). Alternately, you can print the [Challenge Database Form](#) (PDF), complete it, and fax it to the Office for Intellectual Freedom, at 312-280-4227.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Oregon Intellectual Freedom Clearinghouse
Katie Anderson
503-378-2528
katie.anderson@state.or.us

Oregon Library Association
Intellectual Freedom Committee
Candace Morgan
503-245-3868 (home, office)
503 – 701-2316
cd_df_morgan@msn.com

Oregon Association of School Libraries
Intellectual Freedom Committee
Leigh Morlock
lamorlock@hotmail.com

American Library Association
Office for Intellectual Freedom
Deborah Caldwell-Stone,
Deputy Director
800-545-2434, ext. 4221 or ext. 4223
Fax: 312-280-4227
dstone@ala.org, or at the Office for Intellectual Freedom, 800-545-2433, ext. 4223.

You are free to use this document for any non-commercial purpose. Please attribute it.

Candace Morgan (cd_df_morgan@msn.com) 10/2013