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# ALA American Library Association

## American Library Association Protocol for Monitoring and Responding to State and Local Library Crises

The American Library Association (ALA) has adopted a protocol to respond to library crises at the state and local level. The goal of ALA's involvement is to advance the advocacy efforts of the library and/or the appropriate state-level library organizations. ALA can only become involved when its efforts are welcomed by and coordinated with the library and/or the state-level library organization.

A "Crisis Team" of ALA staff members has been created to continuously monitor and coordinate responses to library crises including closures, position eliminations, catastrophic library fiscal crises situations, censorship and intellectual freedom issues, and other advocacy situations affecting libraries at the state and local level. The ALA Crisis Team is facilitated by the Office for Library Advocacy and works in close coordination with the Chapter Relations Office, the Governance Office, the Office for Government Relations, the Office for Intellectual Freedom, the Public Awareness Office, United for Libraries, and *American Libraries*. ALA Divisions are consulted as appropriate to the situation.

### Step 1: Identification

Identification of a crisis can occur in one of the following ways:

- Through routine monitoring of media coverage of library-related issues;
- Through ALA members or members of the library community bringing the matter to ALA's attention;
- Through ALA staff, including *American Libraries* reporters;
- Through state library agencies or state associations.

### Step 2: Strategy

The Crisis Team will initiate contact with appropriate state-level library organizations (including the president, chapter councilor and executive director, as well as the state library agency and the COSLA executive director), to gather facts and background information.

When contacted by library staff or an advocate at the local level, the Crisis Team will respond directly and contact the state level organization for background and consent, before contacting the local library director, trustees, Friends group, or other body legally responsible for library services to gather facts and background information.

### Step 3: Response

The Crisis Team will consult and strategize with contacts at the local level to determine the best method of response.

Written responses, including letters to decision-makers, or op-eds and letters to the editor are penned by the ALA President and respective ALA Division Presidents when appropriate (including local trustees and or Friends), to issue a national statement in response to the crisis.

The response will be disseminated through ALA media outlets including but not limited to, news releases, *AL Direct*, *American Libraries*, and *American Libraries Online*. It will also be posted on ALA and appropriate ALA Division websites,

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newsletters, discussion lists, and social media channels in order to maximize publicity.

Other types of response include consultation on implementing an advocacy plan, grassroots organizing, and employing other advocacy strategies, as well as resource sharing and peer-to-peer consultation.

#### **Step 4: Follow-Up**

The Crisis Team will continue to monitor the situation and update the ALA Board, ALA Council, and appropriate ALA Divisions, as well as appropriate parties at the state and local level, with any actions taken in support of the library or libraries in crisis. .

Established: 2010 by the Office for Library Advocacy

Updated: August 2016