

# **NEW BEDFORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

## **POLICY FOR REFERENCE SERVICES**

### **Introduction:**

Reference service involves identifying a person's information need and proceeding to fulfill it accurately, efficiently and pleasantly, using the resources available in the Library system, and including referral to resources in other libraries or agencies, if necessary.

### **SERVICE PRIORITIES**

- Reference service is provided by trained staff during all hours the Library is open and handled in order in which they are received with priority given to patrons on site.
- The New Bedford Free Public Library regards as valid every reference question asked by any patron of any age.
- All questions will be given equal consideration and each will be answered as accurately and completely as possible within a reasonable time limit.
- Every effort will be made to complete each reference transaction successfully, consulting with colleagues when necessary.
- Simultaneous requests will be managed at the librarian's discretion with regards to urgency and availability of staff resources.
- If the librarian cannot answer a request immediately, he or she will obtain contact information from the patron and see that the patron received a response within 24 hours.
- Requests from federal, state, or local government agencies have highest priority

### **SERVICE STANDARDS**

- All information requests are to be handled and if available, it is provided to patrons without making a judgment on its moral or aesthetic worth.
- No effort will be made to determine whether library users are entitled to library cards before reference service is given.
- The needs of every library patron will always be taken seriously and treated with respect and confidentiality.
- Requests submitted by patrons in the Library are given priority over telephone requests that are received at the same time.
- Librarians will rely upon information obtained from reputable sources in order to give the most accurate and authoritative answers to questions and the source of the answer will be cited.
- Neither the patron's nor the staff member's personal opinions or beliefs should influence the quality of service provided.
- Staff shall not offer their personal opinions on social issues, politics, religion, etc., to patrons.
- Reference staff will attempt to answer questions at the time the request is made and to work within the patron's time requirements. If necessary, staff will inform the patron that a longer response time is needed or that assistance should be sought from another library or agency.
- Telephone reference service should be used for providing short, factual information.
- Given the complexity of reference work, no definitive time limits per question can be set, rather the amount of time per query is best left to the judgement of the librarian.

Staff will not provide the following kinds of assistance, which are deemed to be beyond the scope of the Library's service responsibilities.

- Interpretation, advice, or personal recommendations in any area other than the use of Library resources. This includes, but is not limited to, legal, medical, or tax advice.
- Critiquing or editing patron documents, including resumes for job seekers.
- Completing forms (including online forms) for patrons or assisting in completing forms.
- Solving or troubleshooting problems with patron's personal computers or other electronic devices. (In such instances, staff is permitted to assist by attempting to locate relevant instructions and similar kinds of information for patrons).
- Translations will not be provided except in response to a patron's request for reference service when the patron does not speak English. This will only be provided if a person on staff with appropriate expertise is available. For all other translations, staff will refer patrons to other appropriate resources to obtain information regarding translators.

### **OBITUARY REQUESTS**

- A free 30-minute Quick Search to attempt to answer your questions about our special collections, area history, and obituaries (published in local newspapers 1792-present).
- Requests for copies of newspaper articles must be accompanied by specific dating. An unspecified span of time is outside of the reference services we can provide.
- Requests are answered in the order in which they are received. Please see below timeline for requests:
- Obituaries from 1829-1968 – 5-7 business days
- Obituaries from 1969 – Present – 3-5 business days

Our goal is to answer all questions as quickly as possible given the time and staffing available to us. For more extensive queries and requests, we will advise you as to whether the Library has the necessary materials for you to use, direct you to other sources of information, or to an Independent Researcher for further assistance. **Free obituary requests are limited to three (3) per year per person and a fee of \$5 will be assessed for each additional obituary request.** The library provides a limited amount of searching for persons seeking family and local history information through the Special Collections Department.

**Adopted by the Board of Library Trustees**

**September 17, 2015**

**Revised June 29, 2021**