

OCPL Central Library Security Report and Comprehensive Plan

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Executive Summary

- The top priority of OCPL is the safety of staff, contracted workers, and patrons, as ensuring their safety is essential to fulfilling OCPL's mission. Security incidents have doubled year over year from 2025 to 2026. While OCPL's baseline board policies are generally sufficient, the more immediate need is for clearer procedures, stronger training, greater accountability, and consistent implementation oversight.

Safety and Security Challenges

The Central Library has had a doubling of the number of recorded security incidents (filed in an Onondaga County incident report) over the prior year, having 28 from January to March 2026 and 14 during the same period of 2025. During this time, patron visits have increased by 20% over the prior year. While incidents are relatively uncommon, far under 1% of patrons have or cause an incident, the increased occurrences put everyone at greater risk. We have also seen an increase in overdoses, including on the 400-block of S. Salina St., particularly on the sidewalk in front of the Galleries and the Library.

These challenges are leading to an unsafe environment for staff and patrons. Our goal is a safe and accessible library for all. Achieving that requires clear patron expectations and staff who feel secure at work and are prepared to apply safety and security procedures consistently.

Presently, staff and contracted workers are not applying the policies and procedures consistently. Increased accountability needs to be implemented by branch managers and administrators for OCPL staff, following the normal coaching conversation, oral warning, and disciplinary action protocol. Discussions will be held the week of April 27th with Freeland and CET owners/managers on how to work with them on better implementation and accountability for their staff.

Where Current Implementation is Falling Short

Despite continued training, increased procedures on when to call 911 and to work with security and CET¹, weekly Central security staff and security meetings, and continuous

¹ Community Engagement Team; focus is deescalation and revarylationship building

discussions with library and contracted staff, implementation and awareness of our policies and procedures varies widely. Areas of greatest concern:

- Incident reviews indicate that 911 is not called in accordance with our 911 Procedures and Guidelines.
- Patrons who should not be allowed to enter the library due to their behavior manage to enter despite walking past security/CET.
- The Opioid/Crisis Response Team is not being utilized frequently enough, and not all staff, security, and CET members remember that they are an available resource.
- Appropriate management and administrators are not always told about incidents in a timely manner.
- Disciplinary action and reporting to our contracted companies when there are issues are not consistent.

Recommended Changes, with Board and County Assistance Noted

Change	In-Charge	Goal Date	Cost	Current Status	Goal Type	Partner
Trespass List with barring letters and photos	Becky	May 1, 2026 for all past barrings and then continually updated	-	Completed through 2024 barrings	Document	-
Walkie-Talkies for Security/CET/LIC ²	Becky with assistance from Chris Reidy	Freeland will be bringing their own walkie-talkies during the 90-day trial. We would like ours in place by the end of this time at the latest	Unknown	Awaiting recommendation from County	Facilities	County
2 nd permanent Freeland Guard, armed, located on first floor	Becky	In place, want to continue for 2027 budget year	Approximately \$125,000/year	In place	Security/Budget	County
Tracking of issues with staff, security, and CET implementing policies and procedures and where we need further	Admin, managers	Continuous, but meeting with Freeland & CET 4/27/26; County	-	Training managers on accountability has been ongoing	Staff	Freeland, CET, County Personnel, Union

² Librarian In Charge

<p>policies and procedures</p>											
<p>Facilities Changes: panic button door lock for front door, changing all staff doors to badge access only³, additional cameras, computer system that allows emergency notice to go to all staff, and a few additional door lock changes from the WPV walkthrough</p>	Becky		Budget dependent	Awaiting quotes; some were included in the 2026 NYS construction grant, which we are awaiting state approval of	-	Facilities	County, State				
<p>Facilities Change: Coverings on glass for offices and door into Galleries on 2 in case of active threat</p>	Becky		May 2026	Unknown	-	Facilities	Facilities				
<p>Facilities Change: Move teen area to 2nd floor for family-friendly floor. As families would only be on this floor, if lone adults come up, security and staff would</p>	Kim, Becky, Amanda		2027	Unknown. Construction grant eligible.	-	Facilities	County, State				

³ Construction grant for badge access to Community Room doors, both inside the library and on S. Salina Street

be aware to pay more attention to them									
Facilities Change: Shorter bookshelves on the 3 rd floor for better sightlines and to decrease hiding places	Kim, Becky, Amanda	2028	Unknown. Possibly construction grant eligible depending on the full scope of the project.	-					County
Update paging system to go through all Central staff phones as well as overhead speakers to hear throughout the building	Becky	ASAP	-		Working with County IT. There may be a firewall issue.	Facilities	Facilities		County IT
Clearer use of and focus on stats, including when incidents are occurring, what staffing is like, and whether weather or other events change things. Using this information for staff, security, and CET scheduling and locations	Kim, Becky	Continuous	-			Staffing			
Procedure: Trespass List Usage	Becky	May 2026	-				Policy		Board
Procedure: Debriefing	Becky, Security Committee,	May 31, 2026	-		General guidelines in place;		Procedure		

	Branch Managers			branch-specific plans in the work; training plan forthcoming	
Procedure: Pressing Charges on Patron	Becky, Security Committee	Draft: 5/7/26 for Security Committee	-	Draft in progress	Procedure
Procedure: Weapon and Potential Weapon	Becky, Security Committee	Draft: 5/7/26 for Security Committee	-	Draft in progress	Procedure
Training Plan	Becky, Member Services Staff	Draft: 5/15/26	Unknown, should fit in the County budget	2026 training plan complete, need additional trainings added on situational awareness and partner organizations such as the Opioid Response Team	Training CET, Freeland, community partners
Social Worker ⁴	Amanda	Proposal for 2027 Budget	Unknown	Draft in progress	Security/Budget Board, County

⁴ I spoke with multiple library directors including Rochester and Minneapolis, who both have the same Central library issues we have. They both said that the thing that has made the biggest difference and both partners to get a social worker through their respective County social services office because they deal with the overarching issues that frequently lead to incidents. We have a space this person could use on the first floor which would model how Rochester and Minneapolis do it. It has gone so well in Rochester that they are dedicating a floor to services like this. Further articles

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/diversity/odlos-blog/social-workers>

<https://www.ifla.org/news/social-workers-in-public-libraries-creating-powerful-community-connections/>

Partnerships

Organization	How we are currently connected	How to improve partnership
SPD	We work with them when we call 911, but do not have regular meetings.	Having regular meetings to coordinate with SPD and on best practices for incident response options. For these to occur, I need permission from the County to reach out and coordinate meetings.
Downtown Committee	Their ED used to be on our Board and is aware of the issues on S. Salina St.	While we partner with them for some things, we need to partner to focus on what is occurring on S. Salina Street and how we can all work together to improve the safety for all in the area. For these to occur, I need permission from the County to reach out and coordinate meetings.
The Galleries	We are in contact with the new manager, Kim, about the issues.	Coordination on finding out the best ways to clear those loitering in front of the building, door access, and basement access, which were brought up by the Union in the WPV assessment.
Opioid Response Team	Scott Parker and Central Manager Kim Leighton meet regularly.	We need to make sure staff and contracted workers are aware of when to call them.
HelioHealth	Visits the library and walks around at times to check on things. They also bring us Narcan.	We need to make this more regular if possible. Having them assist patrons will help relieve staff burden and

incidents related to mental health and substance use issues.

How should OCPL approach the balance between access, safety, consistency, and staff support

Urban libraries, including OCPL Central, are currently being asked to do a lot at once: remain open and welcoming to everyone, maintain safety, apply rules consistently, and support staff who are dealing with stress and burnout. Balance is about alignment and making sure we look at these items as interconnected, not as fighting against each other.

Access is a core value according to OCPL's Strategic Pathways and the [ALA Bill of Rights](#), particularly items V-VII⁵, and prioritizing safety is what makes access sustainable. That means keeping doors open as broadly as possible while clearly defining behaviors that aren't acceptable (e.g., harassment, violence). The focus shifts from who is allowed in to how people are expected to behave.

Consistency comes from clarity, training, and accountability, not rigidity. Policies should be simple, visible, and written in plain language. Consistency isn't just about rules; it's about how staff interpret and implement them. We need to invest in continued training on topics such as de-escalation, trauma-informed service, bias awareness for staff, security, and CET so that responses don't vary wildly from one staff member to another to reduce both patron confusion and staff stress. Holding staff accountable for implementing the training practices by management will also increase consistency.

Staff support is key, as without it, everything else breaks down. That includes:

- Adequate staffing levels so workers aren't isolated in difficult situations
- Access to social workers or partnerships with local agencies for patrons in crisis
- Clear escalation paths (when to involve supervisors or emergency services)
- Mental health support and time to decompress after incidents

Design matters more than it seems. Physical layout—sightlines, lighting, quiet vs. active zones—can prevent problems before they start. Similarly, programming (youth

⁵ V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

engagement, community events) can shift the library from a purely transactional space into a community hub, which tends to reduce conflict.

Community partnerships fill the gaps. Libraries can't solve housing instability, mental health crises, or substance use alone. Collaborating with local nonprofits, health departments, and outreach teams helps redirect complex needs to people trained to handle them.

In practice, the "balance" is less about trade-offs and more about alignment: clear expectations for behavior, consistent enforcement, and strong staff support systems make it possible to keep access broad without compromising safety.