Libraries & Public Health
Survey exploring roles of NH & VT Libraries
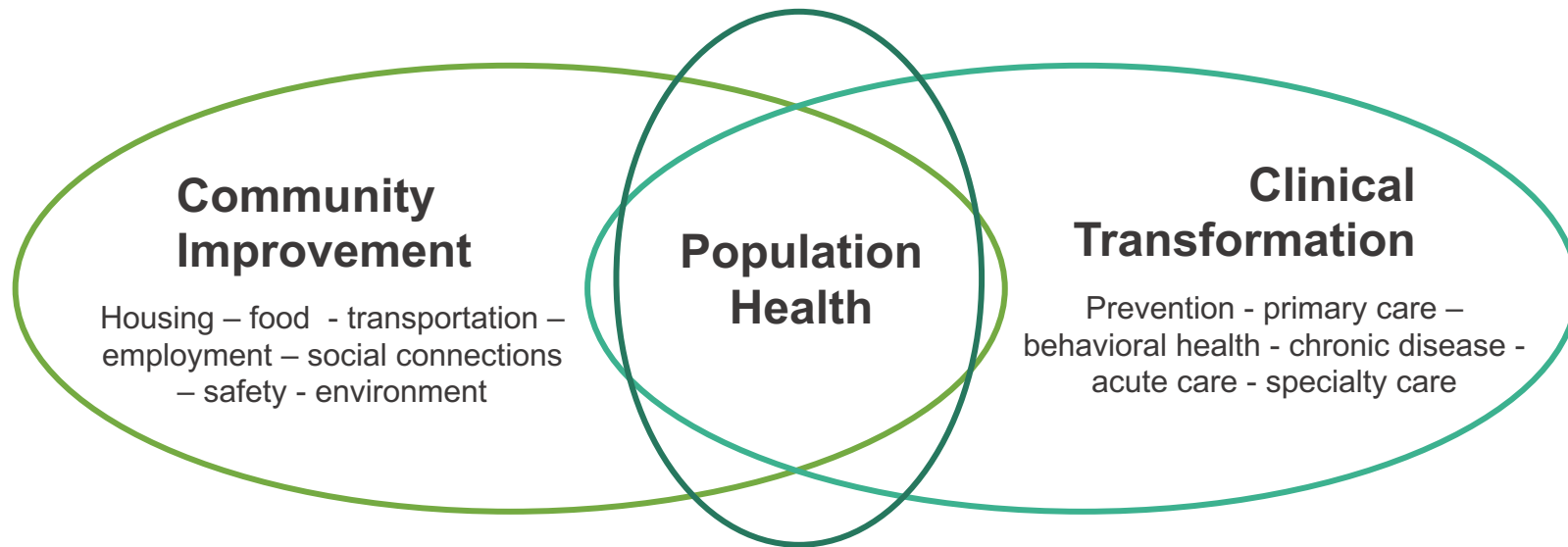
2024-5-15

Dartmouth Health

Slides 3-10   Survey background & methods

Slides 11-21 Survey outcomes

Project ECHO Program at DH
Homed in Population Health

Community Improvement

Housing – food - transportation – employment – social connections – safety - environment

Population Health

Clinical Transformation

Prevention - primary care – behavioral health - chronic disease - acute care - specialty care

Upstream factors inform ~80% of health

Downstream clinical care informs ~20% of health

Dartmouth Health ECHO Program

- Launched in August, 2019

- Forty-five ECHO Courses to date *(typically 6-12 sessions/course)*

  – Clinical courses – 21 *(Diverse topics: pain, palliative, COVID, MH, SUD, Integrative med, HIV)*

  – Community-focused health support courses- 24

    - Schools   7   *(Youth MH, Familial SUD, COVID safety)*
    - CHWs   4   *(Diverse SDoH, COVID, behavioral health topics)*
    - Employer ECHOs   3   *(COVID safety x2, workplace SUD)*
    - Town Health Officers   1   *(Hoarding and squalor)*
    - Broad audiences   9   *(Vaccine confidence, supporting youth, PDoH)*

DH ECHO attendance by librarians

- 41 unique librarians registered for DH ECHO in four years

  – 36 libraries (35 NH, 1 VT)

  – Many individuals attended more than one course

  – Frequently stood out for their engagement and offering astute perspectives

- ECHO courses with number of librarians in attendance

  o Science and Practices for Keeping Workers Safe   37
  o Responding to Youth in Distress   9
  o Recognizing & Responding to Youth in Distress   6
  o Promoting Vaccine Confidence COVID-19 & Beyond   5
  o Learning Together about COVID-19   2
  o Climate & Health   1

Librarian engagement inspired

Beyond Books: Public Libraries As Partners For Population Health

Anna U. Morgan, Roxanne Dupuis, Bernadette D'Alonzo, Andria Johnson, Amy Graves, Kiahana L. Brooks, Autumn McClintock, Heather Klusaritz, Hillary Bogner, … See all authors

- Literature review on libraries and population health

  – Supported impression of increasing engagement by librarians

  – Netted examples of prior library and health surveys (most notably a >100 question PA statewide survey)

- DH survey development

  – Goal: to better understand current roles and activities of libraries in supporting the health and social needs of patrons in order to best support them in this work

Library & health survey methods

- ECHO team drafted brief survey drawing from observations, literature review and existing surveys

- Review solicited from a small group of librarians who had attended ECHOs, revised with this input

- Survey tested on another small group of librarians, revised with this further input.

- Online survey link with background note emailed to
  - Librarians who had attended ECHO courses (#41)
  - VT Library Association Listserv directly (# unknown)
  - NH Library Association Listserv through a member (# unknown)

Key findings based on 71 responses

- Over 50% of respondents note patrons seeking information on accessing health or social services at least a few times a month or more frequently.

- Most feel at least moderately prepared to assist patrons in finding services, but many voiced a need for more organized access to resources on these topics.

- A large majority believe assisting patrons with health and social services is an appropriate role for librarians, at the same time many see the need for librarians to engage as a failure of governmental and health and social systems.

- There is considerable variability among libraries in the degree to which they are called on to serve as shelters for vulnerable people and/or unsupervised persons.

  – Most do not have specific programs or resources for either population though support for unsupervised children is more common

  – Those that do provide services cited a rich and variable array of supports

Key findings (continued)

- Virtually all responding libraries offer free broadband access with

  – All but 2 offering desktop computers, laptops or ipads for patrons to use.

  – 40 of 57 have a private space to potentially use for virtual online tele health.

- A majority of respondents expressed interest in virtual interactive education on these topics. Most frequent topics suggested:

  – Behavioral health (mental health, substance use, disabilities)

  – Social services (general, elderly, child & family, housing)

- Respondents offered that public health community could also assist

  – Compiling organized online and print resources on health & social support topics

  – Providing direct outreach services in libraries

Next steps

- Complete analysis of survey data

- Consider realistic supports that DH Pop Health/Project ECHO and other public health entities may be able to offer libraries

- Share outcomes and initial thoughts on supports with recruitment lists (ECHO librarians and NH and VT Library Associations

- Consider hosting a Library and Health ECHO as an opening to exploring collaborative work with libraries going forward
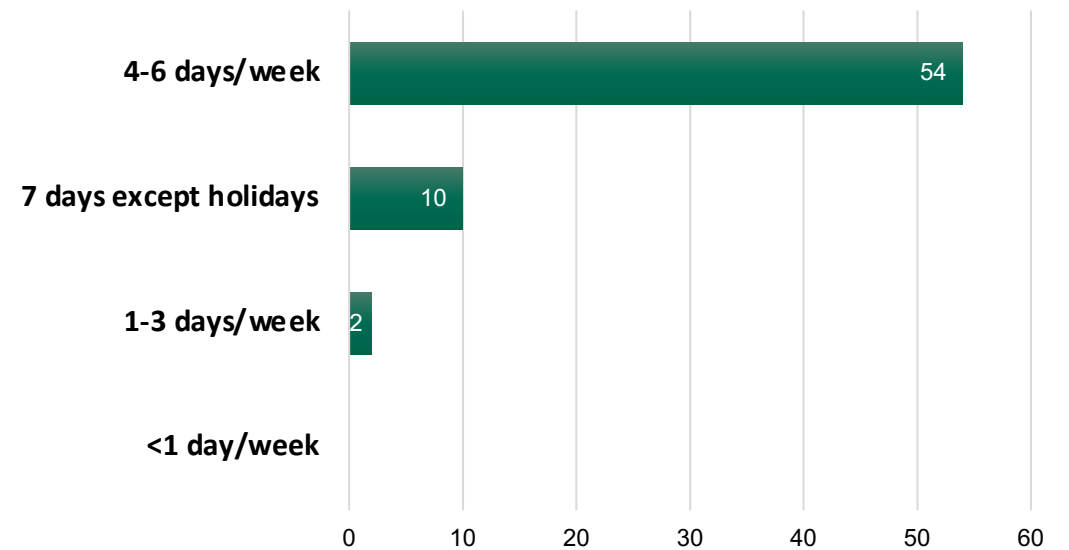
Library and Health Survey OUTCOMES

Respondents

Total number of respondents = 71

Roles (N= 66)

- Library director   35
- Assistant director   3
- Health sciences director   2
- Children/teen librarian   5
- Adult librarian   2
- Other   17
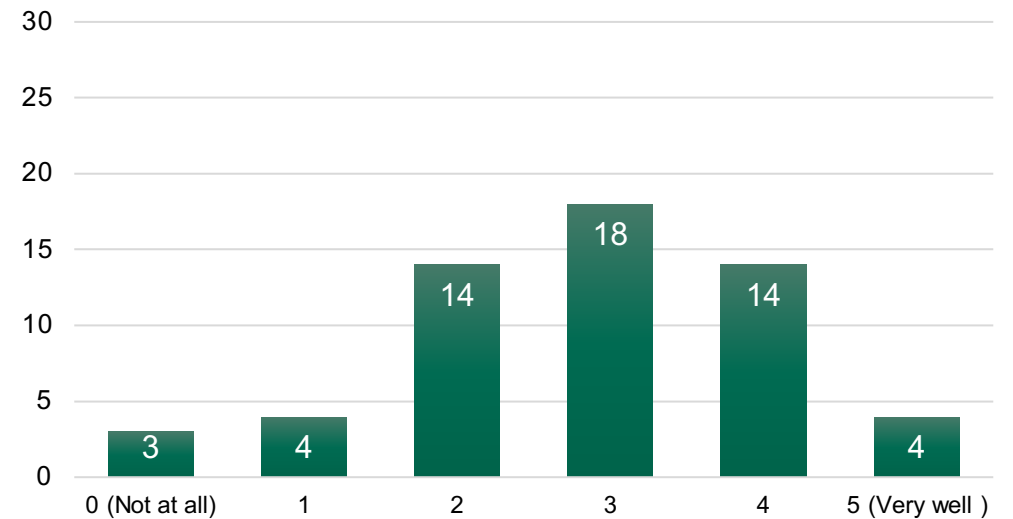
How often is your library open to the public?
N=66

Healthcare Services

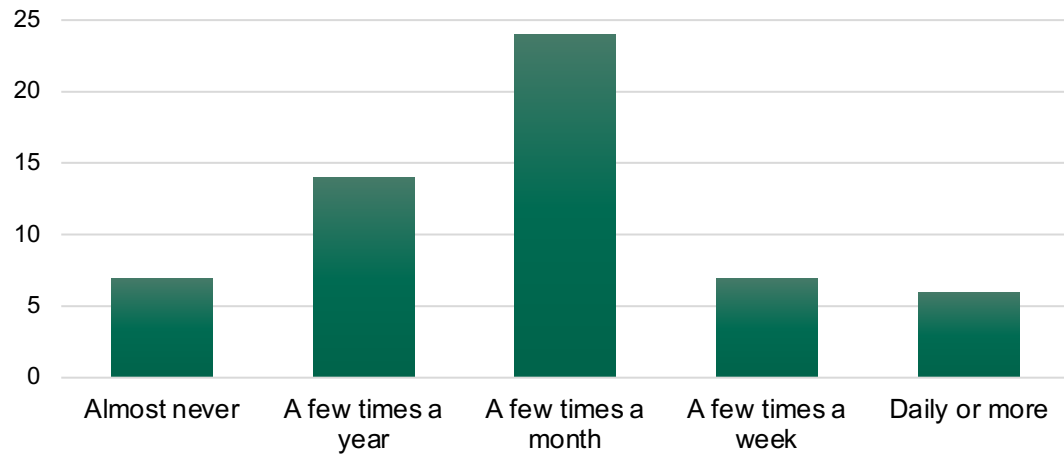How often do people come to your library seeking information on how to access health care services? N=66
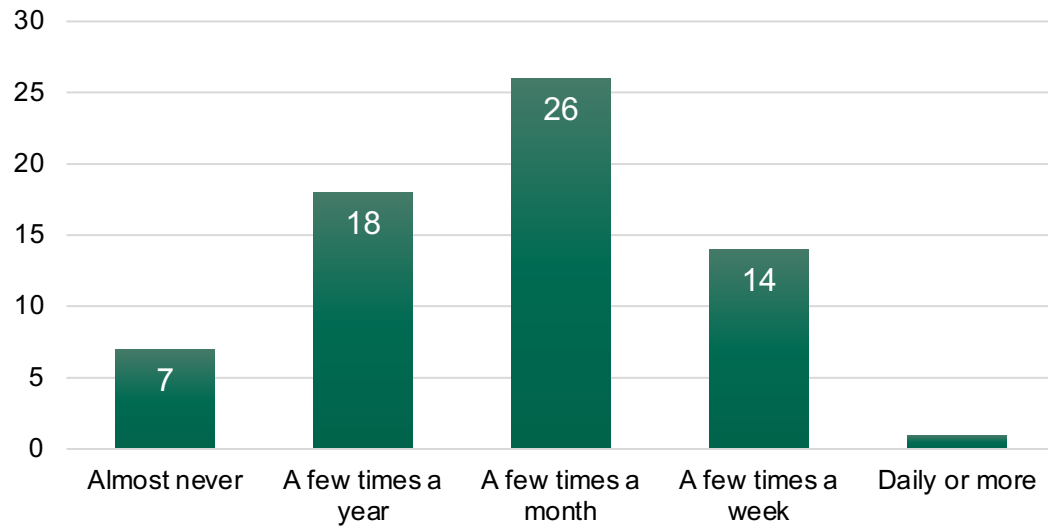
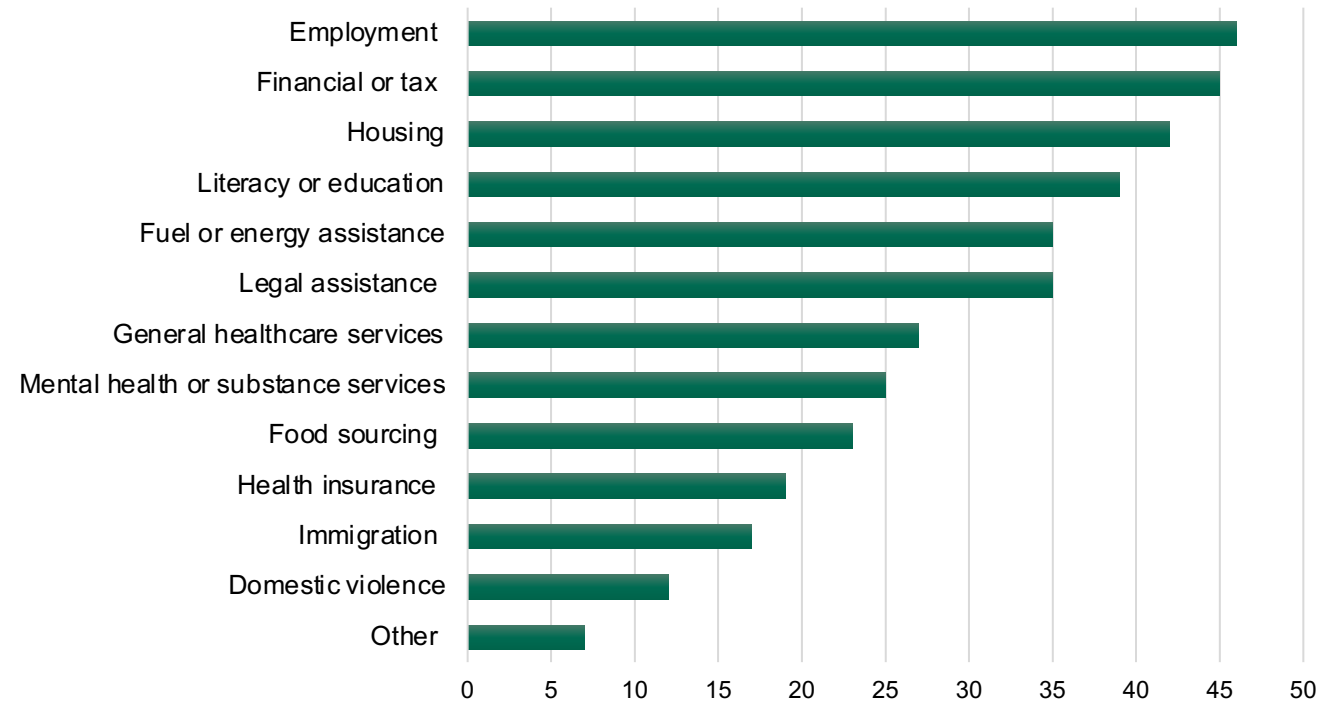How prepared do you feel to help people access health care services? N=57

Social Services

How often do people come into your library seeking information on **how to access social support services?**
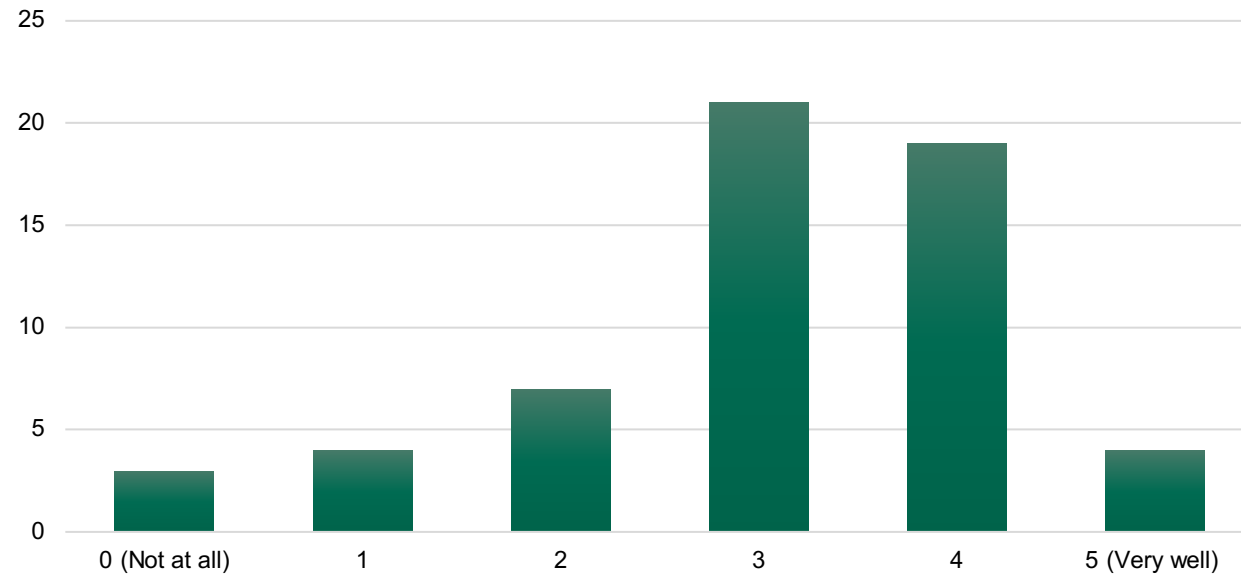**N=58**

What **specific topic areas** do you recall people seeking access to in the past year? (Check all that apply)
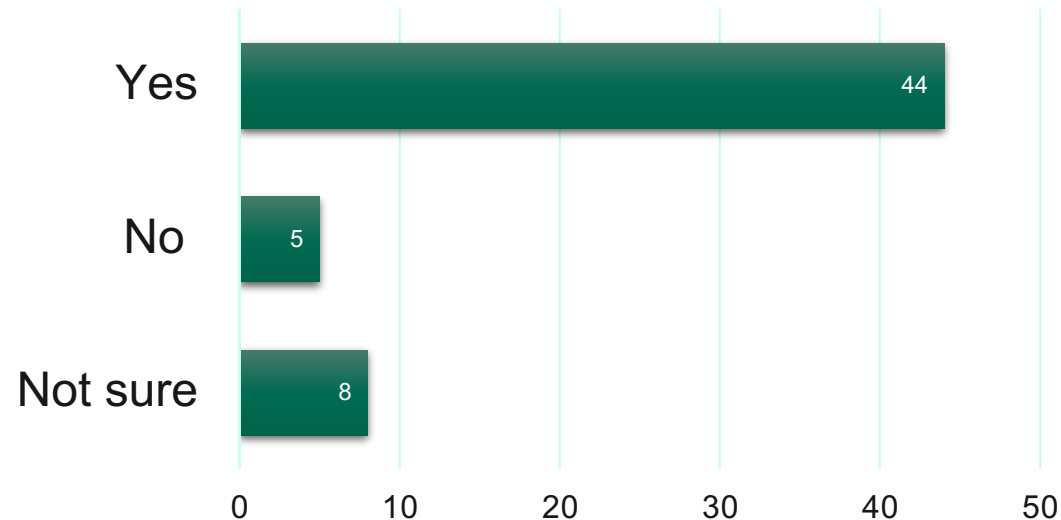
Social Services

How prepared do you feel overall to help people find information on how to access social or other support services? N=58

Dartmouth Health

Do you believe it is an appropriate role for libraries to serve as resources to help people identify health, social or support services?
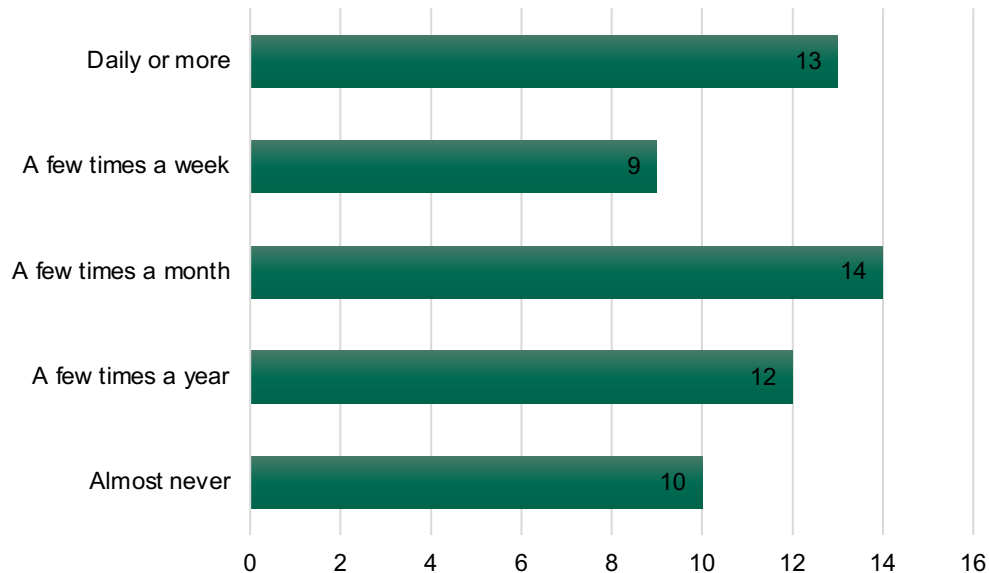

"I think librarians should be able to help patrons find resources. However, I think it is a political and social failing that we are the de facto resource for information on health and support services. It is because we do not have proper resources in place within the health, social, and support services fields that these patrons reach out to us instead of the former agencies…. I am proud that we offer these services but it is a clear indication that the American government is failing us as a society. "

Direct support for vulnerable people

How frequently do you encounter patrons who seem to be primarily **using the library to pass time in a sheltered**, safe, warm, or cool place due to insecure housing and/or lack of employment?

Category	Value
Daily or more	13
A few times a week	9
A few times a month	14
A few times a year	12
Almost never	10

Do you have any special programs or approaches to engage with patrons who are perceived to be using the library primarily for shelter?

| Category	Value
Yes	~7
No	~49
Not sure	~2
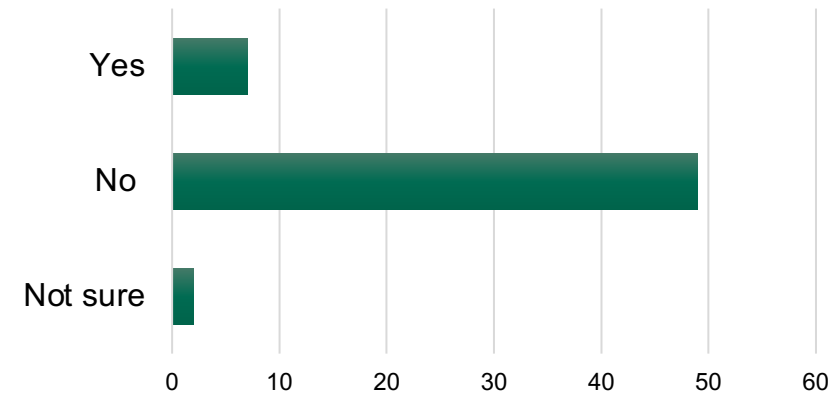
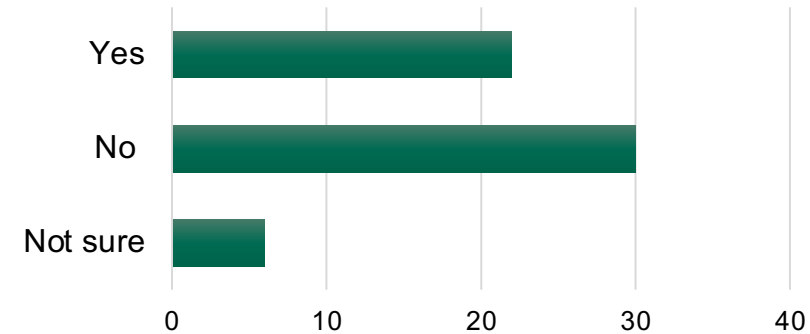Examples of special programs or services, if offered:
- Free coffee, tea, cocoa, water, small pantry
- Free hygiene packs, socks, blankets, tampons
- Free Narcan
- Team of outreach workers for social support/housing
- Entertainment options
- All trained in mental health first aide
- Offer respect & dignity!

Support for unsupervised children

How often do you perceive unsupervised children to be using the library not primarily for study or resources, but as a "safe place" to be after school or other times when their guardians are not available? N=57
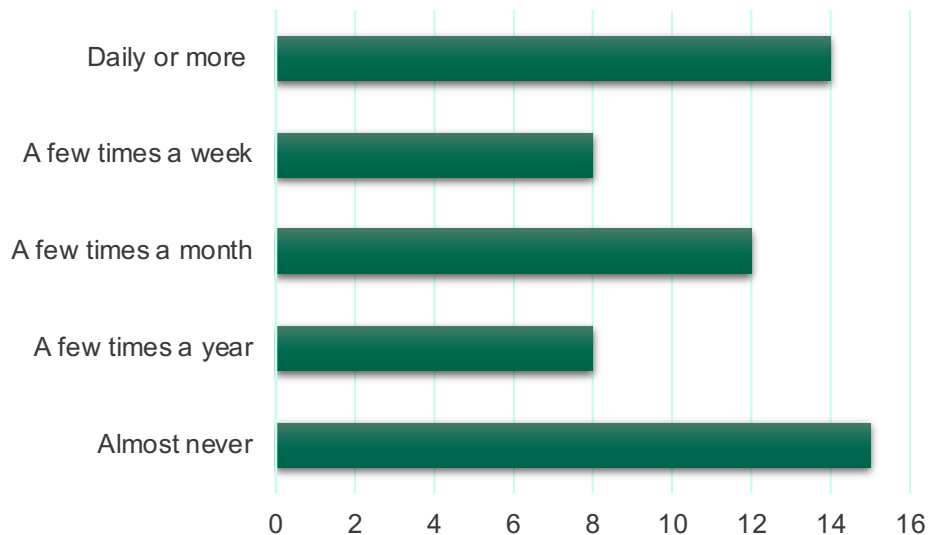
Do you have any special programs or approaches to support unsupervised children who use the library as a "safe place"?

Examples of special programs or services, if offered:
- Games, puzzles, coloring, crafts, other activities to use independently or in organized programs
- Comfortable furniture in special young people room
- Snacks
- Movies
- Reading materials
- Homework help
- Under a certain age (often < 8 or < 4th grade) not permitted, library seeks guardian

Broadband internet access

- 57/58 respondents offer free broadband internet access (1 without access)

- Devices available for patron use
  - Desktop computers - 50
  - Laptops – 35
  - Ipads – 7
  - Cell phone – 1
  - Patrons must use own device – 2

- 40 of 57 have a private space that could potentially be used for telehealth of other internet-based appointments.

Interest in education

Would an interactive virtual educational series with other librarians that explores library roles in public health and/or meeting the needs of socially vulnerable people be of interest to you?
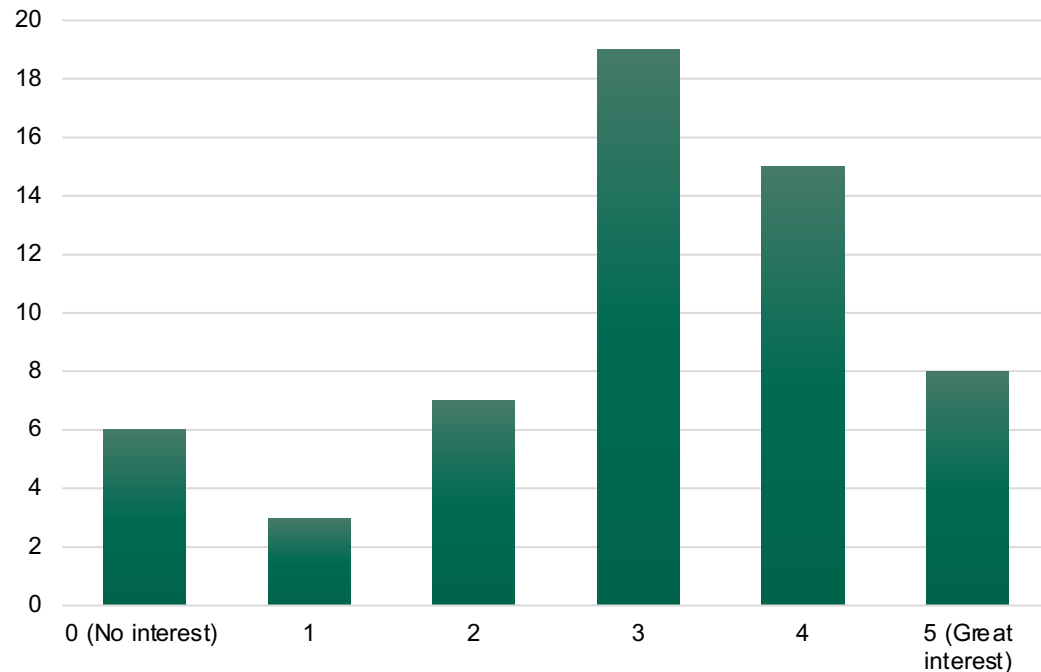
What topics in particular would be of interest?
- Behavioral health-related – 13
- Resources to address diverse social services issues - 14

Many noted need for interactive training and sharing between libraries

Open-ended question: How else can the public health community support libraries?

Key themes

- Organize and make available resources to assist libraries in helping patrons fine health care, mental health care and social services (online, print and other)

- Direct collaboration with libraries to provide outreach health, mental health and social services to patrons

- Work to improve our societal systems of healthcare, mental health care and social services

- Recognize librarians as the public heroes that they are in serving their communities!