



WELCOME to the

*Libraries as a Third Place ECHO:  
Navigating Community Health*

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## Series Learning Objectives

- Describe current and potential roles for libraries in supporting the health of their communities
- Nurture partnerships between libraries and community-based health professionals to better support the health needs of communities
- Support Librarians to provide programs to support individuals and groups with specific health or social needs

## Series Sessions

<b>Date</b>	<b>Session Title</b>
3/20/2025	<a href="#"><u>Libraries as a Third Place</u></a>
4/3/2025	Behavioral Health
4/10/2025**	Social Drivers of Health
5/1/2025	Child and Family Welfare
5/15/2025	Older Adults
5/29/2025	Telehealth and other Online Service Access
6/12/2025	Onsite Health and Social Services

# Today's Program

- Brief housekeeping
- Didactic: Libraries as a Third Place – Emma Parks
- Poll
- Discussion
- Summary
- Up Next

# What is a Third Place?

The concept was introduced by American sociologist .” Ray Oldenburg  
*Describes informal public gathering places that foster social interaction, community building,  
and a sense of belonging.*

1st place: Home

2nd place: work or school

3rd: community



# Parameters of a Third space

**Third spaces are casual and social environments that follow similar social “rules”**

- 1) Neutral Ground – People can come and go freely without obligation. Free of hierarchies and social status
- 2) Conversation as a Main Activity – Social interaction is central, often informal and engaging.
- 3) Accessibility & Accommodation – The space is welcoming, open, and easy to access.
- 4) Regulars & Newcomers – There is a core group of frequent visitors, but newcomers are also welcomed.
- 5) Low Cost or Free – Minimal financial barriers to participation.
- 6) Home Away from Home – People feel a sense of belonging and connection.

## How are libraries third spaces

*Neutral & Inclusive Space* – Open to everyone regardless of background, income, or status, fostering community connection.

*Encourages Social Interaction* – Offers book clubs, study groups, workshops, and community events that bring people together.

*Accessible/ Low cost* – Free access to books, technology, meeting spaces, and other resources makes it an inclusive gathering place.

*Supports Lifelong Learning* – Provides educational programs, research assistance, and digital literacy support beyond formal schooling.

*Comfortable & Safe Atmosphere* – A quiet, welcoming environment where people can work, relax, or connect without pressure to spend money.



## All together: Libraries as third place and healthcare

*Social Connection & Mental Well-being* – Libraries reduce isolation especially in rural communities by providing a welcoming space for social interaction, support groups, and community programs.

*Health Literacy & Resources* – Libraries offer reliable health information, workshops, and access to telehealth services, improving public health knowledge and decision-making.

*Equitable Access to Services* – Free access to computers, Wi-Fi, and community programs helps bridge health disparities by connecting individuals to job resources, healthcare information, and social services.