

## Addressing Book Bans and Appeals

### Basic Definitions:

- A **challenge** is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others.
- A **banning** is the removal of those materials.
- **Censorship** is a change in the access status of material, based on the content of the work and made by a governing authority or its representatives. Such changes include exclusion, restriction, removal, or age/grade level changes.
- **Intellectual freedom** is the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It provides for free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of a question, cause, or movement may be explored.

**Also consider:** Distribute (or have available) the [Library Bill of Rights \(link\)](#), the library's collection development and resource reconsideration policy, and open-meeting procedures.

### Talking Points:

Young people deserve to see themselves reflected in a library's books.

Parents can make their own personal decisions about what their child(ren) can read and what beliefs they support

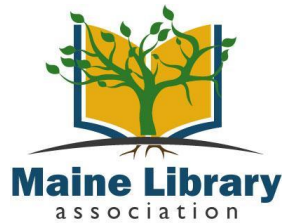
Parents have the right to guide their children's reading, but they should not be making decisions for other families' children. Specifically, a small group of parents should not dictate what books other people's children are allowed to read.

Books are tools for understanding complex issues. Limiting young people's access to books does not protect them from life's complex and challenging issues.

### Q&A

#### **What if someone says that children are too young to begin reading a book that addresses sexually explicit topics?**

Recognize that there will be disagreements over certain content. Everyone has a right to their opinion. However, individuals should not be making decisions for other readers or for other parents about what is appropriate.



Services, materials, and facilities that fulfill the needs and interests of library users at different stages in their personal development are a necessary part of providing library services and should be determined on an individual basis.

Reading materials available in the library are available to students for personal selection; they are not required books. Banning these materials will remove access for all members of the community.

**Why can't adults tell the librarian what materials youth shouldn't have access to?**

Like adults, children and teens have the right to find the information they choose. Libraries have a responsibility to provide information for a wide variety of users. If you are a parent or guardian, you have the right and responsibility to make decisions about what materials are suitable for your own family. No one has the right to make rules restricting what other people use, or to make decisions for other families.

**What if someone argues that they don't want their children being taught political views that they find objectionable, such as critical race theory?**

Librarians are professionals who are trained to not impose their own thoughts and opinions on which ideas are right, but to make knowledge and ideas available so that people have the freedom to choose what to read. Further, librarians and educators respect the rights of parents to decide which book their children are exposed to. They work closely with parents to help them decide the best books for their children. Libraries provide access to books that offer teachable moments for readers of all ages and expand our understanding of people with different backgrounds, ideas, and beliefs.

**How are libraries different from movie theaters or bookstores, which often have restrictions for children and teens?**

You have probably used movie guidelines such as G, PG and PG-13. These standards are developed by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), a private institution. Other organizations also provide movie guidelines. You may be aware of recommendations from parenting resources or from your pediatrician. Librarians can help you find movies that fit your family. We may use information from a variety of sources, including MPAA, but we will find other information for you as needed. As public institutions, libraries cannot discriminate based on origin, age, background or views. Retail stores and theaters are businesses that may be required to — or can choose to — apply restrictions.

Sources:

<https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/youthresourcesFAQ>



**Maine Library**  
association

<https://uniteagainstbookbans.org/toolkit/#talking-points>