

Library Violence and Safety:

*Building Resiliency in a
Complex World and Workplace*

*Prepared for members and guests of the
Ex Libris Association – November 20, 2025*

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WELCOME!

About this webinar....

- Introductions and Self-Care
- What you shared
- Who is PAVE Prevention
- What we're experiencing/noticing
- The results so far
- Discussion/Q and A
- Commitment to **Action!**

While we're assembling.....

*If you could rename a “library” to describe its **contemporary** function, what would you call it?*

What You Shared in the Survey

- Mixture of small communities, suburban and rural locations – ON, NS, AB
- Generous, pragmatic, resourceful, methodical; systems and policies
- Prevention vs. reaction mindset
- Titles reflect expanded scope of safety responsibility

Q. 1 Methods & Approaches

- ✓ Vigilance; frequent reminders; tools (e.g., panic alarm)
- ✓ Clear procedures
- ✓ Leadership and frontline teamwork
- ✓ Emphasis on welcoming “whole community” (sets up trust); and meeting people where they are (“care ethic”)
- ✓ Encourage support from agency professionals
- ✓ Code of conduct/empowering staff

Q. 1 Methods & Approaches (cont'd)

- ✓ Self-care/recovery from traumatic incidents (small town)
- ✓ Installing a camera (optics put patrons at ease)
- ✓ De-escalation, safe distancing techniques; mental health crisis training
- ✓ Incident reports; communication plan; post-incident follow up (1:1); dedicated teams as responders (community connections staff and managers)

Q. 2 Resourcing the Supports

- ✓ Partnerships with municipal and community organizations; free training
- ✓ Professional development investments
- ✓ Soliciting the community directly
- ✓ Online courses, Staff Development Days, Niche Academy
- ✓ Reallocation of existing staff budgets for “wellbeing and community connections” positions

Q. 3 Advice to Sector

- ✓ Stay vigilant; defer to professional supports; listen!
- ✓ Develop a “**culture** where safety is everyone’s responsibility...”
- ✓ Build relationships on community members’ terms
- ✓ Clear **boundary setting** with patrons; set and implement policies
- ✓ Embrace awkward conversations; expect that people will “freak out with what is on our shelves”
- ✓ Build staff confidence for decision-making, and implications
- ✓ Ensure all **stakeholders** - “government, community members, and partners” are at the table and work together to find solutions

- . Who is “PAVE” (Proactive Anti-Violence Education)?
- . What informs our approach, and why?
- . The roots of our experiences and commitment

ABOUT Proactive Anti-Violence Education ("PAVE") Prevention Inc.

PAVE Prevention is a social enterprise dedicated to *shifting the culture of violence* in workplaces.

We believe that by empowering the individual, focusing on human development, and creating more equitable and violence-resistant workspaces, we can disrupt the domino effect of workplace violence and create safer communities.

PAVE TEAM



Arlene Limas, OLY
(She/Her)

Founder & CEO



Jennifer Cusentino
(She/Her)

Director of Business
Development &
Operations



Federica Lacava
(She/Her)

Director of
Partnerships & Grants



Heather Turnbull
(She/Her)

Country Manager;
Strategic Advisor



Dr. Julie Harmon
(She/Her)

Learning &
Development Advisor

WHAT BRINGS PAVE PREVENTION TO THIS WORK....

We are a human safety skills consultancy driven to support cultures where everyone who aspires to perform their best, *can do so...*

In the Field



In the Boardroom

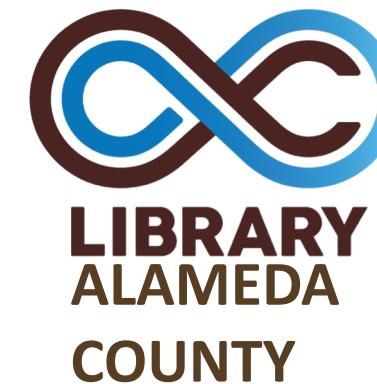


In Community



...within an environment free of aggressive, threatening, and violent behavior.

PAVE CLIENTS AND PARTNERS



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



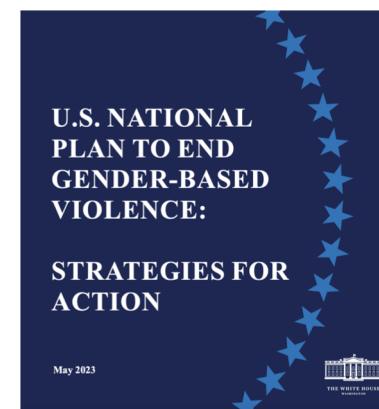
MECHANICS'
INSTITUTE
Since 1854



SCHOOL OF
HOSPITALITY AND
TOURISM MANAGEMENT
Spears School of Business



EVANSTON
PUBLIC
LIBRARY





According to the U.S. Surgeon General's Workplace Mental Health & Well-Being



Equal Employment Opportunity Commission



Occupational Safety & Health Administration



Center for Disease Control (CDC)



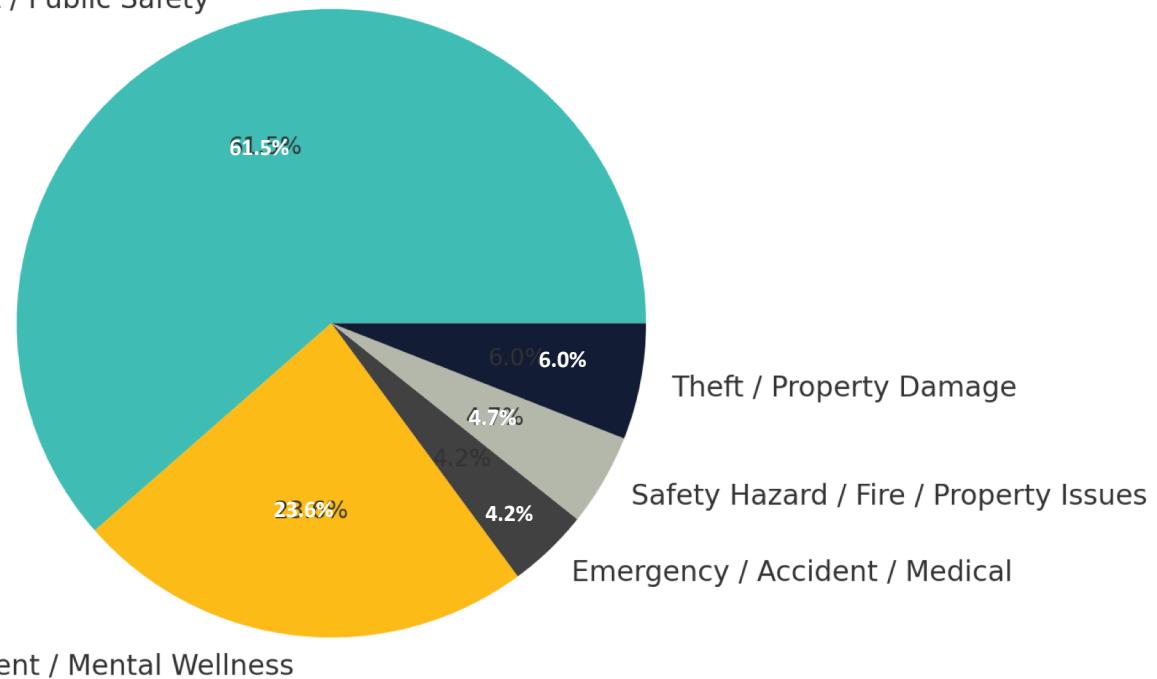
International
Labour
Organization

U.S. LIBRARY INCIDENTS

PAVE Prevention Clients 2024-2025

Incident Totals By Category

Disorderly Conduct / Public Safety



Category	Total
Disorderly Conduct / Public Safety	2,437
Behavior / Harassment / Mental Wellness	937
Emergency / Accident / Medical	166
Safety Hazard / Fire / Property Issues	188
Theft / Property Damage	237
Grand Total	3,965

‘Frontline’ Experiences

- 28 cohorts; 1200+ participants
- **24 Library cohorts, 660 participants**
- 44 branches/locations; 65% urban, 35% rural
- Proud Boys, Amendment Auditors, Racialized violence (vulnerable patrons), book banners

*Urban Library Trauma Study:

- . 68.5% of urban PL staff reported experiencing violent or aggressive behavior
- . 22% reported experiencing *similar behavior from co-workers*

*Source: Library Worker Support Network (LWSN):
libraryworkersupport.org

*Urban Library Trauma Study:

- . 83% reported receiving colleague support, but *many felt neglected or unsupported by library administration*

*Source: Library Worker Support Network (LWSN):
libraryworkersupport.org

The Macro View

- *Space* – purposeful design and navigation
- Cocktail of the aggrieved and aggressed, fueled by **deprivation, desperation, and entitlement**
- *Unresolved conflict* from pandemic lockdown, general incivility (absence of consequences)

The Macro View (cont'd)

- Burden of **maintaining public forum** for free speech, democracy (Met Lib Conference, Oct. 2025)
- Weary but digging in (introverts and empaths): upholding DEIB
- ***"We didn't sign up for this"***
- Academic preparedness lacking (safety training needed in MLS core curriculum)
- Remarkably resilient ("The Librarians")

DELIVERING HUMAN SAFETY SKILLS:

PAVE's Proven Model

HOLISTIC APPROACH

Addressing violent events *before, during, and after* they occur creates healthier, more inclusive workplaces.

1

MEASUREMENT

Capturing and evaluating people's perceptions of their workplace (e.g., proprietary assessment tools) creates trusting learning environments.

2

TRAUMA-INFORMED

PAVE's protocols equip trainers with curriculum that is anti-oppressive, anti-racist, and intersectional.

3

CUSTOMIZED CONTENT

Addressing clients' needs with real life scenarios and flexible delivery.

4

SIX DIMENSIONS OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED LIBRARY

Safety



Ensuring physical and emotional safety.

Trustworthiness/ Transparency



Decisions are made with transparency, with a goal of building and maintaining trust for all.

Peer Support



Utilizing their stories and lived experience to promote healing.

Collaboration / Mutuality



Everyone has a role to play in the healing process.

Empowerment, Voice & Choice



Individuals' strengths are recognized, built on, and validated.

Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues



Actively moving past stereotypes and biases, offering inclusive services.

SPECTRUM OF SITUATIONAL AWARENESS AND RESPONSE

“What’s Going On?”

“How am I Feeling About It?”



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Selected Resources

- **M.E.A.L. Report (2024) - pdf**
- **Library Worker Support Network
(libraryworkersupport.org)**
- ***Library Journal* Summit (FAQs)- pdf**



Alameda County Library and PAVE Prevention (3-year project)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pE60pqTYEv4>



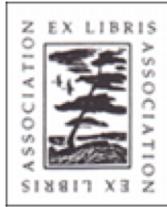
MACRO (Mobile Assistance Community Responders of Oakland) and PAVE Prevention (ongoing project)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qnN1ALIRu8>

<https://www.ktvu.com/news/macro-growing-ahead-of-busy-summer-in-oakland>

A photograph of a group of people in a workshop or classroom setting. In the foreground, a person with curly hair and glasses is gesturing with their hands while speaking. Behind them, several other people are visible, some with their hands raised in a Q&A format. The background shows a window with a view of a city skyline.

Q & A / Calls to Action



Thank You!

Let's keep in conversation:

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*See you at OLA Super Conference 2026:
“WE PERSIST” - Jan. 28th-31st in Toronto!*