

**ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY**  
PROPOSAL TO THE INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM AND LIBRARY SERVICES  
ACTIVATING COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES USING MUSEUMS/LIBRARIES AS ASSETS  
NARRATIVE

**Statement of Need—Social Worker in the Library**

The Pratt Library proposes a program that will bring social worker services to Pratt branch locations. The initiative, Social Worker in the Library, addresses the funding initiative challenge by identifying the way to best serve the community: Providing access to social services in library buildings. The Pratt Library will meet the challenge by gathering resources, forming partnerships and executing a carefully planned and clearly defined program.

In year one, Social Worker in the Library will train librarians in how to handle customers' social service needs, place six graduate students from the University of Maryland's School of Social Work in three Pratt Library branches, and provide programs that address social services needs for customers. This effort will continue in year two, when a full-time social worker dividing time between three additional Pratt Library branches will be added.

Social Worker in the Library will prepare library staff to better handle crisis situations and convert the Library's existing patchwork of partnerships and programs to a consistent array of services.

Traditionally, people visited public libraries to check out books and materials and to access information. During the past 20 years, however, the community's needs shifted to include information about and access to a wide range of social services. A 2012 Pew Research Center study described the Pratt Library's situation:

*Due partly to their role as society's default provider of computer and Internet access, today's urban libraries help residents—including those with limited incomes and educations—find jobs, obtain health information, and connect to government services and benefits. In so doing, the institutions are fulfilling what is sometimes called their "shadow mandate," supporting and complementing the work of other public agencies.<sup>1</sup>*

As a key community information center, the Pratt is challenged to appropriately assist customers. Many of the City's most needy residents spend their days in the Library. Some bring their questions about and need for social services directly to librarians, and others say little but their need is apparent to the library staff they get to know and trust through daily interaction. While friendly and committed Pratt people offer a wealth of information about life skills, books and reading, job training, educational goals, and personal interests, librarians are not trained in the provision of social services.

**Building Upon Previous Work**

There are several models nationally for a social work in urban public libraries. The San Francisco, Denver and Washington, D.C. public library systems all employ social workers. These large public library systems serve diverse urban populations and are similar to the Pratt in size and scope. Each system uses a slightly different model and all have found that offering social services has positive outcomes for customers.

The San Francisco Public Library was the first in the U.S. to employ a social worker. Pratt Innovation Team members—the Library staff who worked to develop Social Worker in the Library—spoke with SFPL's Social Worker Leah Esguerra, Denver's Elissa Hardy and Washington D.C.'s Jean Badalamenti. All three women

reported success, measuring impact by fewer incidents of arguments or violence, fewer customer evictions from the library and success stories of customers finding housing or addressing mental health and addiction issues.

The Social Worker in the Library concept is still in early stages, and representatives from all libraries report that their work continues to shift and grow along with community needs. All library-based social workers developed policies to support comfortable use of shared public space by all community members.

### **Community Improvement Opportunity**

Many Pratt Library customers face a combination of difficult problems. Poverty, food insecurity/hunger, housing insecurity/ homelessness, drug abuse and unemployment are some of the issues Library customer must confront. Poverty is one of the most pervasive and intractable problems in Baltimore. “Over the past 25 years, the city has rarely seen less than one-fifth of its residents living below the poverty level. That figure is well above the nation’s 16% rate, or Maryland’s 10% figure.”<sup>2</sup> More than 80% of Baltimore City school students live in low income households.<sup>3</sup>

Hunger and homelessness are also challenges for many in Baltimore. In 2014, the Feeding America organization found that 23 percent of the City’s population lacks access to enough food for a healthy, active life at any given time.<sup>4</sup> Many food insecure families are not eligible for government food subsidies. According to Health Care for the Homeless 2017 data, at least 3,000 people each night and 30,000 people annually are homeless. These averages are compiled from information in a bi-annual census report, emergency and transitional shelter data and records of those who were turned away from shelters.<sup>5</sup>

Baltimore City is experiencing a large increase in the number of deaths related to opioid drug addiction. Deaths from drug and alcohol intoxication in Baltimore City rose to 290 in the first six months of 2016.<sup>6</sup> These deaths are a measurable sign of the deep and widespread drug abuse in Baltimore City. Unemployment is sometimes the cause and sometimes the effect of the challenges listed above. The impact of unemployment (Baltimore’s unemployment rate hovers at about 6 percent according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics)<sup>7</sup> is greater for low wage workers, the poor and the homeless.<sup>8</sup>

### **Project Impetus**

Social Worker in the Library was developed by the Pratt’s Best Practices Group/Innovation Team. This group is composed of staff from all locations and operational areas of the Library. The impetus, research and planning for Social Worker in the Library came from this group of forward-thinking librarians and staff. Beginning in mid-2016 and in concert with the Library’s Fiscal Year 2016-19 Strategic Plan, the Innovation Team began research into the role of social services in the public library. The effort was in response to staff requests and similar successful initiatives at large urban public libraries in cities around the U.S.

The Innovation Team’s research revealed three models of service: Customer contact (the social worker spends significant time on the library floor interacting with individual customers), program outreach (the social worker spends significant time identifying partnerships and programs and bringing resources to the library) and hybrid program (social worker divides time between individual customer service and program development). The Team recommended the hybrid program, and the Pratt’s Social Worker in the Library project was built on that model.

### **Involving Non-Traditional Constituencies**

The Pratt Library is similar to other large U.S. urban public libraries in that customer service is shifting from transactions—checking out books and materials—to interactions and experiences. The March 2016 IMLS-funded report, Core Customer Intelligence Public Library Reach, Relevance and Resilience, shared market segmentation research from ten public library systems across the U.S. The study focused on core consumers—the 20 percent of cardholders who check out the most physical materials—and concluded that core customers aren't found in any one segment of the population but occur across all lines, reflecting the diversity of their communities.<sup>9</sup>

Certainly this is the case in Baltimore, where core customer characteristics and behaviors vary widely across the 22 neighborhoods that are home to Library branches. While the constituency served by Social Worker in the Library would have been considered non-traditional in decades past, this customer group has been growing in size for more than 20 years and was formally recognized by the American Library Association in 1996 when the Hunger, Homelessness and Poverty Task Force was formed.

The intimate relationship between homelessness and mental illness is well-established. Almost all psychiatric conditions are over-represented in homeless populations. The transition from inpatient to outpatient psychiatric treatment that began in the 1960s, including the closure of state-run psychiatric hospitals, may contribute to the prevalence of mental illness among the homeless. Today, adjusting for changes in population size, U.S. state mental hospitals house only about 10 percent the number of patients they once did.<sup>10</sup> The Pratt Library serves a large number of people who are homeless or are in need of other social services each day, and will seek customer input as Social Worker in the Library programs are planned.

As the program grows and increasing numbers of Pratt librarians receive training, staff will become voices for support and change in Baltimore and with City and State government.

### **Impact—Social Worker in the Library**

Social Worker in the Library will contribute to the long-term health of the Baltimore metro area by connecting social services to the people that need them most at a place they already spend time, the public library. The project will provide much-needed services to low-income Baltimoreans in communities throughout the city, thereby helping stabilize neighborhoods.

Social Worker in the Library will impact Baltimore in a positive way by connecting people who need support coping with hunger, homelessness, mental illness and/or joblessness with resources that encourage self-sufficiency. Lack of information, access to technology, transportation and simply feeling overwhelmed are all barriers for Pratt Library customers who need social services. Social Worker in the Library, a model with proven effectiveness in other large urban libraries, will meet those customers where they are with warmth, compassion and practicality.

All four components of the two year Social Worker in the Library project—training for staff, social work interns in the branches, full-time social worker and targeted programs for customers—will address the growing

need for human services programs in Baltimore. Like all Pratt Library programs, Social Worker in the Library is about expanding access to information, services and opportunities for underserved communities.

### **Community Involvement**

The Pratt Library has offered free educational and enrichment programs for most of its 130-year history. Pratt programs are well known and widely respected in the community. Programs and partnerships become stronger each year, and visibility has increased along with participation. The Library's FY2017-19 Strategic Plan emphasizes partnership and outreach, both of which are key elements of Social Worker in the Library. Several public listening sessions were held in early 2016 in locations around the city as the Strategic Plan was being developed, and additional public listening sessions to gain input on Pratt Library operations and programs were held on March 28, 29 and April 1, 2017. Additional input is being gathered through an online survey.

Community involvement is a hallmark of the Pratt Library's strategy and programs. The Pratt Library has a long track record of partnership with a host of community organizations. Just a few examples include Family Literacy Coalition, Family League of Baltimore City, Baltimore City Health Department Bureau of Maternal and Child Health (B'more for Healthy Babies), Baltimore City Public Schools Office of Early Learning, Baltimore Reads, Baltimore Infants and Toddlers Program of the Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore City Head Start/Early Head Start, Judy Centers, Raising A Reader, Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program of the Baltimore City Health Department, Baltimore Early Childhood Advisory Council, Baltimore Office of the Mayor, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Development, Maryland Early Childhood Advisory Council and the Maryland Library Association. As noted, Social Worker in the Library will be offered through a partnership with the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

### **Creating Community Dialogue and Narratives**

The Pratt Library enjoys strong goodwill among community members. From a local newspaper's Best Librarian award to the American Library Association's Exemplary Digital Reference Services Award to Tech Logic Corporation's People First award (for demonstrating exemplary leadership during Baltimore's unrest of April 2015), the Pratt's commitment to patron service is widely recognized. The City of Baltimore Citizen Survey, conducted annually by the independent Melior Group, reports that libraries, along with fire protection and EMS/ambulance services receive the highest resident satisfaction ratings.

As a City Agency, the Pratt has strong relationships with civic leadership. Collaboration with the Mayor's Office has never been stronger; Mayor Catherine Pugh recently visited the Central Library for a tour and is a champion of the Pratt's new Mobile Job Center, a sophisticated mobile workforce development unit that will offer computer access, one-on-one training and job application assistance.

The Pratt's Central Library also serves as the Maryland State Library Resource Center (SLRC). Working with libraries across the state, SLRC provides cooperative, cost effective, resources and services for Maryland libraries and their customers. Librarians proudly serve Baltimore City residents while providing support to all libraries in the state.

The Pratt will leverage this goodwill with the public and local government representatives to generate support for the continued evolution of the Library to a trusted place for community gathering and dialogue. The Pratt has a renewed commitment to making the most of 22 brick-and-mortar buildings; using spaces to foster social well-being and community development.

### **Performance Goals**

Social Worker in the Library's performance goals support the Pratt Library's vision and goals as described in the FY17-19 Strategic Plan. The Library's vision for the future includes:

*The best information about life skills, books and reading, job training, educational goals, and personal interests is at the fingertips of a friendly and committed staff. Staff put skills into practice to create solutions and find answers for the public and for library colleagues.*

*New ways to present information and meet the needs of all customers are sought and implemented. Library service is an ever evolving process of connecting customers - virtually and in person – to expertise, opportunities, and information. Programs that speak to the strongest needs are offered within the Pratt Library and in or through other organizations that are aligned with the Library's mission. The Enoch Pratt Free Library is valued as a true community partner in helping people attain personal goals and practice lifelong learning.*

The Library's Dynamic Service Goal is defined as *the Enoch Pratt Free Library customer service environment is recognized as flexible and responsive.*

Objectives:

1. Enhance staff responsiveness to emerging customer needs.
2. Enhance library responsiveness by leveraging community expertise.
3. Increase access to service at the point of need.

### **Tracking and Assessing Progress**

San Francisco, Denver and Washington, D.C. public libraries have each measured outcomes in different ways. San Francisco measures reduction in customer incidents and increase in success stories, but does not gather personal information and track program participants after they leave the library. Denver measures success by measuring reduction in library evictions and Washington, D.C. does not measure outcomes.

The Pratt Library will track and assess progress by completing intake forms for customers who access Social Worker services. Referrals to resources for food, addiction, mental health or workforce development services will be noted on the intake forms, which will be securely maintained by Library staff and Social Workers/Interns. When a customer returns for additional consultation, they will be asked to self-report on usage of programs to address hunger, addiction, mental health issues and joblessness.

Pratt staff will be surveyed after Social Worker in the Library trainings and increases in knowledge/confidence in dealing with social services requests will be measured. Attendance at the programs offered with program partners will be measured.

Results of all these evaluation tactics will be used to develop future Social Worker in the Library programs. An IMLS-funded third party evaluator would be a welcome addition to the effort. Time to engage with such an evaluator is included in the project plan; Library staff will be flexible and open to the scheduling needs of evaluators. Just as social work initiatives in the San Francisco, Denver and Washington D.C. libraries are helpful as the Pratt develops Social Worker in the Library, the Pratt's university partnership model can be replicated and scaled at other libraries across the nation. The Pratt's key metrics and outcomes will provide more specific information about the most and least effective components of the project.

### **Key Metrics**

Measurement of referrals to resources for food, addiction, mental health or workforce development services will be key metrics for Social Worker in the Library. These measurements will be self-reported to protect customer privacy and will therefore depend on the veracity of the customer.

Increases in knowledge and confidence as reported on post-training surveys taken by Pratt Library staff will be another key metric. These surveys, completed after Social Worker in the Library training sessions, will help gauge effectiveness and inform future offerings.

### **Outcomes and Outputs**

During year one of the project, it is estimated that 2,250 Library customers will receive direct services from the six University of Maryland School of Social Work students at three Pratt Library branches. An additional 375 Pratt employees will receive training, and up to 15,000 Pratt customers will benefit from the enhanced service they receive from Pratt librarians who have been trained through the project. A total of 17,625 people could be served by this grant funding in the first year, with 17,000 additional people served in the second year. The project is highly likely to make a significant, sustainable difference in the community both now and in the future.

Intended outcomes for Social Worker in the Library include:

- Continued self-assessment of how the Pratt Library can best create meaningful positive community change.
- Development of activities—created in collaboration with the Baltimore community—to achieve sustained community improvement.

Measurable projected outcomes include a 20 percent increase in the number of private and public resources for food, addiction, mental health or workforce development services accessed by program participants in year one of the project, and a 30 percent increase in year two. *Please note this is a pilot program so numbers are estimated.*

### **Project Design**

#### **Conceptual and Social Well-Being Framework**

The specific question addressed by Social Worker in the Library is *how can the Pratt move beyond occasional, drop-in programs and ad hoc reference services to become a significant contributor to serving low-income and special needs and other at-risk populations in Baltimore?* The project was designed and processes put in place

to leverage the Pratt Library's existing relationship with these customers (many of whom spend their days in the library) as well as brick and mortar facilities scattered throughout the city.

Social Worker in the Library's conceptual framework assumes that at-risk populations benefit from intervention and support in the areas of food insecurity, mental illness, homelessness and joblessness. The Pratt will gather empirical and anecdotal data through intake charting and evaluations to track progress and outcomes. This data will be managed and analyzed by the Library's Programs, Planning and Partnerships staff then made available to community partners and other library systems.

The goals of Social Worker in the Library, as framed within the social well-being framework (self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision-making, relationship skills and social awareness) are:

- To encourage customers to recognize when they need support from a social services agency
- To encourage customers to follow through with agency visits after referral
- To help customers navigate everyday social situations
- To encourage customers to manage mental, physical and emotional health

### **Community Opportunity and Stakeholder Roles**

Pratt Library assets map directly back to the opportunity provided by Social Worker in the Library. With 22 buildings across the city, 375 dedicated and caring employees and scores of partnerships with public and private organizations, the Library is uniquely positioned to provide the program. Like many urban public librarians, Pratt staff members have fielded requests for social services for years. Several branches, and more recently the Pratt system, developed detailed resources for social support in Baltimore. This information is available and shared widely. The Pratt's confirmed partnership with the University of Maryland School of Social Work is the final asset that completes map to the Social Worker opportunity.

Key stakeholders include the University of Maryland, the New Day Campaign, an organization that uses art-based programming and public engagement to challenge stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and substance use, and Head Start. Representatives from these organizations have had ongoing involvement in planning Social Worker in the Library and confirm their organizations' buy-in to the project. Their input and ownership will continue as the program is implemented.

### **Sequence of Activities**

Social Worker in the Library will prepare library staff to better handle crisis situations and convert the Library's existing disparate partnerships and programs to a consistent array of services offered across all 22 Library locations.

In addition to crisis management, staff will receive training in:

- how to understand and better serve the wide diversity of customers in Baltimore
- how to reach out to help the marginalized without making more traditional mainstream customers feel uncomfortable
- how to deal with different expectations of behavior in a shared space, urban environment
- how to address specific issues: Poverty, food insecurity, homelessness and drug abuse

Pratt Library staff members are dedicated professionals who use their skills to connect customers to appropriate resources. Over time, the Pratt Library developed a patchwork of programs and resources to help meet customers' very apparent needs for social services support. Some programs are robust, solid collaborations with community based providers, while others are one-time events. The training described above will unify these efforts, resulting in more effective service for Library customers.

The Pratt Library will partner with the Social Work Community Outreach Service (SWCOS) at the University of Maryland for training and social work services in library branches. Under the guidance of Lane Victorson, University Of Maryland School of Social Work SWCOS Clinical Field Instructor, six graduate student social workers from SWOCS will be placed at three Pratt Library branches during predictable time periods each week to respond specifically to the needs of Library customers. Student social workers will serve as:

- a contact person for a crisis involving a customer
- a resource for training the public service staff in appropriate skills
- a source for recommendation of programs and partnerships for all 22 Pratt Library locations

Free public programs specially designed to address customers' social services needs are also part of the Social Worker in the Library. The Pratt is developing a partnership with the New Day Campaign, an organization that uses art-based programming and public engagement to challenge stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and substance use. An existing partnerships with Head Start will expand to include social services programs. These partnerships and the resulting programs will serve the thousands of Baltimoreans in need of social services who spend their days at Pratt Libraries.

The Pratt Library's two-year Social Worker in the Library initiative involves four key strategies: Staff Training, placement of Social Worker Interns in library branches (years one and two), placement of a professional social worker in library branches (year two) and special free programs to address social service needs.

The research and planning phases of staff training are complete. Victorson, along with Everett Smith, University of Maryland School of Social Work SWCOS Clinical Field Instructor, will conduct Crisis Trainings for all Pratt Library staff.

Each training session will be a two-hour instruction in the basics of crisis management. The Crisis Management Workshop will be offered at the joint meeting of all Pratt branch library managers meeting and will be refined after attendee feedback, and then offered to all Public Service staff. Crisis Management Workshops will be offered for five-six months to accommodate the Pratt's large public service staff.

Lisa Kenyon, Pratt Library Staff Development and Training manager, has already begun plans to incorporate topics related to social work into the staff training schedule. Kenyon created Customer Service and Gender Identity, for example, and recruited a Community College of Baltimore County faculty member to present. In this successful workshop, participants learned how to be more sensitive to gender identity issues and handle situations with and among customers. Similar trainings will be offered throughout the two year grant period.

By December 2017, the Pratt Library will place six Social Work Community Outreach Service (SWCOS) students at three branch libraries. With general guidelines and support from library staff, the students will get to know the branch customers and work on developing programs that meet the specific needs of customers at their branch. Students will also handle social service needs/situations as they arise.

Beginning in October 2017, special free programs designed to help customers cope with poverty, food insecurity, homelessness and addiction will be offered at several Pratt locations. These programs, created through partnerships with experts at organizations that provide social services, will reach many of Baltimore's most needy residents who are already frequent library patrons.

### **Key Decision Points and Risks**

The challenges faced by Baltimoreans who need social services are by definition and nature difficult to pin down. Addiction might lead to unemployment and homelessness, and interventions that address just one issue are less effective.

Staying in communication with customers and following up to address varied issues will be challenging for Pratt staff, UMD student social workers and the professional social worker. Communication is difficult with customers who do not have phones or fixed addresses and it is challenging to ensure that those who need services the most are able to access them.

Social Worker in the Library will address these challenges by focusing on the customers who routinely spend their days in the library. The program will provide comfortable spaces with coffee and resources, and Pratt staff will leverage the relationships—many of which are longstanding—they have with customers to encourage program participation. Pratt staff and student social workers will ask customers about the kinds of programs and services they want and will not profile or force social services.

### **Sharing Project Results**

There are several stakeholder groups with whom Social Worker in the Library results will be shared:

- Pratt program staff, partners, funding agencies, and coalition members.
- Customers or clients, advocacy groups, community members, and elected officials.
- Public Libraries and partners in other cities.
- The general public or taxpayers.

Stakeholders will be involved in evaluation planning and throughout the project and will share thoughts about what is working and what is not working from their perspective. Based on their feedback and other evaluation findings, the program will be refined.

The Pratt Library will create a dissemination plan for program results and will share with the audiences listed above. The plan will identify what information is most useful to each audience, and how to get it into their hands. The University of Maryland School of Social Work has engaged a tenure track faculty member who will help craft a research proposal that will be sent to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for eventual inclusion in a peer reviewed publication.

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SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

**Social Worker in the Library Project Training Timeline**

**Year One – October 1, 2017-September 30, 2018**

- October: Joint Managers Meeting (All Pratt Library branch managers). Crisis Management Training session led by Lane Victorson
- November: Public Services Staff. Crisis Management Training session led by Lane Victorson
- December: Public Staff Crisis Management Training led by Lane Victorson
- January: Children's and Young Adult Public Services staff retreat. Crisis Management Training led by Lane Victorson
- February: Public Service Staff. Crisis Management Training by Lane Victorson
- March: Adult Public Services Staff. Domestic Abuse, Substance Abuse, Gender/Transgender Awareness training
- April: Adult Public Service Staff. Life Skills, Resources for Parents training
- May: Public Service Staff. Veterans: PTSD, Wounded Warriors, Women Veterans services training
- June: Public Service Staff. Veterans Issues: Domestic Abuse, Suicide, Substance Abuse, Homelessness services training
- July: Adult Public Service Staff. Homelessness, Substance Abuse, Suicide, LGBTQ Issues, Domestic Abuse training
- August/September: Adult Public Service Staff. Homelessness, Substance Abuse, Suicide, LGBTQ Issues, Domestic Abuse training

**Social Worker in the Library UMD SWOCS Student Placement Timeline:**

**Year One – October 1, 2017-September 30, 2018**

- Six students will work in the Light Street, Pennsylvania Avenue and Southeast Anchor branches October 2017-May 2018.
- In June 2018 a formal evaluation of the Library's Social Worker initiative will be conducted. Mid-point observations and suggestions for improvement will be collated and disseminated.

**Social Worker in the Library Partnerships/Programs Timeline:**

**Year One – October 1, 2017-September 30, 2018**

- Specially designed programs offered by partners including the New Day Campaign, Baltimore City Department of Public Health and Head Start will be planned and offered October 2017-September 2018.