

## Metropolitan Library System Safe Place FAQ

**Updated: 11/28/22**

### **General:**

#### **- Introduction:**

From the National Safe Place website: Safe Place provides access to immediate help and supportive resources for youth in need. As a community initiative, the program designates schools, fire stations, libraries, and other youth-friendly organizations as Safe Place locations, which display the yellow and black sign.

Since 2018, Pivot has been the lead agency for Safe Place in Oklahoma County. They have been building organizational engagement with the program since that time. OnCue gas stations and fire stations across the county became Safe Place sites and, in the summer of 2021, Metropolitan Library System (MLS) signed a memorandum of understanding to be the next organizational partner to support Pivot in implementing the Safe Place program.

The information in this FAQ will explain what the Safe Place program is, how it operates, and what it means for you as an MLS employee. MLS is committed to having open, respectful, educational and most of all, safe environments for patrons of all ages. The Safe Place program will provide an extra level of community support for our young guests who may need it.

#### **- What is Safe Place? (“Elevator Speech”) version**

*Safe Place is a service that connects youth in crisis to the service of Pivot, Inc. When a young person comes into a location displaying the Safe Place sign, and indicates they need a “Safe Place,” staff bring the youth to a place off the public floor and call Pivot. Pivot arrives, assesses the situation, and connects the youth to needed resources – shelter, counseling, food, transportation, etc.*

#### **- What is Pivot?**

From Pivot’s website: “We are a force for good, turning young lives around and setting their course for an empowered future. We strive to meet the needs of young people and families, educate ourselves and others and truly be part of the answer.”

Services Pivot provides to young people include:

- Emergency shelter services, including overnight sheltering
- Connection with needed services like food, clothing, housing, medical, counseling, or mentoring
- Low-cost tiny homes
- Supporting youths in independent living
- Counseling services for youth and families as they navigate relationships, trauma, external factors and more, including depression, poor nutrition, high risk behaviors, substance abuse, anxiety, unlawful actions, and grief

While Pivot is intended a place that provides services to young people, they do have resources that can benefit all ages, and they are willing to speak to any community member in need and either provide assistance directly or provide a referral to another organization that can help.

### **- Why is Safe Place important? We have 911 and DHS – is Safe Place really needed?**

Safe Place gives library staff another option when working to address a challenging situation with a youth in crisis. Calling 911 remains the appropriate response to an active emergency. But for situations where there is not an immediate emergency or threat, Safe Place engages trained professionals at Pivot, who can assess the situation and connect the youth with the appropriate services to assist them.

### **- What constitutes an “active emergency” in the answer above?**

*Some things that could elevate a situation to “active emergency” status include:*

- *The young person indicating they are being pursued*
- *The young person being injured or needing medical attention*

*What sets an active emergency apart from a regular Safe Place situation is the demonstrated immediate threat or danger to the young person. If you don’t feel like you have time to implement the Safe Place process – call the number, wait for the representative to arrive, etc. – the situation can be considered an active emergency.*

*When in doubt, call 911! After calling 911, go ahead and implement the Safe Place process and call Pivot, as well. They will be able to engage with the police either at the library or at the police station to see how they can help with the situation.*

### **- Why is Metro supporting Safe Place?**

Safe Place supports the Metro core values of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; People First; Innovation; Integrity; and Respect – in short, Safe Place complements every Metro core value! Our purpose is to connect community members with information and resources they need to improve their lives. Safe Place is a way to connect young people to the information and resources provided by Pivot.

### **- How is Pivot involved in Safe Place?**

For Safe Place to exist in a community, there must be an organization willing and able to oversee the program. Pivot is the “host organization” for Safe Place in Oklahoma County. Pivot’s purpose and mission of connecting youth in crisis with needed resources complements the Safe Place program.

### **- Who are the Safe Place Volunteers?**

Safe Place volunteers are trained by Pivot. They must be 21 years old, pass a background check, and possess a valid driver’s license and auto insurance. Pivot has many trained volunteers throughout Oklahoma County.

## **Implementation:**

### **- What is my responsibility as a staff member?**

Your responsibility is to know what Safe Place is (and be able to explain it), and to know how to put the program in action at your location. You are *not* expected to act as a counselor. As staff, we offer information, not advice. You can explain what Safe Place is when a customer asks, and even ask if a youth would like us to implement the process on their behalf. You cannot advise or offer your opinion to

the customer on whether Safe Place is an appropriate solution to their situation. Just like you can connect a customer to a legal or medical resource, but you do not suggest legal action or attempt to diagnose medical issues.

**- Is there a way for me to share feedback or ask questions about Safe Place with the System?**

Yes! You can share feedback, questions, stories, etc., with the Safe Place Committee at [safe.place@metrolibrary.org](mailto:safe.place@metrolibrary.org). Your feedback is important to help us grow this program and make it successful.

**- How does the Safe Place process work?**

1. Get a general idea of what is wrong. Do not try to go into detail about the problem but be supportive. Get some background to the situation, so you know how best to respond. In an immediate emergency, call 911.

2. Communicate next steps. Tell the youth that you are going to call the Safe Place agency. Before calling the agency, get the youth's name, age, and note their physical description. Show the youth where to sit and wait until a Safe Place representative arrives.

Ensure you or another staff member can wait with the youth or at least observe them while you call the Safe Place number. Try to make them feel comfortable. Do not counsel them. If they reveal information about their situation, be sympathetic but keep the conversation general.

3. CALL: PIVOT at (405) 479-6609: Identify yourself and your library location, giving the address and phone number. Remember to give a direct line phone number so Pivot staff can call back directly (and not have to go through the library's phone queue). Give the youth's name, age, and physical description. The Pivot staff will call you back and tell you the name of the volunteer or staff member who will come to meet with the youth. Write this down so you will have it ready.

4. Tell the youth that someone will be there shortly. Remind the youth to wait in the area that you have suggested. Make sure the youth waits inside the building. The youth should not be in the way of normal activities, but at the same time should be in an area where you can easily monitor them.

5. Check on the youth every few minutes to make sure they are doing okay. Offer them some water or other available refreshment.

6. When the Safe Place representative arrives ask for photo identification. This ID will confirm that the individual is the person that the agency indicated. If there is any discrepancy or question, call Pivot back. Do not allow the youth to meet or go with anyone who has not been verified.

7. If the identification matches, show the Safe Place representative to the area where the youth is waiting and give them a few minutes to talk privately. Offer them an office or other private space if the youth has been waiting in a common area that is open to other people. The representative will be able to connect the youth to needed resources.

8. If possible, note when the representative and the youth leave the location.

9. Record the incident in the Safe Place Interaction Report located on the Library Management Team SharePoint. The SharePoint is only accessible to supervisors – if you are not a supervisor, please email the supervisory team at your location so they can enter the information in the Interaction Report.

10. Record the incident in MetroPITS. In the PITS report, include the names of the youth and the representative as “victims/witnesses,” as well as in the description of the event.

11. Email [safe.place@metrolibrary.org](mailto:safe.place@metrolibrary.org) with any follow-up questions or feedback you have about the incident at your location or the process in general.

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### **- How should I promote Safe Place?**

Safe Place flyers and other promotional materials (including an image of the recognizable Safe Place logo) will be shared with locations via the Library Management Team Share Point. Displays of materials can be tied into Safe Place, and it can be mentioned in age-appropriate programming. March includes National Safe Place week – this would be a good time to promote the program.

### **- When should I offer information about Safe Place?**

You can offer information about Safe Place when specifically asked about the program – including language like, “Is this a Safe Place?” or “What does that yellow sign on the building mean?” You can also offer information about the program when circumstances make you think it could be a benefit to a youth in distress.

### **- What if I suspect a young person may be in an abusive situation – can I automatically set Safe Place in motion?**

Do not automatically set the Safe Place process in motion without first discussing the situation with the young person. Remember, you are not expected to act as a counselor. But you may realize there is a deeper situation at play in the youth’s life by asking general questions about how things are going, if they are doing okay, if they need any help, etc.

### **What happens if a youth decides to leave before a volunteer arrives?**

If a youth decides to leave your site before the Safe Place volunteers arrives, call Pivot and let them know the youth has declined services. Fill out a PITS report and indicate that a Safe Place request was made, but the youth chose to decline services. Still list the name, age, time, and volunteer name in the incident report.

### **What happens if a youth’s parent/legal guardian arrives and wants the youth to leave with them?**

If a youth’s parent or guardian comes to the library and wants the youth to leave with them do not interfere. Call Pivot and let them know. If you believe the youth was forced to leave, or the situation escalates, let Pivot know. They will follow up on the situation with the appropriate agencies and authorities. Fill out a PITS report and indicate that a Safe Place request was made, but the youth left the premises with a parent/guardian. Still list the name, age, time, and volunteer name in the incident report.

### **What if a youth is accompanied by a sibling that is not 12-17 years old?**

If a youth requesting a Safe Place is accompanied by a younger sibling, let Pivot know when you call. They will send a staff person instead of a volunteer to your location.

### **What if a youth under 12 years old needs a Safe Place?**

The Safe Place representatives are trained to work with youth in the 12 to 17 age range. But if you have a 10–11-year-old Safe Place requester it is ok to call Pivot and ask for advice. They will direct you to the best course of action based on the situation. For children under 10 years old, Pivot recommends calling the police *first*, even if the situation does not represent an immediate danger or threat. The responding police officer will be able to connect the child with DHS or Pivot as needed to provide additional support and resources.

### **What if a family or adult requests Safe Place services?**

While Safe Place is designed specifically to support young people between the ages of 12-17, Pivot offers services to young people up to age 24 through **The Point** (see below). For older adults or families, Pivot can pass along references to other community resources. You may also refer to relevant information on-hand in your library and pass the references along yourself.

***It is important to clearly state your need and the situation when calling Pivot so they can respond in the most effective way possible.***

### **Safe Place vs. The Point**

While Pivot offers services to young people up to age 24, the Safe Place program is specifically designed for underage youth between 12 and 17 years of age. If you have a youth in this age range in need of assistance, and you implement the Safe Place process, Pivot will always find a way to accommodate that youth in crisis.

The Point overlaps with Safe Place in a way as it is designed for young people from 18-24 years old. Safe Place is for younger youth, and The Point is for older youth. The Point includes a daytime resource center and an overnight shelter. The daytime resource center is on the Pivot campus and is available daily from 4-8 for a hot meal, a place to shower, hang out, etc. The shelter is also on the Pivot campus and may fill up. If the shelter is full, Pivot staff may suggest other resources to help that young person, but there may not be a space available at The Point for them.

So - if a 15-year-old runs away from home because they are being abused, and they come to library for a Safe Place, Pivot will always help that young person and connect them to resources. If a 19-year-old runs away and needs a Safe Place, Pivot could offer them a meal, a shower, etc., from 4-8, but may or may not be able to offer them a place to sleep, depending on their shelter capacity. If they can't offer a place to sleep, Pivot staff will try to connect the youth to other resources that can help.

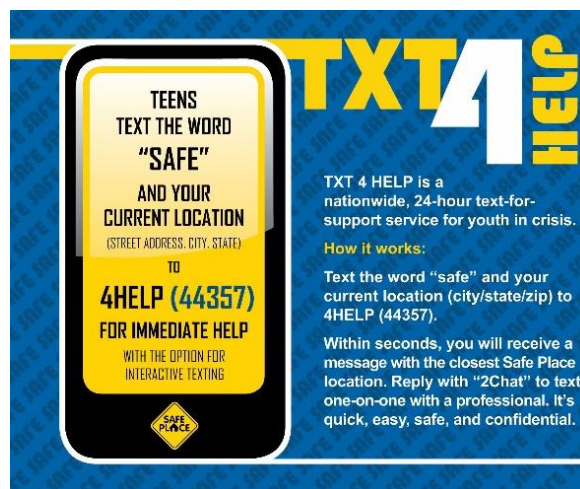
***Feel free to call the main Pivot number when assisting a youth in crisis, but clearly state if it is a Safe Place (12-17) situation, or a situation with an older youth (18-24) in need. Clearly stating this up front can help facilitate Pivot's best response to the situation.***

### **What if a youth requesting a Safe Place needs immediate medical attention?**

Call 911 in an emergency, including for a youth needing immediate medical attention. Then call the Safe Place number to alert Pivot of the situation.

### ***What if a youth comes to the library seeking a Safe Place after the building is closed for the evening?***

*The youth can utilize the TXT 4 HELP service detailed below. A bookmark and flyer have been created and are available in the Library Management Team and All Engagement Staff SharePoint sites that can be printed on demand, distributed, or displayed. One copy of the flyer should be displayed in the front entrance of each location.*



### ***What happen after youth leave the library with the Safe Place representative?***

*The Safe Place representative will work with youth to resolve their crisis. This can take many different avenues depending on the situation. In some cases, the representative will simply drive the youth back home. In other cases, they may help facilitate connection with the family, provide overnight/temporary shelter, connect the youth with the police/DHS or other services. Pivot and the Safe Place representative will be well-positioned to assess the situation and provide the youth with a tailored approach.*

### **Online Resources to Learn More**

National Safe Place - <http://nationalsafeplace.org/>

Pivot - <http://www.pivotok.org/>