UNDERSTANDING POVERTY & PRACTICING COMPASSIONATE CUSTOMER SERVICE
"WHAT WOULD YOU DO?"

Key Principles

Empowerment:
- Create processes and an environment that encourages independence, self-direction, and confidence
- Set clear expectations and boundaries
- Always stay positive and communicate what you can do
- Use every opportunity to connect, engage, and encourage

Empathy:
- Acknowledge and validate a person's feelings
- Ask how you can be of assistance without assuming you know how to meet a person's needs
- Seek to understand- be patient, sensitive, and respectful and make the time to listen

Agility:
- Seek to understand a person's need and respond with an openness to solutions
- Remember to always remain calm and judgment free when meeting people where they are regardless of your perception
- Be flexible and willing to offer alternatives without breaking organizational boundaries

Scenario:

A volunteer comments to a patron that maybe if they quit smoking they would be in a better financial situation.

Food for Thought:
You should be communicating regularly to your volunteers on your service philosophy and expectations on how patrons are treated. Documenting this philosophy and expectations in your volunteer handbook is important; you may want to consider developing a volunteer agreement that each volunteer signs during their orientation. This agreement would clearly state your philosophy, expectations, and boundaries and should be reviewed with volunteers at every training. Remind this volunteer of those expectations, and, if the behavior is repeated, consider giving them responsibilities so that they have less contact with patrons.

What would you do?

1. With empowerment in mind for both patrons and volunteers, how can you use this opportunity to set clear expectations and boundaries around the respectful treatment of everyone?

2. How would you communicate the importance of the key principle empathy to this volunteer?

3. What is important for this volunteer to understand about the key principle agility?