Tools to Assist in Handling a Challenge

Definitions to Clarify Terminology Associated with Challenges

In 1986, in response to inquiries from librarians facing book or material challenges for the first time, the Intellectual Freedom Committee developed the following list of definitions to clarify terminology associated with challenges:

- **Expression of Concern.** An inquiry that has judgmental overtones.
- **Oral Complaint.** An oral challenge to the presence and/or appropriateness of the material in question.
- **Written Complaint.** A formal, written complaint filed with the institution (library, school, etc.), challenging the presence and/or appropriateness of specific material.
- **Public Attack.** A publicly disseminated statement challenging the value of the material, presented to the media and/or others outside the institutional organization in order to gain public support for further action.
- **Censorship.** 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.

For more information and resources on challenges to library materials, please see essential preparation, challenge support, and reporting a challenge.