



GUIDANCE STATEMENT 2020-2
Reopening the Library
April 27, 2020

GENERAL INFORMATION

The COVID-19 virus and subsequent Stay at Home order is challenging libraries across the state. Resuming services after the Stay at Home order is lifted will be equally challenging. Library management needs to ensure patrons and staff can return to the library safely with minimum health risks. This statement provides information for Boards and Directors to develop a reopening plan for the library.

Stage 1: Updates/Additions to Library Policies

Due to the pandemic, current library policies may be insufficient to handle social distancing, remote working conditions, patron behaviors, or another Stay at Home Executive Order from the Governor. Consider updating the following policies before discussions on reopening the library. Be sure to consult with the city or county lawyer on retainer to ensure the policy updates and or additions are legal. *Keep in mind that Board must approve all changes at a regularly scheduled meeting and the actions reflected in the meeting minutes.*

1. Patron Behavior
2. Meeting Room
3. Computer Use
4. Employee Dress and Leave

Patron Behavior

During this time, it is easy to make policies that may be in everyone's best interest but may be illegal. Unless mandated by the County or State Health Officer, the library may not be able to require patrons to wear protective masks or undergo a health screening to enter the library. Consult your city or county lawyer before adopting these types of policies. Voluntary precautions may serve the library better.

Meeting Room

The library's meeting room may not be able to accommodate as many individuals as it would when there is not a health crisis. Consider the number of individuals the room can hold during a public health crisis. In the policy, add a statement, "During a public health crisis, the library's meeting room(s) are closed" or "During a public health crisis, the library's meeting room(s) are restricted groups of x individuals or less."

Computer Use

Like meeting rooms, computer usage may look differently during a public health crisis. Look at the size of the computer room and the number of computers, guaranteed time limits, the time

necessary to disinfect the area, and factor in social distancing precautions. A potential policy addition could be, "During a public health crisis, only [number] computers will be available to the public. Library WiFi will be extended to the parking areas for patrons to use without a password."

Employee Dress and Leave

Library Management has more control over whether or not an employee may be required to wear personal protective masks while performing duties for the library as part of their uniform. Keep in mind that there can be legitimate medical reasons why an employee may not be able to wear a mask. Encourage these employees to work from home.

Other precautions the Board and Director may consider:

- Screening and evaluating workers who exhibit signs of illness.
- Requiring workers who show signs of illness to not report to work or seek medical attention.

The Library Board and Director may need to consider additional policies, too. Some of those policies could include those listed below.

- New or Alternative Service Models
 - Appointments for reference transactions, notary, faxing, scanning, and or computer use
 - Curbside pick-up and or drop-off of library materials
- Limiting the Number of Individuals in the Library at Any One Time
- Remote Working for Staff. See *WVLC Guidance Statement 2020-1* for assistance on developing this policy.
- Quarantining Deliveries and Items Returned by the Public

New or Alternative Serve Models

Not all libraries will be able to add new or alternative services during this time. When considering appointment or curbside pick-up options, take an honest look at the library's capacity.

- Does the library have sufficient staff to effectively provide the service?
- What personal protective equipment is needed? Does the library have access to it?
- Is there an adequate holding space for items waiting to be picked up?
- Is there an adequate space to have items in isolation?

For libraries with the capacity to provide these services, ensure that library staff involved with the service has adequate input and training as well as protective equipment.

Examples:

Scappoose Public Library Curbside Pickup Procedures: <https://www.scappooselibrary.org/curbside-pickup-procedures-1>

Chesterfield County (Va.) Library COVID-19 Response: <https://library.chesterfield.gov/418/CCPL-COVID-19-Response>

Billerica Library Curbside Pickup: <https://billericalibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Curbside-Pickup-OnlinePageUpdatedHours.pdf>

Limiting the Number of Individuals in the Library at Any One Time

Work with your [County Health Officials](#) to determine the maximum number of individuals that safely can be in the library at any given time and if additional precautions are mandatory. Keep in mind that figure will include staff as well as the public. Some staff members may need to continue working from home during this time. Ensure that the library has an approved Remote Working policy.

Quarantining Deliveries and Items Returned by the Public

It will be up to each library to determine the duration of the quarantine for returned library materials and the quarantine location. Suggested periods based on the type of item includes

- 1 to 5 days for paper-based items.
- 3 to 9 days for CDs, DVDs, plastic-covered books, courier totes, and bins.

Housing items in quarantine can be virtually no cost, a cleared range of shelving, multiple book carts, or piles on a table. Make sure to label the materials with dates, so the time when the isolation period ends is known.

Stage 2: Limited Staff Return to Work / Buildings Closed to the Public

Depending on the size of the library and social distancing requirements, develop a staggered approach for all staff to return to work as health mandates are eased by the Governor's Office.

- Libraries with 1 to 3 employees or libraries with dedicated public service staff should bring those individuals back first. This group will be referred to as **Team A Staff** throughout this document.
- Technical Services Staff should continue working remotely during this time unless needed for alternative service models. This group of individuals will be referred to as **Team B Staff** throughout this document.
- All other staff, or **Team C Staff**, should continue working on projects remotely.
- **Team D Staff**, or volunteers, should be the last to return to daily operations in the library.

Services restored include:

- Team A Staff checks all hard drives and thumb drives used for working from home for viruses before using on network PCs.
- Team A Staff returns desks and work areas to normal after an extended time away.
- Office work routines restored.
- Team A Staff catches up on mail and deliveries following established isolation procedures.

- Team A Staff catches up on reference questions and library card creation they could not do while working remotely.
- Team A Staff catches up on library materials returned by users following established isolation procedures.
- Restore janitorial services in staff areas. Ensure that staff or janitorial services sanitize workspaces, including tabletops, door handles, book drops, computers, and telephones.
- Resume digital material ordering.
- Resume interlibrary loan.
- Team A Staff prepares for the library opening to the public.
 - Reopening with social distancing recommendations of gatherings of 10 or fewer individuals:
 - Begin assisting patrons for reference and computer use on an appointment basis.
 - Begin alternative service models.
 - Continue providing virtual programming and services.
 - Consider reducing the number of hours the library is open to allow for virtual programming, preparing materials for alternative service models, cleaning public areas, and quarantining returned materials. Contact the Library Commission if reducing library hours affects the minimum amount of hours open requirement in the ARs.
 - Reopening with social distancing recommendations of gatherings of 50 or fewer individuals:
 - All considerations listed above.
 - Initiate limited the number of individuals in the building. Consider setting up specific times for vulnerable individuals in the community to visit the library.

The Library Director should consider allowing Team A Staff to remote work for one day a week to make sure the remote work infrastructure developed so quickly during this crisis is not lost. Especially since the library may need to close again if COVID-19 infection hotspots increase in the county. Incorporate remote work equipment (laptops, monitors, etc.) into future library budgets.

The Director should hold an after-action general staff meeting to evaluate telework – ask: What worked well? What did not work well? What could we do better?

Preparation for this stage includes:

- Let Team A Staff have a week in the building before the partial opening to the public.
- Ensure sanitizing supplies and protective gear are on hand.
- Recognize that all staff went through incredible stresses during the COVID19 crisis.
- Let Team A Staff get used to working in the physical presence of coworkers; in an open office plan, this could be jarring for those who found remote work comforting.

- Create a display or social media posts, noting what staff did during the closure and put it up in a prominent place.
- Urge Team A Staff to successfully integrate work projects they did at home into daily work in the office; it is easy to let daily office work overtake any projects they did at home
- Set the library up for social distancing.
 - Reconfigure tables and other patron space to accommodate at least six feet of space.
 - Temporarily limit access to computers.
 - Temporarily remove toys and games from children's' area, etc.
- Set up additional precautions for staff at public service points. Precautions could include
 - Providing masks for both patrons and staff
 - Installing shielding (plexiglass or transparent shower curtains) at circulation/reference desks
 - Posting additional signage around the library and parking lot, as needed, etc.
- Give Team A Staff time to practice standard opening/closing and alternative service model procedures for at least a few days before the public opening.
- Test all public facing equipment to ensure it is in working order.

Stage 3: Limited Public Service Restored as Restrictions Ease

Depending on the size of the library and social distancing requirements

- **Team A Staff, Team B Staff, and Team C Staff** can work in the library.
- **Or, Team C Staff** continues to work on projects remotely.
- **Team D Staff** remains at home.

Buildings are open to the public with extra social distancing procedures (limited number of people in the building), a limited number of seating in public areas, and adequate sanitation supplies for public areas.

Services restored include:

- Building open to the public with social distancing restrictions and reduced hours.
- Computer areas open to the public for limited/timed visits. Encourage the public to make an appointment to use this service.
- Full building janitorial and security restored.
- Determine if public areas need additional cleaning before opening.
- Reference, holds, and interlibrary loan reinstated.
- Alternative service modules in place.
- Virtual programming continues.

- Limited in-person programming resumes. Encourage the public to register for events.
- Meeting rooms open for limited/timed visits.
- Staff sanitizes public areas as public leave.
- Wireless available throughout the building.
- Team B Staff catalogs and processes materials that were in the building before the Stay at Home Executive Order.

The Library Director should consider allowing Team A Staff to remote work for one day a week to make sure the remote work infrastructure developed so quickly during this crisis is not lost. Especially since the library may need to close again if COVID-19 infection hotspots increase in the county. Incorporate remote work equipment (laptops, monitors, etc.) into future library budgets.

The Director should hold an after-action general staff meeting to evaluate telework – ask: What worked well? What did not work well? What could we do better?

Preparation for this stage includes:

- Determine the hours the library will be open to the public and hours for alternative service modules. Contact the Library Commission if reducing library hours affects the minimum amount of hours open requirement in the ARs.
- Staff publicizes limited-service restoration.

Stage 4: Full Public Service Restored

Team A-D Staff can work in the library.

The library is entirely open to the public with business as usual. Staff and patrons should continue disinfecting work areas, computer areas, etc.

Services restored include:

- Team B staff resumes ordering and processing physical materials.
- Team A Staff may stop quarantining returned library materials.
- The library lifts limited access to the meeting rooms.
- Patrons may use computers without restrictions.
- Social distancing restrictions in public areas are lifted.
- All in-person public programs resume.
- The library director evaluates which virtual programs to continue based on the library's mission.
- Team D Staff can return to work within the library.

Preparation for this stage includes:

- Determine if meeting rooms and library spaces need additional cleaning before opening.
- Staff publicizes full-service restoration

Citations

Brown, Stacy, et al. "Recommendations for Library Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic." *Georgia Public Library Service*. 2020, *Georgia Public Library Service*, georgialibraries.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Recommendations-for-Library-Services-During-The-Covid-19-Pandemic.pdf.

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Thill, John. "A Phased Reopening Plan for Libraries as COVID 19 Restrictions Are Lifted." *Medium*, Medium, 20 Apr. 2020, medium.com/@john.alan.thill/a-phased-reopening-plan-for-libraries-as-covid-19-restrictions-are-lifted-2d96885c0c1d?fbclid=IwAR2I9qOsjXBIbbyZxGWAqRyi_1S5gUpp644nSPq12jK8eJ6LZelgfB6lJIA.

Disclaimer: This Guidance Statement is meant to provide general guidelines and should be used as a reference.