

Epidemic and Public Emergency Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish formal guidelines for operations during an extended epidemic or other emergency. The library district should plan for numerous staff being unable to report for work during an epidemic or other health emergency. In addition, the library district will be required to follow orders of the County and State Health Department to help slow the spread of illness. This may include the closing of all library branches, or other reductions in service. The library district will attempt to keep core services of the library operational in case of reduced staff and reduced hours of operation.

Levels of operation

1. Business as usual. During the period prior to the arrival of an epidemic or other health emergency, the library director shall monitor the situation and prepare stockpiles of supplies to reduce the likelihood of staff becoming infected and train staff on preventive measures to reduce the spread of infections.

The CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

2. Notification of infections in the area. When we have been notified by public health officials, either directly or by broadcast media, that the illness has arrived in our area the following precautions will be taken:

- Staff with compromising preconditions will be required to contact their healthcare provider for guidance on work attendance and/or protective procedures.
- Staff will be encouraged to wear protective face masks, gloves, and eye protection when working with patrons and returned items. Hand washing for 20 seconds with hot water and soap is required immediately after removing gloves and before removing face masks and eye protection.
- Books and other items returned will be wiped down with appropriate antiseptic wipes before being re-shelved.
- Programs involving groups of people will be canceled. This includes outside groups renting meeting rooms.
- Staff who are able to work from home will be encouraged to telecommute.
- Hours of operation may be reduced by the library director if illness lowers the number of staff able to work at the front desk.
- Normal sick leave policy will be in force.

3. Notification of health emergency. Upon a declaration of a health emergency by public health officials, the library will first implement the directives of the public health officials. If the libraries are ordered closed the following procedures will take place:

- The public will be notified of the order to close by health officials via our standard procedures for closing during weather by the Marketing/PR Manager. The public will be encouraged to use our 24/7 resources for their information/reading needs.
- Staff will be notified of the closing by the current calling tree.
- Branch managers will come by their branch once per day to empty the bookdrop. They may call in an assistant to help with check-in and sanitation. Branch managers and assisting staff are required to wear gloves, eye protection, aprons and N95 respirators when handling returned materials. All materials returned will be disinfected as appropriate for the item. Staff are required to wash their hands for 20 seconds in hot water with soap after removing protective gloves and before removing eye protection and masks. Branch managers will inspect the building for any maintenance problems that occur while being closed and inform the library director upon discovering any problems.
- All staff will continue to be paid for the duration of the emergency. Sick leave/time off will not accrue during an ordered shutdown by public health officials.
- Maintenance staff will be called in on an as needed basis to fix problems occurring during the shut-down, if allowed by local officials.
- Overdues and lost items for physical items will be suspended for the duration of the closing.

4. Re-opening. Staff will be notified by calling tree when the library district is allowed to re-open. Provisions under step 2 may be required until the full epidemic has passed. The library director will make the appropriate determinations upon being allowed to reopen. Upon re-opening, standard sick leave and time off policies will come back in force. The library director will continue to monitor news and public official announcements in case a second wave of illness occurs.