

BOARD POLICY

EPIDEMIC AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE POLICY

Background

The La Conner Regional Library, as a public service, seeks to establish an appropriate response strategy to epidemic or pandemic illnesses that balances protecting the health of our patrons and staff while still providing essential library services. Recovery from widespread public health crises such as these may be slow as compared to a natural disaster or other event.

Definitions

Epidemic – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) defines an epidemic as an increase, often sudden, in the number of cases of a disease above what is normally expected in the population in that area.

Pandemic – The CDC defines a pandemic as “an epidemic that has spread over several countries or continents, usually affecting a large number of people.” Three factors that are generally considered necessary for an outbreak to reach the level of a pandemic are: a virus that can cause illness or result in death, a sustained person-to-person transmission, and global spread. Most or all people will not have a natural immunity to what is defined as a “novel” or new virus.

Social Distancing - The public health practice of encouraging people to keep their physical distance from each other during disease outbreaks in order to slow the spread of infection. The goal should be for there to be at least 6 feet of distance between people at most times, with minimum recommended boundaries at 3-4 feet.

Appropriate Staffing Level – The minimum number of qualified staff necessary to provide service safely and efficiently, as determined by the Library Director or designee.

Authorities

Skagit County Health Department is our primary local public health authority providing guidance and direction to the community, and may, within the scope of their jurisdiction, increase social distancing by mandating or recommending the closure of public or private facilities.

Before an official mandate is made by federal, state, or local public health authorities, the Library Director or designee may take measures to protect the health and safety of staff

and patrons by reducing hours, limiting services, closing the Library, and suspending services.

Library Staff

- A. If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the established Personnel policy.
- B. Staff may request sick, vacation or personal leave to follow recommendations made by public health authorities to protect their health.
- C. Social distancing recommendations could reduce the number of staff able to work at one time in a confined space. Possible remedies may include staggered work schedules, reassignment of duties, or working from home, with approval of Director or designee.
- D. Reductions in available workforce as a result of a staff member or family member's illness, or recommended or forced quarantine, could be absorbed by reassigning staff duties, reducing open hours, canceling meetings or programs, closing portions of the Library, or closing completely.
- E. If public areas of the building are closed, staff may continue to offer limited services as a way to augment disrupted services.
- F. Staff and patron concerns about handling materials will need to be addressed and answered.
- G. In the event of reduced hours or closure, healthy employees may be asked to work at the Library, or be assigned work-at-home tasks. When appropriate, work tools (e.g., laptops, supplies, etc.) will be checked out to employees for work-at-home assignments.
- H. In the event of reduced hours or closure, regular employees who are not able to work shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours (see Weather and Emergency Closures.) They must remain available to return to work should the condition causing the closure abate. Regular employees who are taking vacation, sick, holiday-other, leave without pay, or any other type of leave at the time of closure may not convert the time to emergency leave, unless the leave was taken in response to the pandemic.
- I. Prioritization of work will be given to the following essential services: information services for the public—in person, by phone, and online; payroll; accounts payable; technology and facility maintenance. Other tasks and services will be prioritized by Library Director or designee.

Epidemic or Pandemic Response

As an epidemic or pandemic progresses, the Director or designee may implement the following strategies, among others, in correlation with the level of impact being addressed. Adjustments may be made up and down between levels in response to emergent needs.

A. Level 1: Normal Operations

(Threat Level: Low)

1. Make no changes to current operations and procedures.

2. Remain aware of changes to public health recommendations.

B. Level 2: Enhance Sanitation

(Threat Level:

Elevated)

1. In addition to Level 1, Action #2, add:
2. Provide additional hand sanitizer, soap and towels throughout library buildings.
3. Wipe down all horizontal surfaces and high contact items (doorknobs, phones, keyboards, coffee makers) once or twice a day.
4. Spray soft furnishings with disinfectant spray at the end of each day.
5. Weekly deep clean of children's area (toys, etc., with bleach solution).
6. Remove soft toys from children's areas (run in hot dryer, then bag up).
7. Stop serving food at programs unless individually packaged.
8. Staff follow preventive measures:
 - a. Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or, in the absence of a tissue, one's sleeve or elbow, and dispose of used tissues promptly.
 - b. Wash hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner, especially after coughing or sneezing.
 - c. Frequently clean all commonly touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs.
 - d. Recommend vaccinations for seasonal influenza and other diseases, when available.
 - e. Masks and gloves are not recommended as preventive measures.

C. Level 3: Rigorous Sanitation

(Threat Level: High)

1. In addition to Level 2 actions, add:
2. Hourly hand sanitizing or handwashing for all staff.
3. Wipe/disinfect all returned materials before reshelving.
4. Hold all returned materials for 24 hours after disinfecting before recirculating.
5. Consider not recirculating returned materials until after health crisis is resolved.
6. Remove all toys and manipulatives from children's areas.
7. Stop serving food and drink at programs.

8. Consider canceling meeting room reservations and/or library programs to support social distancing recommendations.
9. Staff observe the health of library users – library staff may ask patrons that are symptomatic to use a face mask or to leave the Library using the Code of Conduct (i.e., unsafe behavior).
10. Adjust volunteer work schedules as needed.
11. Cancel library-related travel.
12. Hold Board of Trustee meetings by video- or tele-conference.
13. Staff who are symptomatic stay home following guidelines from state and local public health authorities:
 - a. Expect sick employees to be out for anywhere from three days to four weeks, depending on diagnosis.
 - b. Doctor's notes for those staff who are ill but not with an epidemic or pandemic illness are not required to validate their illness or return to work, as doctor's offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and may not be able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
 - c. Doctor's notes are required for workers who test positive for an epidemic or pandemic illness, prior to returning to work.
 - d. Employees who are well but who have a family member at home with symptoms of an epidemic or pandemic illness should stay home. However, these employees should monitor their health every day and return to work as soon as it is determined safe to do so. Employees may use sick, vacation or personal leave, unless they are advised or ordered to quarantine, in which case they would use emergency leave. They may be able to work at home to offset leave, with Director or designee approval.

D. Level 4: Restrict Activities
Emergency

(Threat Level:

1. In addition to Levels 2 and 3, add:
2. Cancel passive programs to reduce spread of contact infection (shared pencils, etc.).
3. Cancel all meeting room reservations and library programs to reduce person-to-person infection.
4. Enforce social distancing in public areas.
5. Restrict public activities to picking up holds at the front desk that have been placed by phone or online; all other public areas closed to patrons.
6. Consider closing drop boxes; do not accept return of library materials.

7. Change circulation parameters—extend holds shelf pick-up time; lengthen due dates for current and future checkouts; suspend billing for overdue materials.

E. Level 5: Building Closures
Critical

(Threat Level:

1. Reduce hours if staffing falls below acceptable levels.
2. Close Library if public visitation is too low to warrant keeping open, or if staff levels are too low to operate the Library.
3. Close Library if a staff member or recent patron is tested positive for an epidemic or pandemic illness
 - a. Employees who test positive should follow public health authorities' instructions to quarantine.
 - b. Other staff should follow public health authorities' instructions if exposed to contagion.
 - c. Library will close for a minimum of three days to clean and disinfect, and only reopen when cleared by local public health authorities.
4. Close Library if advised, requested or ordered by public health authorities, or at the discretion of Library Director or designee.
5. Any school closure will likely result in a corresponding library closure.
6. Close drop boxes and post closed signs; do not accept return of library materials.
7. Inform vendors and delivery services of closure to suspend deliveries.
8. Notify after-hours cleaners.
9. Library essential business functions continue—online systems, communications, payroll and accounts payable, administrative coordination.
10. Staff leaders enact pre-determined emergency roles and responsibilities.

Recovery

Once Library receives notification from public health authorities that an epidemic or pandemic period is over, recovery and restoration efforts will begin implementation.

The criteria to re-open a location are:

- Authority granted by the local public health authority and Director;
- Building disinfected; and
- Ability to maintain minimum staffing.

The Library Director will contact staff to begin recovery implementation. In preparation for resumption of library services, the following recovery components, features, and issues will be addressed:

- A. Library Administration:
 - Communicate with public health authorities to make estimations for how long it will take staff to return from leave and when staffing will return to normal levels or pre-event status.
 - Coordinate staff notification.
- B. Facilities Management:
 - Contract with janitorial vendors for disinfection prior to reopening.
 - Evaluate for any supplies which need replenishing.
- C. Managers and Staff:
 - Determine if any services and procedures, which were initiated during the epidemic or pandemic, need to be canceled, extended or re-evaluated.
 - Determine if there are any services and procedures which were postponed that need to be reinstated.
 - Review the epidemic and pandemic response plan and make recommendations to improve response and recovery capabilities.
- D. Community Relations:
 - Issue an announcement regarding the reopening of the Library and resumption of services through print, online and media sources.

Effective: 03/17/2020

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