

OSSINING PUBLIC LIBRARY

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

Purpose of the Policy

In the event of a pandemic or infectious disease outbreak, the library must plan for the safety of staff and patrons, as well as continuity of operations in a manner that is safe, mission-driven, and responsive to the community as well as to the situation. The library's response to a pandemic must be flexible and informed by government directives and regulations, known best practices, and guidance from health departments or health authorities. A Pandemic Team will be formed and will consist of the Library Director, Assistant Library Director, Department Heads, the Marketing and Communications Librarian, the Technology and Training Librarian, and other staff as necessary and appropriate.

Library Operations

The Ossining Public Library is committed to providing the highest quality, most community-responsive library service possible. In a pandemic or infectious disease outbreak the library may need to adjust, alter, or reduce service to the public. The value of any service to the community will be weighed against the safety, both to the staff and to the public, of providing that service.

Reduction in Services

Reductions or suspension of library services or changes in how services are provided may be necessary during various stages of a pandemic or infectious disease outbreak. Decisions about library services will be based on available guidance and regulations from federal, state, county, and local government agencies and public health authorities. The Library Director will consult with the President of the Board of Trustees and will communicate all decisions to the Library Board. During the outbreak:

- The Director, in consultation with the President of the Board of Trustees, may reduce or discontinue library programs or shift programs to a digital or passive format.
- The Director, in consultation with the President of the Board of Trustees, may discontinue the use of meeting and performance spaces by outside groups.
- The Director may close off portions of the library building or relocate services from one part of the building to another.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

- The Director, in consultation with the President of the Board of Trustees, may need to limit the number of people in the library building, impose age limits on unaccompanied children who are allowed in the library, or impose time limits on how long people can stay in the building.

Cleaning and Safety

Regular cleaning, use of hand-washing and hand sanitizer, and use of personal protective equipment is key in allowing library services to continue, all or in part, while protecting the safety of staff and public. The following measures should be considered at different stages when library services are adjusted or limited, or the library is shut down, or the subsequent reopening:

- Provide hand sanitizer to staff and public
- Provide masks and gloves to staff who request them. If government directives mandate masks and/or gloves or if public health authorities recommend masks and/or gloves, staff may be required to wear them when on duty.
- Increase the frequency and thoroughness of cleaning throughout the building, focusing on high-touch surfaces such as countertops, door handles, banisters, elevator buttons, etc.
- Provide cleaning and sanitizing wipes and/or paper towels and cleaning products to staff for frequent cleaning of staff and public workspaces.
- Post signage throughout the building reminding staff and patrons of social distancing practices, hand washing and sanitizing, mask-wearing, staying home when sick, and other methods of preventing the spread of disease.
- Require staff who are sick to stay home.
- Require temperature checks of staff if deemed feasible and appropriate.

Library Closure

In the event of a pandemic or infectious disease outbreak, the Ossining Public Library may need to close to the public or reduce hours. The library will follow directives and guidance from government agencies and public health authorities in making this decision. The library may need to close to the public or reduce hours in the case where adequate staffing levels for basic service cannot be maintained.

Maintaining Service to the Public

The Ossining Public Library takes its mission of service to the community very seriously and will make every effort to provide needed, meaningful service during a pandemic or infectious disease outbreak closure or partial closure.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

Technology

The library will provide the technology infrastructure and support for staff to work remotely and onsite.

Communications with the Public

During the period of crisis, communication to the public is critical. The library's communications through email blasts and social media posts will be the lifeline between the library and the community. Communication frequency will be increased in an effort to keep the public informed about the library's operating hours, library closure, temporary telephone numbers, digital programs, and other matters of interest or importance. Staff will respond to patron emails and will be accessible by phone. Other communication methods (such as chat) will be investigated and implemented if deemed beneficial.

Digital Content

The library will prioritize and widely publicize digital content such as ebooks, downloadable audiobooks, streaming services, and databases. If feasible, the library will prioritize collection development spending in the area of digital content. Services will be put in place that allow patrons to receive help accessing digital content. This help should include help by phone, email, and instructional guides and videos available online.

Online Programming

The library will shift as much programming as possible to digital, online formats, including streamed programs, recorded programs, and passive programs. All staff who are responsible for library programming will provide online programming, including streamed programs, recorded programs, passive programs and activities, and real-time participatory programs using online meeting software and social media platforms.

Extension of Due Dates and Suspension of Fines

In the event of a closure, due dates will be extended to a point in time beyond which it is thought the pandemic will be over. Fines will be suspended and all items checked in during the pandemic and for a period of time after the immediate threat is over will be done so in amnesty mode. The public will be encouraged not to return their books and materials until further notice if the library is closed to the public.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

Maintaining Essential Operations

Essential operations are those which must continue in order for the library to function as an organization and in order to maintain the integrity and safety of the library building, building systems, and property.

Business Office Operations

In the event that the library is closed to the public, essential business operations must continue, including bill paying, payroll, reporting, communication with vendors, insurance agents, attorneys, etc. Every effort will be made to continue these operations in a timely manner. Business Office and Administrative Staff may need to enter the building during a staff shutdown in order to complete essential work or retrieve documents, equipment, and other materials to complete work from home.

Building Operations

During any building closure, the building will continue to be cleaned and maintained by Building and Grounds staff. Building and Grounds staff will be scheduled in such a way that minimizes their contact with each other and allows them to work in a safe manner. Face masks, gloves, and other protective supplies and equipment will be made available and may be required.

Employee Attendance and Activities

During a period of pandemic or infectious disease outbreak, regular work methods or work rules may need to be changed in order to accommodate both the library's needs and the needs, including health and safety needs, of the staff.

- If the library is open to the public, or if employees are needed on site, employees are expected to report to work as scheduled. Employees may use paid time off or leave without pay as an option.
- Employees may be reassigned, within reason and in consultation with the union president, to duties that are different than their normal duties. Employees' skill sets and abilities will be taken into consideration when planning reassignment.
- Employees who come to work sick will be sent home immediately.
- In the event that the library is closed to the public, but open to staff, mandatory staffing reductions may inform how many staff are able to work in the building. All staff who are scheduled to work in the building are expected to report to work as scheduled.
- Non-essential work-related travel will be canceled or postponed.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

Work from home may be required during a pandemic and may continue, all or in part, during the re-entry period. All work from home must be approved by the Library Director, who will work in consultation with the Department Heads to make the decision regarding work from home for each employee.

- All employees who work all or in-part from home must use a reporting method in addition to the time and attendance system. Such reporting methods will be determined by the Library Director.
- Employees who work from home are expected to perform meaningful work such as digital programming, collection development, Business Office operations, bibliography compilation, website development, administrative tasks, and online professional development. Work that provides programs and services to the public, as well as essential Business Office and administrative work, will be prioritized. Employees are expected to work their full allotment of hours. Part time employees may request to work fewer hours if they choose. Employees will be paid for the hours that they work.
- Department Heads and Supervisors will routinely check in with employees working from home.
- When the library begins to open first to staff, and then to the public, some employees may be asked to work from home for all or part of their scheduled hours. Such decisions will be made based on the ability of the employee to do their work from home and considerations for staffing levels in the library building.
- If an employee wishes to continue to work all or in part from home when the library is beginning the re-entry phase, the employee must provide a written request to his or her supervisor and to the Library Director. The employee must outline what tasks he or she plans to do from home, how many hours they are requesting to work from home, and the reason for their request. The ability to work from home is not an entitlement and requests may be denied. Decisions will be made based on the following factors:
 - The employee's duties and whether or not these can be reasonably and effectively done from home.
 - The need for on-site staff in the library building.
 - The equitable distribution of on-site work within each department or throughout the library staff to the extent that this is possible.

Staff health monitoring will be necessary at various times during the pandemic.

- Staff who feel ill or who have a fever must stay home and inform their supervisor.
- Mandatory health screening will be required for all on-site workers.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

- Staff members who test positive for the disease must inform their supervisor immediately and must quarantine at home, following instructions from government agencies or public health authorities.
 - The Library Director or her designee must be informed and must immediately start contact tracing. All staff who were in close contact with the positive individual for a period of time as defined by government agencies or public health authorities must be informed and sent home for quarantine for a period of time as defined by government agencies or public health authorities.
 - The positive person's immediate work area and all areas where he or she may have worked for a period of time will be disinfected as soon as possible.
 - While staff may be informed that a coworker tested positive, the positive person's identity will be kept confidential from all but those who need to know.

Closing and Re-Entry Plan

Closing Plan

This plan outlines a phased closing of the physical building and/or physical, on-site services and work. Each phase outlines the services that will be reduced or paused, all or in part, the conditions necessary to reduce or pause these services, and other considerations. Flexibility is given to the Library Director to determine the feasibility of providing services using information that is available from governmental agencies and public health authorities. Reducing or pausing services may not be linear. The library may move from one phase of closing to another, and then be permitted to move back to a previous phase due to public health conditions and considerations provided by governmental agencies or information from public health authorities.

Closing Phase 1

Some library services are reduced or paused. Staffing levels remain at regular levels if government directives or information from public health agencies allow. This phase will start when government agencies or public health authorities declare an immediate or imminent threat of pandemic in the local area or the state.

- Staff and public work spaces may be adjusted to accommodate safe social distancing. Meeting rooms and performance spaces may be prepared to be used for staff work spaces or other purposes.
- Staff working in the building may be required to wear masks, and must wash hands frequently and use hand sanitizer between hand washings.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

- Safe materials handling and processing will begin, observing recommended cleaning and quarantining methods.
- Limited delivery may be available (to be determined by WLS)
- If advisable, curb-side pickup and other curbside services can start.
- In person, on site programs may be canceled or postponed. Programs that can be provided digitally are moved to digital format and digital content is prioritized.
- Safety supplies are inventoried and additional supplies are purchased.
- Frequent communication with the public starts.
- Frequent cleaning of the building, especially high touch surfaces is prioritized. Building disinfecting occurs regularly or as needed.

Closing Phase 2

More library services are reduced or paused. Public may not be able to enter the building or there may be limited public access to the building. This phase will start when government agencies or public health authorities set restrictions that limit on site or in person service and/or limit the number of staff who are allowed to work on site.

- If staffing limits are set or if social distancing requires it, staff who can work all or in part from home may be asked to do so. It is possible that most or all staff, with the exception of some essential employees, will work all or in part from home.
- On site will continue to follow safety protocol, such as mask-wearing and frequent hand-washing.
- All in person or on-site programs are canceled or postponed. Digital programming continues to expand.
- Electronic resources are prioritized.
- If not started already, curbside pickup and other curbside services start.
- Frequent communication with the public continues.
- Frequent cleaning of the building continues. Building disinfecting occurs regularly or as needed.

Re-Entry Plan

This plan outlines a phased reopening and restoration of library services. Each phase outlines the services that will be restored, all or in part, the conditions necessary to restore those services, and other considerations. Flexibility is given to the Library Director to determine the feasibility of providing services using information that is available from governmental agencies and public health authorities. The library's re-entry may not be linear. The library may move from one phase of re-entry to another, only to be forced to move back to a previous phase due to safety concerns, governmental directives, or information from public health authorities.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

Re-Entry Phase 1

The library building continues to be closed to the public, but staff are permitted to work in the building. Depending on government requirements or information from public health authorities, staff may be limited to a certain number or percentage. This phase is dependent on the ability of the library to provide enough safety supplies for staff. This phase will start when the regulating government agency lifts any order that requires all but the Buildings and Grounds Staff to work from home.

- Scheduled staff start working on-site. Percentage limits of on-site staff may be imposed and on-site staffing levels will be adjusted to comply within limits.
- Staff who are permitted to work all or in part from home continue to do so.
- On-site staff work to prepare the library for limited on-site service. Sneeze guards are installed at all service desks. Social distancing cues are installed in waiting areas of the building. Public computers are repositioned to allow for social distancing. Furniture in public areas may be removed or moved.
- Staff and public work spaces will be adjusted to accommodate safe social distancing. Meeting rooms and performance spaces may be prepared to be used for staff work spaces or other purposes.
- Staff working in the building are required to wear masks, wash hands frequently, and use hand sanitizer between hand washings.
- Safe materials handling and processing resumes, observing recommended cleaning and quarantining methods.
- Limited delivery is available for returns to other libraries (to be determined by WLS)
- If advisable, curbside pickup could be resumed.
- Programs continue to be provided digitally and digital content continues to be prioritized.
- Frequent communication with the public continues.
- Frequent cleaning of the building, especially high touch surfaces, continues. Building disinfecting occurs regularly or as needed.
- Frequent communication to the public continues.

Re-Entry Phase 2

The library building opens to the public, but with limited services available and limited areas accessible. On-site staffing levels increase, in compliance with government requirements. The number of people who can be in the building may be limited by government requirements. This phase is dependent on the ability of the library to secure enough safety and cleaning supplies. This phase will start when the regulating government agency allows public libraries or institutions that are similar to public libraries to open to the public and when the library's physical space allows for safe interactions

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

between staff and public.

- Scheduled staff continue to work on site. Some staff continue to work some hours all or in part from home. Staff schedules may be staggered to accommodate social distancing.
- Staff may be required to wear masks. Frequent hand washing is required and use of hand sanitizer between hand washing is required.
- Limited on-site library service is provided. Services may include:
 - Closed or open stacks checkout
 - Check-in by Book Drop
 - Reference services by phone, by email, or in-person.
 - Printing services, such as on-demand printing
 - Curbside checkout and curbside printing
 - Limited computer availability if safe
 - Outdoor programs may be offered if social distancing can be accomplished.
 - Some services may be offered by appointment if deemed necessary
- Limited areas of the building will be opened to the public. Service points may be relocated in order to contain services to the public to certain areas.
- Digital services continue.
 - Streamed, recorded, and online programs continue.
 - Digital content continues to be promoted.
 - Phone assistance continues.
- Specific hours for vulnerable patrons may be considered if feasible.
- Library hours may be limited due to staffing levels or other considerations.
- Meeting rooms and performance spaces are unavailable to the public and may be used for staff spaces or other purposes.
- Extended stays or gatherings may be discouraged or disallowed. Seating may be removed from public spaces.
- Home delivery may be considered if feasible and safe.
- Frequent cleaning of the building, especially high touch surfaces, continues. Disinfecting occurs regularly or as needed.
- Unaccompanied minors under the age of 18 must make an appointment to enter the library building.
- Frequent communication to the public continues.

Re-Entry Phase 3

Additional services are added. This phase is dependent on the ability of the library to secure enough safety and cleaning supplies. This phase will begin when information from government agencies and public health authorities advise that infection rates are declining but that social distancing is still strongly recommended.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

- More areas of the building are opened up.
- Some seating is reintroduced.
- Additional public computers are reintroduced if safe.
- Service points are reestablished at their traditional locations. Staffing levels at service points may be reduced to provide social distancing.
- Curbside delivery and print on demand service may continue if deemed beneficial and feasible.
- If started in Phase 2, home delivery may continue.
- Digital programming continues.
- Digital content continues to be publicized.
- Meeting rooms and performance spaces continue to be unavailable to the public.
- Unaccompanied minors under the age of 14 may be restricted from entering the library building. Unaccompanied minors between the ages of 10 and 13 must make an appointment to enter the building.
- Frequent cleaning continues.
- Staff are required to continue hand-washing and use of hand sanitizer. Use of masks will be determined by recommendations from public health authorities or by government requirement.
- Frequent communication to the public continues.

Re-Entry Phase 4

The majority of library services and hours are restored. This phase is dependent on the ability of the library to secure enough safety and cleaning supplies. This phase will begin when social distancing requirements have been relaxed and smaller group gatherings are allowed. Large group gatherings may still be prohibited or discouraged.

- Full on-site staffing resumes, though service desks may be staffed differently in order to continue social distancing.
- Any staff working from home are by request and only with the approval of the Library Director.
- Small in-person programs resume if recommended social distancing rules can be followed.
- Age limit for unaccompanied children in the library building reverts back to the ages laid out in the Unaccompanied Children Policy if it is deemed safe.
- Children's and teen programs resume, but children or teens must be able to understand and practice safe hygiene and social distancing. Programs where social distancing cannot be accomplished may continue to be suspended or may be provided in an online format.
- Public use of meeting and performance spaces may still be prohibited.
- Large programs may still be inadvisable.

PANDEMIC POLICY AND PLAN

- Communication to the public continues. Frequency may be modified.

Re-Entry Phase 5

Full service is restored to our “new normal” in all areas of service and all public areas of the library building are open. This phase begins when government agencies and public health officials have declared the threat of infection to be low or non-existent.

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 6, 2020