Library Services
COVID-19 Requirements

Summary of May 19, 2021 Changes:

- Removed the requirement to quarantine returned items.

Prior to reopening any operations, libraries are required to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 exposure control, mitigation, and recovery plan that at least conforms to the requirements of this document. The plan must include policies regarding the following control measures: customer traffic management; PPE utilization; on-location physical distancing; no-contact material returns; hygiene; sanitation; symptom monitoring; incident reporting; disinfection procedures; COVID-19 safety training; exposure response procedures and a post-exposure incident project-wide recovery plan. A copy of the plan must be available at the location for inspection by state and local authorities. Failure to meet planning requirements may result in sanctions, including forced closure of the location.

All public libraries, public library systems, institutional & governmental libraries, and libraries at institutions of higher education are permitted to provide mail, curbside, and limited in-person services to customers. However, in general libraries should continue to facilitate services through the mail or via curbside pick-up where possible to limit interaction between staff and customers within enclosed spaces.

<u>Library Operations Specific Requirements:</u>

1. In order to open any in-person services, libraries must require customers to wear a face covering at all times while present within the facility.

2. Customer Traffic Management

    a. **Customer occupancy** – The occupancy limits below do not include employees in the calculation. Staff must be kept to the minimum necessary to accomplish the tasks that must be done in-person. Work that can be done remotely should be done remotely.

    Phases 1 and 2 – Occupancy must be at 25% or lower of the maximum building occupancy.

    Phase 3 – If the building is less than 100,000 square feet, no more than 400 people or 50% of the building's occupancy, whichever is less, is permitted. If the building is more than 100,000 square feet, no more than 600 people or 50% of the building's occupancy, whichever is less, is permitted.

    b. Place distance markers outside of the library in order to maintain six feet of physical distancing requirements for customers waiting to enter. Assign employees to assist and monitor customers waiting to enter if necessary.

    c. Arrange the flow of customers to eliminate choke points and reduce crowding. Mark high traffic areas with six-foot markers to maintain physical distancing requirements.

    d. Place conspicuous signage at entrances and throughout the store alerting staff and customers to the required occupancy limits, six feet of physical distancing, and requirement to wear facial coverings.

    e. Reduce or eliminate the use of in-person check-out processes wherever possible. Where they are still necessary, place distance markers in check-out lines in order to maintain the six feet physical distancing requirements for customers waiting to check out materials.

f. Ensure a minimum of six feet of physical distancing requirements are maintained between customers and staff, except when exchanging materials. Sneeze guards or other barriers must be placed throughout the facility at all fixed places of potential interaction between customers and employees that could be less than six feet.

g. Where possible, establish hours of operation that permit access solely to high-risk individuals as defined by the CDC.

3. Sanitation

a. Ensure operating hours allow downtime between shifts for thorough cleaning.

b. Employees should be encouraged to regularly wash their hands, and must do so before and after using the restroom, eating, or engaging in any activity that involves exposing their hands to other bodily fluids (i.e. coughing, sneezing, blowing nose, etc.).

c. Libraries must provide disinfectant and sanitation products for employees to clean their workspace, equipment, tools, and common areas. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with greater than 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol must be provided and utilized, but may not supplant regular hand-washing.

a. Frequent sanitation of surfaces should occur, particularly in high-traffic areas such as restrooms, computer stations, doors, and check-out counters amongst others.

b. Where feasible, libraries must keep doors and windows open and utilize fans to improve ventilation. Adjust mechanical ventilation systems to bring in as much outside air as possible. Increase filters to MERV 13 if the HVAC can accommodate.

4. Group spaces and public meeting spaces

a. Generally, libraries are discouraged from allowing the use of group meeting or study spaces by customers. However, at the discretion of the appointed building-specific COVID-19 supervisor, libraries may allow customers to utilize these spaces under certain conditions.

b. In Phases 1 and 2: Must limit to five customers or less per grouping.

   In Phase 3: Must limit to 10 customers or less per grouping and not exceed 50% capacity of the room.

c. Groups or individual customers must be far enough apart when measured from occupied space to occupied space, to ensure customers are a minimum of six feet away from customers in adjacent space, or there must be a physical barrier or wall separating customers.

d. Clean and sanitize any group or public space after each use by customers and ensure a reasonable amount of time passes before allowing subsequent groups or individual customers to access the space.

5. Computer terminals/stations

a. If, at the discretion of the appointed building-specific COVID-19 supervisor, a library chooses to allow customers to access public computer terminals, certain protocols must be followed. **Best practice** includes the use of an automated reservation system, and use of coverings for screens, keyboards, mouse, and other high-contact areas, but is not required.

b. Customers must be far enough apart, when measured from station to station, to ensure a minimum of six feet of physical distancing from customers in adjacent space, or there must be a physical barrier or wall separating.

    c.   Clean and sanitize each station after each use and ensure a reasonable amount of time passes before allowing subsequent access.

    d.   Limit customers' access to an appropriate amount of time based on number of available spaces, and customer demand, with appropriate time in-between scheduled appointments.

6. Returns

    a.   Libraries should continue to utilize no-contact return procedures where possible. Any in-person returns should follow protocols to limit potential staff exposure including:

        i.   Staff who are processing materials as they are returned must wash hands immediately after processing the returned materials.

       ii.   Employees who process returned items must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) consistent with "Which Mask for Which Task?".

7. Library staff must develop individualized library guidelines based on materials offered, library footprint, location, and other local conditions.

Safety and Health Requirements

All facility owners have a general obligation to maintain a safe and healthy workplace in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules for a variety of workplace hazards. Employers must specifically ensure operations follow the main Labor & Industries COVID-19 requirements to protect workers. COVID-19 workplace and safety requirements can be found here.

Additional information is available at Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19) Resources and Paid Leave under the Washington Family Care Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.