

EPIDEMIC/PANDEMIC/PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY POLICY AND PROCEDURES KIMBALL PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, a disease can be declared an *epidemic* when it spreads over a wide area and many individuals are taken ill at the same time. If the spread escalates further, an epidemic can become a *pandemic*, which affects an even wider geographical area and a significant portion of the population becomes affected. This can include diseases, such as Influenza and Coronavirus. A Public Health Emergency can be: a) a disease or disorder presents a public health emergency (PHE); or b) that a public health emergency, including significant outbreaks of infectious disease or bioterrorist attacks, otherwise exists.

For the purposes of this policy and procedure, epidemic and pandemic will be used interchangeably.

The Kimball Public Library will work with the City of Kimball and Kimball County to determine what services the library might be expected to provide in the event of pandemic outbreak in the community. Suggestions could include:

- The library might serve as a site to distribute information or emergency kits.
- The Library Director and library board might work with local health officials to determine whether it is appropriate to keep the library open, restrict areas where a higher density of people congregate, or to distribute materials or services at a single pick-up location.
- The library might enact appropriate staffing levels and determine at what point library services must be reduced or suspended due to staff illnesses, as well as what role the library can play in local emergency plans.

PURPOSE

To establish the protocol to be used in the event of an epidemic, pandemic or public health emergency. If there is an 'event', the library may be required to operate on limited staffing or take unique measures to help slow the spread of the illness, including service restrictions, limited hours of the operation, or possible closures by order of local, state or federal public health officials.

Recovery from a pandemic may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or other physical crises. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the library can be maintained for several weeks or more with limited staff and reduced hours due to a pandemic.

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN—EPIDEMIC/PANDEMIC

This plan differs from a general emergency preparedness policy or procedure. With an emergency preparedness policy, there is an assumption that staff will return to the building or begin recovery work almost immediately after the event or crisis. If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for several weeks or more. Appropriate staffing level refers to the minimum number of qualified staff necessary to provide service, safely and efficiently as determined by the Library Director or their designee.

POLICY

This policy shall continue to be followed in the event of an epidemic/pandemic or public health emergency while the library remains operational.

CRITERIA FOR CLOSING

The Kimball Public Library may temporarily close or limit services because of a public health emergency such as an epidemic/pandemic in the event that any of the following occur:

- A. a mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by Panhandle Public Health Department, Nebraska State Department of Health or other local government officials.
- B. if a Library employee has been diagnosed with the causative agent of the epidemic.
- C. at the direction of the Library Board of Trustees, or
- D. at the discretion of the Library Director.

In addition, Kimball Public Library may temporarily close, reduce its operating hours, or limit service temporarily in the event that there is insufficient staff to maintain basic service levels or if unable to maintain adequate social distancing for health and safety to reduce the possible spread of the contagion. In the event of closure, overdue fines will be suspended. The exterior book drop will be

cleared periodically.

The Director can update procedures as needed during a pandemic. In the event of closure or reduction in operating hours, the Library Director will maintain communication with City Administration, staff, Library Board of Trustees, and patrons.

TYPES OF LIBRARY CLOSURES

- A. Complete Closure: no staff in the building at any time.
- B. Library Closure with Essential Services Only: essential library employees may be required to work from home or on site during closures to perform necessary duties, such as payroll, bill paying, building maintenance, emptying book drops, etc.
- C. Library Closure with Reduced Services – staff may:
 1. be allowed to work inside the building, although the building is closed to the public
 2. be assigned to provide services to patrons in newly determined ways
 3. be assigned to clean the building
- D. In the event that Kimball Public Schools are closed because of an epidemic, the Kimball Public Library will remain open unless one of the above conditions under the “Criteria for Closing” section above is met.

COMMUNICATION

In the event of cancellation of services, programs, meeting room usage or Library closures, administration staff will:

- Notify staff, trustees, and the Friends of the Library President, custodial staff and public via email, social media, the website and newspapers
- Call or email scheduled program presenters, community room reservations, outreach sites, program attendees (if contact information is available)
- Provide information regarding the epidemic/pandemic on the Library’s website’s homepage
- Create signage for updating patrons inside the library
- Notify local media and other government entities as deemed necessary

SOCIAL DISTANCING PROCEDURES

Social distancing may be recommended by local, state or federal health officials. Library staff will follow suggestions and directions to implement social distancing within the Library buildings.

Masks and gloves, along with training of staff in their removal and disposal, will be provided as determined by authorities and the situation.

Examples for social distancing (i.e., keeping people and their belongings separate from each other) include removing a number of chairs so people aren't sitting close to each other; limiting the number of people who can come in at any one time; limiting the number of available computers and use of computers by appointment only (15 minutes to 50 minutes) and disinfecting each computer, mouse, desk & chair after each use; use of masks and gloves; disinfect tables and chairs after use, etc.

Regular programing and meetings may be provided by using social media such as Facebook Live, Zoom, Skype, and other streaming venues.

Online materials, information and reference services for the public will provided via the phone, e-mail and main social media venues.

Efforts will be made to accommodate the needs of people in the community who rely on library resources by home delivery, curbside delivery, fax and copy services.

ADDITIONAL CLEANING MEASURES

During the epidemic/pandemic, the Library will ask staff and contracted custodians to increase cleaning within each location according to standards for the cleaning of bathrooms, railings, door knobs, telephones, keyboards, counters, workstations/offices of employees, emptying of wastebaskets, etc. Standards will be determined by recommendations from local, state, or federal public health entities (CDC, PPHD)

RESPONSIBILITY FOR LIBRARY OPERATIONS

If, for any reason, the Library Director is unable or unavailable to perform the responsibilities and decisions outlined in this policy, the Assistant Director shall have administrative authority for this policy and all library operations.

APPROPRIATE STAFFING LEVEL

Appropriate staffing level for a temporary period of time is defined as one to two healthy employees available to be present at the library during all open hours. An inability to maintain this temporary minimal level or necessity to maintain this temporary minimal level for more than two consecutive days will result in reduced hours or closing the library.

In providing service safely and efficiently, the following actions may be taken at the discretion of the Library Director or designee:

- Increased health/safety measures for staff (wearing gloves, wiping down work areas, etc.)
- Social distance practices in public areas
- Reduction of staffing
- Cancellation of all programs, special events, and meeting room reservations
- Reallocation of employee responsibilities and shift/schedule changes to provide coverage during open hours
- Closure of the library.

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the established City of Kimball Personnel Policy, or due to sickness of the pandemic itself. ~~In the event of closure, employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.~~

GUIDELINES FOR RE-OPENING

The principles of personal safety, risk mitigation, transparency, and capacity guide the ongoing development and application of these guidelines.

Every community in the area is unique and all library decisions are made by local library boards. These guidelines and best practices are intended to allow libraries to make the best possible decisions for their communities. Not all libraries will have the ability to offer curbside service at the same level or along the same timeline as other libraries. The safety of library staff and communities is of paramount consideration while evaluating the services offered.

Each library and system will determine its level of physical item service, handling, and delivery based upon its ability to abide by public health protocols for staff and patrons. The Library Director will share this information with trustees to ensure informed decisions when planning future service offerings within the context of the pandemic. Planning for the upcoming service levels will be based on the Governor's plan or other official authorities.

The Guidelines for Re-opening is a living document and a work in progress; it will be edited and added to as situations evolve. It serves as the reference point for changes in recommendations or orders coming from local, state, and federal governments, the Department of Health, and the Department of Homeland Security, and it will address how those orders impact library services at the public library level. Examples for closing and reopening phases are in Appendix A, pages ix – xi.

SICK LEAVE, PAYROLL, WORK FROM HOME

The City of Kimball Employee Handbook outlines the regular PTO policy. In the event of closure, the library will follow current closure compensation policies per the City of Kimball Employee Handbook or as determined by the City Administration.

In the event of school districts and day care closures due to an epidemic, staff may choose to use their accrued leave or take unpaid time off to stay at home. If the library is closed or hours reduced, healthy employees may be assigned work-at-home tasks to be completed as part of their compensated hours. When appropriate, work tools (laptops, supplies, etc.) will be checked out to employees by the Library Director or designee for work-at home assignments.

In the case of reduced staffing or reduced hours of operation, the Library Director or designee will prioritize service-related tasks and assign the daily work plan to staff.

EDUCATING THE PUBLIC IN ADVANCE OF AN EPIDEMIC

The public will be informed of the status of the library closures and re-opening with the use of any media available, e-mails and phone calls (i.e., see the Communication and Media Policy). Updates will be provided periodically as the situation dictates.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is an excellent source of outbreak information and emergency preparedness concerns. Public libraries may wish to review their resources for guidance, checklists, and cleaning and disinfecting recommendations. The CDC also provides a number of free print resources, from fact sheets to hand washing posters, in multiple languages.

Agencies within the National Institutes of Health (NIH) also have reliable information, particularly the MedlinePlus consumer health

information from the U.S. National Library of Medicine, and more in-depth information for researchers from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

The World Health Organization (WHO) site provides a more global perspective on pandemics, including international travel advice.

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