

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY LIBRARY

PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PLAN

During a pandemic, the Library may not serve as a critical institution, such as law enforcement or health and medical services, but it still has had an important role to play. Since pandemics spread through contact and proximity, the Library must be careful to balance need for library services against the potential for becoming a place where the pandemic can be transmitted and spread.

The COVID-19 virus of 2020 has had an unprecedented impact on libraries and the communities they serve. This plan seeks to explore several possible reopening scenarios, each dependent on factors such as recommendations from local, state and national health agencies, social distancing protocols, and critical community needs. The primary consideration in this plan is maintaining the safety of library patrons and staff while finding ways to provide necessary services that the library is uniquely positioned to perform. The most likely scenario may be a scaled reopening with an incremental easing of physical distancing measures.

In any of scenarios of reopening the library should implement the following:

1. Improved hygiene procedures for cleaning and disinfecting common areas
2. Acquiring protective gear such as masks and gloves to wear while administering public services
3. Continuing to allow teleworking where it makes sense from an operational standpoint
4. Follow Health Officer's recommendation for testing of staff for the virus and/or for immunity to the virus
5. Messaging and plans should be in place to encourage the most vulnerable populations to limit their time in the community and/or allow for service hours that accommodate their needs more specifically

Possible scenarios for phased reopening:

When the shelter in place order is lifted a variety of possible scenarios may come to pass. There is the possibility of the complete removal of restrictions, but more likely is a progressive phasing out of restrictions or a possible return to restrictions if the virus begins to spread more actively within the community. Below are some possible scenarios for reopening the library with various restrictions along with possible criteria for when each scenario might be enacted.

Scenario 1: Virtual services only – On the recommendation of public health officials or after consultation between County Librarian and the CAO, the County Board of Supervisors closes library buildings to all public use.

Criteria:

The County Health Officer issues a shelter in place order except for securing food or necessary medical, transportation and other critical services. Essential library employees working remotely with few exceptions.

Possible Services:

- Expanded access to eBooks and eAudiobooks
- Access to wireless internet broadcast from library facilities
- Access to book drops for library returns
- Virtual programs
- Assistance via email, chat service and phone

Scenario 2: Limited core services

Front Door Service where customers are met at the door to pick-up items on hold/return of books to exterior book drops.

Criteria:

1. The County shelter in place order permits libraries to open
2. Strong social distancing recommendations remain in place

3. The library has access to the necessary materials to administer some essential services
4. The library has access to enough staffing to run said services

Possible services:

- Access to wireless Internet broadcast from library facilities
- Library WiFi Hotspot lending
- Front door or self-service holds pickup outside the building
- Pre-selected books by the bag by age, genre or other interest
- Access to book drops for library returns
- Virtual programs
- Assistance via email, chat service and phone

Preparation:

- Develop a procedure for front door pick up
- Secure and schedule staffing for front door pick up
- Secure protective gear for staff working in the public
- Secure adequate stores of disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer
- Determine a location to quarantine materials
- Post for staff and public the directions regarding face coverings
- Restore mail and package services

Scenario 3: Reopening with some social distancing requirements

Criteria:

1. Follow the direction of the County Health Order to open further
2. Strong social distancing recommendations remain in place
3. Gatherings are limited to 25% of building occupancy
4. The library has access to the necessary materials to administer some critical services
5. The library has access to enough staffing to run said services

Possible services:

- Metered access to the building by the public to ensure that social distancing is maintained and that no more than the recommended number are gathered within library facilities
- Core desk functions could resume with the possibility of staffing some desks and not others with priority given to the main public service desk at each location
- In-building hold pickup with the use of self-checkouts
- Access to library collections by the public
- Access to checkout services using self-check machines
- Access to some seating with improved social distancing measures, such as the removal of some chairs
- Access to portions of the computer areas with improved social distancing measures, such as the removal of some stations or through making some computers unavailable
- Possible computer assistance through virtual means such as screen sharing

Preparation:

- Determine library hours for each location
- Determine a method to meter access to the building
- Secure staffing for main service desks
- Develop a procedure for in-building holds pickup that allows minimal staff contact
- Post for staff and public the directions regarding face coverings
- Develop a self-check procedure that ensures social distancing
- Arrange the computer areas to allow adequate social distancing either by removing stations or placing stations out of order
- Investigate screen sharing software as a possibility for providing public computer help while maintaining social distance
- The County shelter in place order permits libraries to open

Scenario 4: Full-scale reopening of the library

Administration monitors and evaluates public health concerns, but services continue as usual. All services restored to pre-pandemic levels.

Criteria:

1. Following the County Health Order, the shelter in place order has been canceled and health officials have canceled current social distancing and gathering recommendations
2. The library has access to the necessary materials to maintain high hygiene standards
3. The library has access to enough staffing to run all its core operations

Services:

- A resumption of all core services with an increased emphasis on hygiene

Preparation:

- Restore any computers that have been removed to accommodate social distancing
- Restore all public seating
- Clear backlog of quarantined items and return to conventional turnaround on shelving items
- Re-staff and schedule for all operations
- Determine how virtual programs fit into the spectrum of services going forward

Scenario 5: Reopening followed by scaling down services or a second closure due to virus circulation

Criteria:

1. County health officials release a second order mandating social distancing or a shelter in place order
2. There is a sustained increase in community spread
3. Local hospitals are no longer able to safely treat all patients requiring hospitalization
4. Effective testing is not available within the community
5. The library is unable to maintain the hygiene or staffing necessary to operate

Services:

- What service would be accessible would depend on the restrictions inherent to any recommendation. The Library could return to Scenario 1 or 2 or revert to a full-scale closure as appropriate.

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