

BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN TO ADDRESS AN INFECTIOUS
DISEASE OUTBREAK OR OTHER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Drafted 4/20/20

I. Purpose.

The purpose of this document is to establish the Bridgeport Public Library Plan of Action in response to a pandemic, epidemic, or other public health emergency, ensuring protocols are in place to be used for the safety of all staff and visitors to the library. Recovery from a disease outbreak may take time and recommended courses of action are apt to change over the course of a public health emergency. This document is written with the understanding that as situations change along the course of a public health emergency, this plan and accompanying protocols may change. Specific recommendations for staffing, materials and supplies and health-related guidelines are subject to national, state and local governance mandates and public health department recommendations on those levels. In a state of no public health emergency, the library may establish plans and procedures that are not reflected in this document.

This document establishes the protocols that Bridgeport Public Library is following in response to an infectious disease outbreak, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in recommendations by the World Health Organization (WHO), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the State of Connecticut Department of Health, and City of Bridgeport Department of Public Health and Social Services.

During the course of a specific public health emergency several measures to mitigate the spread of infections may be put in place. Recommendations may include the following:

- Closing of schools, and government offices
- Restrictions for retail establishments
- Quarantines for exposed individuals and social distancing measures in all facets of social life

II. Definitions

“Public Health Emergency Response Plan.” A public health emergency 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 rebuilding almost immediately after the event or crisis (such as after a fire or storm, or if there is a utility shortage). 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.

“Pandemic.” A disease epidemic occurs when there are more cases of that disease than normal. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic of a disease and may occur when a new virus appears against which the human population has no immunity. When a new virus appears, it can be expected that the virus would spread rapidly, due to the interconnected nature of the world and the high level of global travel. Workers may be out during a pandemic due to unrelated illnesses, and other workers may be out for other reasons as covered in the City of Bridgeport Employee Policy Handbook. (Sources: World Health Organization, www.who.int and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.dcd.gov)).

III. Library Operations

- **Continuity of Services:** Under the guidance of public health authorities (local and state departments of public health) and the CDC and WHO, the library will work towards maintaining library operations while at the same time adhering to the best science and medical information and recommendations as to how to operate safely and responsibly during a pandemic, epidemic or other public health emergency. Such recommendations and guidelines may disrupt normal library service operations, and the library will consider the cost/benefit of any measure against the safety and wellbeing of staff and the public and will maintain library services as much as reasonably possible while adhering to the recommendations and guidelines of the above mentioned public health authorities.

- **Public Health Measures:** Bridgeport Public Library fully supports and promotes providing sanitary library facilities for use by the public and for library staff. The library in all circumstances provides:
 - Regular cleaning of all public areas and commonly used equipment such as computers, furniture, returned books and other library materials, counters, handles, and doorknobs.
Hand sanitizers for staff and use by the public, in bottles found at public service desks and automatic dispensers found at all library locations.
Tissues provided at public service desks.
 - Signage and pamphlets to promote public health recommendations
 - Library staff will be responsible for keeping their work areas, including computer keyboards and telephones clean.

In the event of a public health emergency, with the understanding that no amount of reasonable cleaning can guarantee an infection-free public space, library may increase mitigation measures and do the following:

- Temporarily increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing in all library facilities, focusing on high-touch areas.

- Keep on hand and provide PPE (personal protective equipment) for all staff. PPE may vary with the nature of work performed by staff.
- Post signs to encourage frequent hand washing for staff and the public
- Increase availability of hand sanitizer and tissues, and provide disinfecting wipes for surfaces such as tables as needed.
- Arrange furniture and computer workstations to promote social distancing measures.
- Use tape markers on the floor outside of public book check-out stations and service desks to maintain distance between library patrons
- Post and share informational pamphlets to educate the library public on changes to library services that aim to mitigate infections and maintain a safe environment for all.
- Provide gloves and safety procedures for all library staff handling books and library materials.
- If supplies are adequate the Library may provide masks to the public upon request or upon the need to mitigate a potential infectious public health emergency inside of library facilities.
- Explore the feasibility of equipment such as UV lights for use in the handling of returned library materials.
- Conduct employee awareness training in how to respond to a public health emergency in the library.
- Follow City Rules and Guidelines (Labor Relations and Human Resources) for sending sick staff home.
- The Library's ***Code of Conduct*** was adopted to promote the safety and wellbeing of all staff and library patrons. While the ***Code of Conduct*** does not specifically address the kinds of situations that may be found during a Public Health Emergency, any person behaving in a manner that threatens the health and safety of staff and the public shall be considered in violation of the Library's ***Code of Conduct***.
- If a patron violates the Library's ***Code of Conduct*** in a manner that jeopardizes the health and safety of staff and the public during a public health emergency, staff should call 911 for assistance. Library security or a staff member should calmly isolate the individual as much as reasonably possible until help arrives.
- Encourage personal responsibility among staff and promote CDC guidelines for good keeping good hygiene habits as outlined on the CDC website (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>)
- Remove all hard to clean display items, including books, toys and other materials from Children's Rooms.
- Close or limit traffic in areas of the library to the public where it has been determined that proper social distancing protocols cannot otherwise be adhered to during the course of operating hours.
- During an emergency, the City Librarian in consultation with the Library Board President, limit hours of operation or suspend services if staff absences and/or public demand for library services create a public health

concern. Other situations that are not dire may be brought to the Library Board.

- **Temporary Reduction or Suspension of Services:** On the advice of public health authorities during a public health emergency due to an infectious disease, the City Librarian with advice from the Library Board President, may suspend any and all public programs to adhere to local, state, or national orders to eliminate public gatherings for a period of time or indefinitely. Meeting Room use would also be suspended.
- **Temporary Library Closure:** In the event of a mandate by local, state, or national authorities, the Bridgeport Public Library will close. The library will follow the Plan of Operation, modifying as needed, that has been submitted to the City of Bridgeport. The Plan includes the identification of essential and non-essential staff, and staff approved for Teleworking. Staff whose work must be performed at a library facility and are performing essential library functions, will be assigned in accordance with the needs of maintaining basic library operations and maintaining a safe working place.

In the event of an epidemic, pandemic or other infectious public health emergency, the City Librarian, with the advice of the Library Board President, may close public library services in one or more library locations if it is deemed that:

- There is not enough staff to maintain basic library service levels
- Public visitation is too low to warrant keeping the library open
- Any other condition exists that prevents the Library from operating safely and effectively.

IV. Minimizing Negative Impacts on Operations and Services

Bridgeport Public Library provides important informational, educational, and recreational services to the public. During the event of an epidemic, pandemic or other public health emergency, the library will strive to main its services to the public to the fullest extent possible and lessen negative effects on the public as follows:

- **Online Library Services:** The library provides online services that can be accessed in the library and many of these services can be accessed remotely (from home). Where some online databases can only be accessed at the library, the library will work towards increasing the number of services that can be accessed remotely.
- Residents of Bridgeport can apply for new library cards online and renew their expired cards online.
- Recognizing that many residents do not have reliable Internet service, the library will find ways to help those seeking access to the Internet by keeping its Wi-Fi on for access outside of library facilities to the extent of that such Wi-Fi signals can reach.

- The Library will resume and implement ways to make hotspots available to the public, through item loans, and other means as becomes available and financially feasible.
- Computer access within the library will be available in keeping with reasonable safety measures and social distancing protocols.
- Library staff will keep statistics of all public service activities during closure.
- **Suspension of Due Dates and Fines:** in the event of a closure of the library due to an epidemic, pandemic or other public health emergency, all library material due dates will be suspended. Library fines will be waived. The Library will announce the suspension of due dates and fines on its website and all social media outlets to inform the public so that they are encouraged to keep their library material until the library reopens. This measure will minimize the public venturing out to return library materials and risking exposure during the time of a public health emergency.

V. Minimum Staffing Levels during an epidemic, pandemic or other public health emergency.

Each Bridgeport Public Library Location varies in square footage and floor layout. During a specific public health emergency due to a pandemic, epidemic, or infectious disease public health emergency, the City Librarian will determine the minimum number of staff needed in a given location to provide library services to the public. In the event that a library location drops below that minimum staffing level, staff in other library locations may be reassigned temporarily with regards to departments, hours and days to ensure that the library will be able to serve the public. If minimum staffing levels cannot be sustained over a reasonable length of time, the City Librarian with the advice of the Library Board President may recommend that the location close temporarily until minimum staffing can be restored. During a period of minimal staffing, certain public areas and departments may close at the discretion of the City Librarian until such time as adequate staffing can be maintained, while the library system as a whole remains open.

The presence or absence of staff may determine the Library's ability to carry out its daily operations during an epidemic, pandemic or other public health emergency. Services that may be affected are:

- Library programs, meeting room reservations, outreach, and event.
- Circulation, Reference and Information Desk, Children & Teen Departments
- Outreach and non-library events

Prioritization of Services: In the event the Library must operate with a minimal staff, the priority will be to provide services to the public, such as book check-out, library card sign-up/renewals, computer and reference assistance. In the event of a library closure, priorities are book returns, mail and other deliveries, payroll, bill processing and library board governance.

VI. Communication: In the event of an epidemic, pandemic, or other public health emergency, the City Librarian and administrative staff will maintain direct

communication with staff, the public, city officials and library board members through all avenues of communication, including the library website, library email, and social media.

Meetings: Wherever possible meetings of library staff will be conducted via videoconferencing to minimize public gatherings over the recommended guidelines.

VII. Employee Considerations:

The Bridgeport Public Library follows all City of Bridgeport Work rules and Policies (Labor Relations, Human Resources) where general work rules and attendance policies are outlined. During an epidemic, pandemic, or other public health emergency, the following considerations apply:

- If the Library is open, healthy employees are expected to report to work on time and as scheduled, with the understanding that they may be temporarily reassigned in terms of work location and tasks performed during the emergency period.
- Library staff that are sick should stay home, and follow standard absence reporting procedures.
- If a library employee becomes sick at work, they should inform their immediate supervisor, limit the number people that they come in contact with and seek medical attention. Staff will follow procedures from Human Resources for returning to work.
- Supervisors should re-evaluate work spaces in order to maintain the recommended six-foot distance among staff.
- Employee travel during a public health emergency should be prohibited.

What to do if a library staff member becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease. The Office of the CAO, Workplace Guidelines in Response to COVID-19 suggest the following:

1. Get the person home or to their healthcare provider, limiting the number of people who have contact with the sick person.
2. The supervisor should contact Labor Relations or Human Resources for assistance. The supervisor should provide all pertinent information to the Director of Health.
3. Supervisors should consider how to identify employees who may be at risk, and support them, without inviting stigma and discrimination into the workplace. This could include persons who might have contact with an infected person or have conditions that put them at higher risk of serious illness (e.g. diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease, or older age.) If the employee does not wish to go home, isolate them to minimize contact with other employees. The supervisor should contact Labor Relations or Human Resources for assistance.
4. If an employee reports concerns about possible exposure to an infectious disease, the supervisor should direct the employee to contact his or her qualified health care provider.

5. The library will keep PPE in stock, such as gloves and masks.
6. When an employee informs the employer that he or she has a communicable disease that will affect his or her performance on the job, the employer can require a medical exam or health certification to confirm the illness, just as it can with any other ADA disability. Supervisors must seek guidance and assistance from Labor Relations or Human Resources.
7. When an employee exhibits symptoms of influenza-like illness at work during a pandemic he/she should leave the workplace. An employer may require workers to go home if they exhibit symptoms of COVID-19. In addition, an employer is permitted to request such worker seek medical attention and get tested for COVID-19. The City's labor Relations Department should be consulted immediately in such situations and prior to issuing any directives to the employee suspected of having COVID-19.
8. Supervisors should advise staff of the availability of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Behavioral Health Associates, Inc.

What to do if a library patron becomes ill with a suspected infectious disease while in the library.

1. Any staff member responding to a case of a potentially infectious individual should first take all precautions to protect him or herself, wearing gloves and a mask with a filter or tissue inside.
2. One staff member should calmly isolate the individual by clearing out anyone in the immediate area of the sick individual as much as reasonably possible while another staff member calls 911. Do not attempt to touch or move the individual. Keep as much distance as reasonably possible.
3. The Staff should notify their supervisor once 911 has been called. Evacuated staff should remain in a designated area, practicing social distancing measures and wearing PPE until given further instructions.
4. An assessment by the City Librarian and/or designee to close off an area of the library or evacuate the facility will be made with the guidance of Labor Relations and/or Human Resources and the Department of Health and Social Services.
5. The Library will follow guidelines of the CDC to clean and disinfect all areas of potential contact with the ill person.

VIII. Responsibility for Library Operations

If, for any reason, the City Librarian is unable or unavailable to perform the responsibilities and decisions outlined in this plan, administrative authority for this plan and all library operations shall rest with the Assistant City Librarian. In the absence of the City Librarian, the Library Board reserves the right to designate a member of the senior library staff to perform the responsibilities and decisions outlined in this plan.

