

# Phase 2 and 3 Library Services COVID-19 Requirements

**Phase 2 and 3:** All public libraries, public library systems, institutional & governmental libraries, and libraries at institutions of higher education are permitted to provide limited services to customers in-person. 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 space. Libraries should continue to utilize the [Phase 2 Curbside Guidance](#) where applicable.

1. 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.

## **In-person Library Operations Specific Requirements:**

2. In order to open to any in-person services, libraries must require customers to wear a cloth face covering at all times while present within the facility.
3. Customer Traffic Management
  - a. **Phase 2:** Guest occupancy must be 25% of maximum building occupancy or lower as determined by the fire code. This limit does not include employees in the calculation. Staff must be kept to a minimum necessary to accomplish the tasks that must be done in person. Work that can be done remotely should be done remotely.
  - b. **Phase 3:** Guest occupancy must be 50% of maximum building occupancy or lower as determined by the fire code. This limit does not include employees in the calculation. Staff must be kept to a minimum necessary to accomplish the tasks that must be done in person. Work that can be done remotely should be done remotely.
  - c. Place distance markers outside of the library in order to maintain six-foot physical distancing requirements for customers waiting to enter. Assign employees to assist and monitor customers waiting to enter if necessary.
  - d. 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.
  - e. Place conspicuous signage at entrances and throughout the store alerting staff and customers to the required occupancy limits, six-foot physical distancing guidance, and policy on facial coverings.
  - f. 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 six-foot physical distancing requirements for customers waiting to check out materials.
  - g. Ensure minimum six-foot physical distancing requirements are maintained between customers and staff, except when exchanging materials. Sneeze guards or other barriers

should be placed throughout the facility at all fixed places of potential interaction between customers and employees that could be less than 6 feet.

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

#### 4. 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 should not supplant regular hand-washing.
- d. Frequent sanitation of surfaces should occur, particularly in high-traffic areas such as restrooms, computer stations, doors, and check-out counters amongst others.
- e. Where feasible, libraries must keep doors and windows open where possible 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.

#### 5. 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 patrons to utilize these spaces under certain conditions.
- b. Must limit to 5 patrons or less per grouping.
- c. Groups or individual patrons must be far enough apart when measured from occupied space to occupied space, to ensure patrons are a minimum of six feet away from patrons in adjacent space, or there must be a physical barrier or wall separating patrons.
- d. Clean and sanitize any group or public space after each use by patrons, and must ensure a reasonable amount of time passes before allowing subsequent groups or individual patrons to access the space.

#### 6. 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. Patrons must be far enough apart, when measured from station to station, to ensure a minimum of six feet separation from patrons 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 patrons' access to an appropriate amount of time based on number of available spaces, and customer demand, with appropriate time in-between scheduled appointments.

#### 7. Returns

- a. Libraries should continue to utilize no-contact return procedures developed under the [Phase 2 Curbside Guidance](#) where possible. Any in-person returns should follow protocols to limit potential staff exposure including:
  - i. Requiring returned items to be sealed, stored, and quarantined for **24 hours** before allowing them to return to active inventory for redistribution. Staff who are processing materials as they are returned must wash hands immediately after processing the returned materials.
  - ii. Employees who process returned items need proper PPE.
8. Library staff must develop individualized library guidelines based on materials offered, library footprint, location, and other local conditions.

**In addition to the above, libraries facilitating in-person services should continue to enforce the specific health protocols (8-9), sick employee plan (10-15), and training requirements (16) outlined in the [Phase 2 Curbside Guidance](#).**

### **Safety and Health Requirements**

All libraries and library systems have a general obligation to keep a safe and healthy facility in accordance with state and federal law, and comply with the following COVID-19 organization-specific safety practices, as outlined in Governor Jay Inslee’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” Proclamation 20-25, the Governor’s “Safe Start” [Proclamation](#) 20-25.4, and in accordance with the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries [General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](#) and the Washington State Department of Health Workplace and Employer Resources & Recommendations at <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus/workplace>.

All libraries must specifically ensure operations follow the main L&I COVID-19 requirements to protect employees and customers:

- Educate all employees in the language in which they are most proficient about coronavirus, how to prevent transmission, and the library’s COVID-19 policies.
- **Maintain minimum six-foot separation between employees and library patrons in all interactions at all times.** When strict physical distancing is not feasible for a specific task, other prevention measures are required, such as the use of barriers, minimizing the number of employees in narrow or enclosed areas, staggered breaks, and work shift starts.
- Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields and face masks as appropriate or required to employees for the activity being performed. **Cloth facial coverings must be worn by every employee within the facility unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under Department of Labor and Industries safety and health rules and guidance.** Refer to [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#) for additional details. A cloth facial covering is described in the [Department of Health guidance](#).
- **All libraries are strongly encouraged to require customers to use cloth face coverings when interacting with staff.**
- Ensure frequent and adequate hand washing with adequate maintenance of supplies. Use disposable gloves where safe and applicable to prevent transmission on items that are shared.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at entry for all staff and customers (assuming supply availability).
- Establish a housekeeping schedule that includes frequent cleaning and sanitizing with a particular emphasis on commonly touched surfaces.

- Screen employees for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 at the start of every shift. Make sure sick employees stay home or immediately go home if they feel or appear sick. Cordon off any areas where an employee with probable or confirmed COVID-19 illness worked, touched surfaces, etc., until the area and equipment is cleaned and disinfected. Follow the cleaning guidelines set by the CDC to deep clean and disinfect.

A building-specific COVID-19 Supervisor shall be designated by each library to monitor the health of employees and enforce the library's COVID-19 safety plan.

An employee may refuse to perform unsafe work, including hazards created by COVID-19. And, it is unlawful for the employer to take adverse action against an employee who has engaged in safety-protected activities under the law if their work refusal meets certain requirements.

Employees who choose to remove themselves from a worksite because they do not believe it is safe to work due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure may have access to certain leave or unemployment benefits. Employers must provide high-risk individuals covered by Proclamation 20-46 with their choice of access to available employer-granted accrued leave or unemployment benefits if an alternative work arrangement is not feasible. Other employees may have access to expanded family and medical leave included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, access to use unemployment benefits, or access to other paid time off depending on the circumstances. Additional information is available at <https://www.lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/paid-sick-leave-and-coronavirus-covid-19-common-questions>.

**No public libraries or library systems may operate curbside services until they can meet and maintain all the requirements in this document, including providing materials, schedules and equipment required to comply. Additional considerations are made as suggestions and may be adopted, as appropriate.**

All issues regarding worker safety and health are subject to enforcement action under L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

- Employers can request COVID-19 [prevention advice and help](#) from L&I's Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).
- Employee Workplace safety and health complaints may be submitted to the L&I DOSH Safety Call Center: (1-800-423-7233) or via email to [adag235@lni.wa.gov](mailto:adag235@lni.wa.gov).
- General questions about how to comply with the agreement practices can be submitted to the state's Business Response Center at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/how-you-can-help/covid-19-business-and-worker-inquiries>.
- All other violations related to Proclamation 20-25 can be submitted at <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/report-safe-start-violation>.
- **Disclaimer:** Health and safety plans created under this guidance do not need approval or review from local government before reopening. Should additional clarity be needed or for questions, please contact L&I DOSH Safety Call Center: (1-800-423-7233) or via email to [adag235@lni.wa.gov](mailto:adag235@lni.wa.gov).