Library Services
COVID-19 Requirements

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: patron 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.

A. Curbside Library Operations - Phase 1 and Phase 2: All public libraries, public library systems, institutional & governmental libraries, and libraries at institutions of higher education are permitted to provide mail, curbside, and in-person services to patrons. **Phase 1 and Phase 2:** All public libraries, public library systems, institutional & governmental libraries, and libraries at institutions of higher education are permitted to provide limited services to patrons 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 patrons within enclosed spaces.

Library Operations Specific Requirements:

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

2. Patron Traffic Management

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

   c. Arrange the flow of patrons 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 patrons 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 patrons waiting to check out materials.

   f. Ensure a minimum of six feet of physical distancing requirements are maintained between patrons 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 patrons 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 should 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 patrons. 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 five 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 ensure a reasonable amount of time passes before allowing subsequent groups or individual patrons 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 patrons 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 of physical distancing 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 patron demand, with appropriate time in-between scheduled appointments.

6. Returns

    a. Libraries should continue to utilize no-contact return procedures described above under "Curbside Library Operations Specific Requirements" 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 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.

C. Safety and Health Requirements – Phase 1 and Phase 2

All libraries and library systems have a general obligation to keep a safe and healthy work site in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules for a variety of workplace hazards. In addition, they must comply with the following COVID-19 work site specific safety practices as outlined in the Governor's "[Healthy Washington — Roadmap to Recovery](#)" Proclamation 20-25.12 et seq., and in accordance with L&I [General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](#) and the Washington State Department of Health [Workplace and Employer Resources and Recommendations](#).

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

- Educate workers in the language they understand best about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission and the employer's COVID-19 policies.

- **Maintain a minimum of six-feet of physical distancing 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 (at no cost to employees) and require the wearing of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields and face masks as appropriate or required for the activity being performed. **Cloth facial coverings must be worn by every employee not working alone on the jobsite unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under Department of Labor & Industries safety and health rules and guidance.**
  - Exceptions to this requirement for cloth face coverings include when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site; if the individual is deaf or hard of hearing and is communicating with someone who relies on language cues such as facial markers and expression and mouth movements as a part of communication; if the individual has a medical condition or disability that makes wearing a facial covering inappropriate; or when the job has no in-person interaction.
  - Refer to [Washington Coronavirus Hazard Considerations for Employers (except COVID-19 care in hospitals & clinics) Face Coverings, Masks, and Respirator Choices](#) and *[Which Mask for Which Task?](#)* . Cloth face coverings are described in the [Department of Health guidance](#).

- 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 patrons (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 their 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 sanitized. Follow the cleaning guidelines set by the Centers for Disease Control to deep clean and sanitize.
- Post a sign at the entrance to the business that patrons are required to wear a cloth face covering.

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.

A worker may refuse to perform unsafe work, including hazards created by COVID-19. It is unlawful for the employer to take adverse action against a worker who has engaged in safety-protected activities under the law if the individual's work refusal meets certain requirements. Information is available in these publications: Safety and Health Discrimination in the Workplace brochure and Spanish Safety and Health Discrimination in the Workplace brochure.

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 20-46.2 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 use unemployment benefits, or access to other paid time off depending on the circumstances. Additional information is available at Novel Coronavirus Outbreak (COVID-19) Resources and Paid Leave under the Washington Family Care Act. **No public libraries or library systems may operate 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.**

Sick Employee Plan:

1. Screen all employees at the beginning of their day by asking them if they have a fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle aches, or new loss of taste or smell. Libraries are recommended to develop a Staff Health Self-Assessment procedure for this purpose.
2. Ask employees to take their temperature at home prior to arriving at work or take their temperature when they arrive. Thermometers used shall be 'no touch' or 'no contact' to the greatest extent possible. If a 'no touch' or 'no contact' thermometer is not available, the thermometer must be properly sanitized between each use. Any employee with a temperature of 100.4°F or higher is considered to have a fever and must be sent home.
3. Create policies which encourage employees to stay home or leave the location when feeling sick or when they have been in close contact with a confirmed positive case. If they develop symptoms of acute respiratory illness, they must seek medical attention and inform their employer.
4. Have employees inform their supervisors if they have a sick family member at home with COVID-19. If an employee has a family member sick with COVID-19, that employee must follow the isolation/quarantine requirements as established by the State Department of Health.
5. Instruct employees to report to their supervisor if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle aches, or new loss of taste or smell). If symptoms develop during a shift, the employee should be immediately sent home. If symptoms

develop while the employee is not working, the employee should not return to work until they have been evaluated by a healthcare provider.

6. If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19 infection, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The employer should instruct fellow employees about how to proceed based on the CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure.

Training:

7. All on-site employees must be trained on the library's policies, these requirements and all relevant sanitization and social distancing protocols. They must also be trained about COVID-19 and how to prevent its transmission. This can be accomplished through weekly safety meetings, where attendance is logged by the system, supervisor, or COVID site supervisor.

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 DOSH: www.lni.wa.gov/DOSHConsultation.
- Employee workplace safety and health complaints may be submitted to the DOSH Call Center: 1-800-423-7233 or via email to adag235@lni.wa.gov.
- General questions about how to comply with the agreement practices can be submitted to the state's Business Response Center.
- All other possible violations related to Proclamation 20-25.12 et seq. can be submitted at www.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.