

## Phased Plan for Reopening Nebraska Libraries

**Updated April 28, 2020**

Many Nebraska libraries have closed their buildings to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic; some stopped all physical services completely, and others developed alternative services. This plan will provide a phased outline of how full services could be restored as the health crisis eases and social distancing measures end.

**Disclaimer:** This document is intended as guidance only. The Nebraska Library Commission does not have the authority to mandate that libraries close or open in any capacity. Library directors should work with their library boards, local government, and local health departments to determine their course of action. Libraries may modify this plan to suit their needs.

**Goal:** to restore services to the community while protecting the health and safety of staff and patrons.

### **Phase 1 - Building Closed to Public, Minimal Staff in Building**

*Skeleton staff working in the building with emphasis on social distancing between staff, with the majority of staff working from home if possible.*

Services provided include:

- In-building staff receive and sort mail
- Limited reference service:
  - o In-building staff assist with reference/tech questions received by email or phone
  - o Teleworkers assist with reference/tech questions via email, or provide research.
- All staff work on fiscal, personnel, and statistical tasks as usual
- In-building staff assist teleworkers with printing, scanning, and other necessary tasks
- Monitor buildings for security issues and building systems operations
- Teleworkers may come into building to load up on work, but should primarily work from home
- Teleworkers work on special projects or provide enhanced remote services (virtual storytimes; remote books clubs; support for students; access for community to virtual meeting technology for meetings, etc); engage with

community via social media. What does the community need? Entertainment, tutoring, job search assistance, skill-building?

Preparation for this stage includes:

- Follow or establish communications methods with staff. (phone, e-mail, texts; Zoom; Go-to-Meeting) and communicate as needed.
- Establish a schedule of duties for staff.
- Staff complete telework agreements with supervisors, outlining expectations. Laptops and tablets distributed to teleworkers, if needed/available.
- Encourage professional development through Ncompass and other webinars, if time allows.
- Turn off ILL lending and/or holds if needed.
- Janitorial services revised to reflect closure to public, reduced staff, and precautions for virus management
- Skeleton crew develops health-safe working processes – safe distancing, rotating shifts.
- Staff publicizes closing, restrictions (e.g. no bookdrop, waive fines, extend due dates), and virtual programs, emphasizing what services are still available, ie. Overdrive, wi-fi access, NebraskAccess, etc.
- WiFi signal increased/extended to reach outside building walls.
- Staff develops procedures for issuing library cards virtually to new patrons for access to electronic collections.
- Work with vendors to see if number of checkouts can be temporarily increased.

## **Phase 2 - All Staff Return to Work in Building**

*All staff return to work in the building as health mandates are eased by the Governor's office or regional health departments. Vulnerable staff are given the option to continue some or all work from home if feasible.*

Services restored include:

- Staff return desks and work areas to normal after time away
- Office work routines restored
- Staff catch up on mail and deliveries
- Staff catch up on reference questions they could not do while teleworking
- Staff catch up on library materials returned by users, processing, shelving
- Staff catch up on new cards issued virtually, mail to new patrons or have ready for pickup later.
- Janitorial services restored in staff areas
- Staff prepare for opening to the public, including evaluating what services need to be changed, added, or eliminated.

Preparation for this stage includes:

- Try to let staff have several days to a week in the building before partial opening to the public, practicing normal opening/closing procedures.
- Evaluate points of service and returns to see if additional protection is needed. (Glass around service desks)
- Evaluate patron flow patterns for returns and around computers for social distancing considerations.
- Review projects that have been on hold due to time or would be better to do when the building is closed and evaluate staff to complete the projects.
- Ensure sanitizing supplies on hand for library materials that have been returned - gloves, wipes, disinfectant; establish quarantining area and procedure for returned materials.
- Ensure masks/other PPE available for staff if desired.
- Continue the online services and develop a priority plan for daily work and virtual projects.
- Continue communication that includes staff in the office and staff at home.
- Continue communication with the public regarding ongoing services and programs.
- Recognize staff for their work during closing; address concerns about re-opening.

[www.ala.org/tools/sites/ala.org.tools/files/content/NEDCC%20recommendations%20for%20disinfecting%20books\\_Mar2020-converted.pdf](http://www.ala.org/tools/sites/ala.org.tools/files/content/NEDCC%20recommendations%20for%20disinfecting%20books_Mar2020-converted.pdf)

### **Phase 3 Limited Public Service Restored as Social Distancing Guidelines Relaxed**

*Some public services restored outside of building – curbside pickup, etc.*

*Buildings open to public with extra social distancing procedures (limited number of people in buildings), limited seating for the public, and adequate public area sanitation supplies*

*Consider if vulnerable populations (immunocompromised, elderly) need separate hours/access*

*Services restored include:*

- Building open to public in limited fashion
- Full building janitorial and security need to be restored
- Determine if public areas need additional cleaning prior to opening
- Reference, holds, and interlibrary loan restored
- Staff sanitize public areas as public leave
- Wireless available throughout building

- Computer use for limited time/by appointment with sanitizing in between

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html)

*Preparation for this stage includes:*

- Evaluate online and in-person services to determine what services will be on-going.
- Ensure curbside service follows sanitation guidelines
- Increase spacing in seating areas and between computer stations; reduce number of stations available
- Position reference/public service staff to be safely distanced from patrons within building; encourage self-checkout, partitions at desk.
- Establish separate hours/access for vulnerable patrons
- Establish sanitizing procedures for staff to use between patron visits
- Continue quarantining and disinfection of returned and in-house use materials.
- Staff publicizes limited service restoration

#### **Phase 4 Full Public Service Restored**

*Buildings completely open the public with business as usual*

*Services restored include:*

- Unlimited entry to meeting rooms and facilities
- Social distancing restrictions in public areas are lifted
- Public programs restored
- Interns and volunteers can return to work within buildings

*Preparation for this stage includes:*

- Plan and set-up programs and events
- Restore full staffing, including volunteers and interns
- Restore any computers and seating removed during social distancing.
- Reset any changes to due dates/fines implemented during closing.
- Discontinue quarantining items
- Staff publicizes full-service restoration
- Celebrate with patrons and staff!

\*This plan was adapted from guidance issues by New Mexico State Library, Alaska State Library, and others.

Guidance from Institute of Museum and Library Services:

<https://www.ims.gov/news/covid-19-research-partnership-inform-safe-handling-collections-reopening-practices-libraries>

Article from John Thill, Assistant Director of the Meridian Library District in Idaho:

<https://medium.com/@john.alan.thill/a-phased-reopening-plan-for-libraries-as-covid-19-restrictions-are-lifted-2d96885c0c1d>

Reopening: Not "When?" But "How?": <https://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/blogs/the-scoop/covid-19-reopening-libraries-not-when-but-how/>

State Library of Pennsylvania FAQ:

<https://www.statelibrary.pa.gov/Covid-19/Pages/FAQ.aspx>

Sample Reopening Plans from Wyoming State Library: <https://library.wyo.gov/a-guide-to-covid-19-for-libraries/>

Alaska State Library- Preparing to Reopen Your Library:

[https://lam.alaska.gov/ld.php?content\\_id=54168737](https://lam.alaska.gov/ld.php?content_id=54168737)