

SECTION II General Policies

6. Pandemic Services

Approved by Board of Trustees, 05/17/2020

TUCKER FREE LIBRARY EPIDEMIC/PANDEMIC POLICY

I: Definitions

Epidemic: A widespread occurrence of an infectious disease in a community at a particular time.

Pandemic: A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease.

Epidemic/Pandemic Plan: An epidemic/pandemic 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 an extended period of time.

Appropriate Staffing Level: For the purposes of this policy, Appropriate Staffing Level refers to the minimum number of qualified staff necessary to provide service safely and efficiently, as determined by the library director or his/her designee. Should staffing levels drop because a staff member needs to leave and if replacement staff cannot be identified, the library director should consult with the board of trustees prior to deciding to close the facility.

II. Purpose and Specific Recommendations for Operational or Closure Protocol

If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, the library may be required to operate on limited staffing or take unique measures to help slow the spread of the illness, including service restrictions, limited hours of operation, or possible closure by order of local public health officials. Recovery from an epidemic/pandemic may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or other physical crisis. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the library can be maintained for several weeks or more with limited staff and reduced hours due to an epidemic/pandemic.

Seeing to the critical needs of the facility if the library is closed for an extended time.

- Lock book drop on front porch.
- Put a large garbage bag on the book drop at rear of building since there is no lock.
- Submit payroll remotely. Director should take laptop home.

- If mail service is still running and staff is able, check mail weekly and pay bills if possible.
- Walk through building weekly to make sure everything is functioning properly.
- Cancel weekly cleaning, schedule thorough sanitizing re-opening cleaning.

Means for continuing to provide information services for the public, such as online ordering of materials and pick up from a table in the lobby at certain times, or expansion of online services

- Create a specific webpage to keep the community informed.
- Publicize downloadable content.
- If local or regional newspapers provide free access, include on website. Include links to local or regional health resources.
- Material may be placed on hold online. Hold requests would be prepared for pickup during limited library hours to reduce risk of contamination from social gathering.
- Determine methods for the handling and/or recovery of materials post-quarantine.

Accommodation of the needs of people in the community who may not have a home subscription to the local newspaper or a working home computer

- Determine a mechanism to allow for printing of materials of a critical nature.
- Post emergency information on front door for community consumption.
- If limited hours are feasible, then remove computers that are in close proximity to each other and relocate and/or provide access to library Chromebooks.
- Discourage social activities within the building.

Education of the public in advance of an epidemic

- Provide instruction on the handling of materials if members of household are quarantined.
- Eliminate video fines throughout the crisis.
- Eliminate overdue notification process throughout the crisis.
- Provide step by step instructions on how to renew materials.
- Provide step by step instruction on reading eContent.
- Provide access to any free resources that are available such as local and regional newspapers, health department alerts, town notifications.

III: Suspension of Service and/or Library Closure

Public Health Mandate

The Tucker Free Library will close due to an epidemic/pandemic in the event of a mandate order or recommendation for closure issued by public health or government officials on the local, county, or state level.

Specific criteria for closing the library

- Limited staff availability.
- Town offices, school, White Birch, NEC closed.
- Mandated by local or regional officials

Discretionary Service Level Changes

At the discretion of the library director and in consultation with the board of trustees, the library may close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services temporarily in the event that there is not sufficient staff to maintain appropriate staffing levels or if unable to maintain adequate social distancing for health and safety.

In the event of closure or reduction in operating hours, the library director or designee will maintain communication with staff, library Board of Trustees, and the Town Manager.

Specific criteria for suspending story times and other library programs

- Limited staff availability.
- School and/or White Birch experiencing outbreaks.
- Mandated by local or regional authorities.

IV: School Closure Due to Epidemic/Pandemic

In the event that Henniker School District school is closed due to an epidemic/pandemic illness, the Tucker Free Library will remain open, but with reduced hours and services, unless one of the criteria for closing listed above is also met. All library programs, special events, and meeting room reservations will be canceled. Hours will be reduced and services will be restricted on any day in which Henniker schools are closed due to an epidemic/pandemic-related illness.

V: Staffing

Minimum staffing level for a temporary period of time is defined as two healthy employees available to be present at the library during all open hours. An inability to maintain this temporary minimal level for more than two consecutive days will result in reduced hours or closing the library.

- Our employees are cross-trained and can fit into any role.
- Assuming an epidemic/pandemic level closure or suspension of services, only essential functions will be required. ILL may be limited by State. Acquisitions work may be limited by availability of vendor and shipping. Without acquisitions there will be no need for the physical processing of materials.
- Director will pay any outstanding bills in need of immediate attention. If the director is unavailable, then bookkeeper can be consulted. Treasurer should receive basic bill paying instruction for the sake of continuity in case director and bookkeeper become unable to fulfill their roles.
- Director has a binder in office titled “Lib Admin Emergency Management” which contains relevant operational procedures.
- Director has created a chart of accounts and passwords. This file is contained in the office.

In providing service safely and efficiently, the following actions may be taken at the discretion of the library director or designee with consultation with the library Board of Trustees.

- Increased health/safety measures for staff (e.g., wearing of gloves, wiping down work areas, etc.).
- Restricted access to areas in the library (e.g., closing floors or unmonitored areas for safety).
- Social distancing practices in public areas.
- Reduction of open hours.
- Cancellation of all programs, special events, and meeting room reservations.
- Reallocation of employee responsibilities and shift/schedule changes to provide coverage during open hours.
- Closure of the library.

If the library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the established Personnel Policy. In the event of closure, employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours. If the library is closed or hours reduced, healthy employees may be assigned work-at-home tasks to be completed in their compensated hours.

VI: Communication

In the event of closure necessitated by epidemic/pandemic, effective communication about any reduction in services or open hours must be announced in a timely manner.

Communications plan for reaching staff and for communicating with the public.

- Update emergency call list.
- Make WMUR closing login information available to staff and trustees.
- Update website and Facebook as needed. Include directions for materials and hours.
- Facilitate Google Hangouts Conversation for emergency communication with Trustees, Staff, and Friends.

VII: Prioritization of Services

Priority will be given to the following essential services:

- Information services for the public, both in-person and online.
- Payroll.
- Accounts Payable.
- Facility Maintenance.

In the case of reduced staffing or reduced hours of operation, the library director or designee will prioritize service-related tasks and assign the daily work plan to staff.

VIII: Additional Concerns Related to Library Services

Policies for social distancing -- that is, removing a number of chairs so people aren't sitting close to each other, or limiting the number of people who can come in at any one time, or taking out coat racks, and similar actions that keep people and their belongings separate from each other.

- If limited hours are feasible then remove computers that are in close proximity to each other and relocate and/or provide access to library Chromebooks.

Provision of masks and gloves along with the training of staff in their removal and disposal.

- Make personal protection equipment (PPE) available if needed.
- Provide public education on handling of materials if members of households have flu or virus.
- Educate and practice universal precautions.

Standards for the cleaning of bathrooms, railings and door knobs, telephones, keyboards, counters, and cleaning of workstations/offices of employees who go home sick, emptying of wastebaskets, etc.

- Disinfect railings and door knobs.
- All staff will wipe down their work stations before handing off to new staff member. This includes telephone, keyboards, and desk tops.
- Refrain from eating at circulation desk.
- Empty and tie off bag in all wastebaskets before being placed in larger bag.

TUCKER FREE LIBRARY EXISTING POLICY FOR EMERGENCY CLOSURE WEATHER/PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

EMERGENCY CLOSURE WEATHER/PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY – ADEQUATE STAFFING. In order to provide the best service, the Tucker Free Library is open for scheduled service whenever possible, so long as adequate staffing is available. For the purpose of operation of the library, adequate staffing means that two employees are available to work but ideally, three should be available to provide scheduled breaks for all employees.

1. The library is, however, concerned about the safety of its patrons and employees. During extreme weather situations or community emergencies the Director or his/her designee may close the Tucker Free Library by the authority of, and time permitting, prior consultation with the Chair of the Tucker Free Library Board of Trustees. If such an event occurs, the Director or his/her designee will inform Town Administrator of the decision. The Director or his/her designee will also inform local media outlets of the closing, change the message on the library answering machine, and post the closing on the library website.

2. Library staff scheduled to work will be paid for their regularly scheduled hours for the day, or portion of the day, that the library closes for the weather situation or community emergency.
3. If the library remains open but staff members feel they cannot make it into work or must leave early, they may opt to use vacation time or take unpaid leave.

(Approved by Board of Trustees, 6/16/2015)