

## **Epidemic & Library Health Emergency Policy**

### **I. Purpose**

To establish a protocol that will be used in the event of an epidemic or declared public health emergency. The library should plan for staff being unable to report to work in the event of a serious infectious outbreak. In addition, during an epidemic or health emergency organizations may be required to take measures to help slow the spread of illness such as closing by order of the President of the United States, Governor of the State of Wisconsin or Polk County public health officials. It is important to ensure that essential business activities of the library can be maintained with limited staff and reduced hours as determined by the Library Director.

### **II. Definitions**

This 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 recovery work almost immediately after the event or crisis (such as after a fire or storm). In the event of a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for several weeks or more.

Epidemic – a disease affecting many persons in a specific locality at the same time, and spreading from person to person in a locality where the disease is not permanently prevalent.

### **III. Library Closure**

The Public Library may temporarily close because of an epidemic or library health emergency in the event that any of the following occur:

A mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by the state library division, Public health, or other government officials.

At the discretion of the Library Director, the Public Library may temporarily close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services in the event that there is insufficient staff to maintain basic service levels or it is unsafe/unsanitary to open.

In the event of closure, due dates and hold pickup dates for library materials will be adjusted so that no overdue charges are assessed and holds do not expire on dates in which the library is closed.

### **IV. Minimum Staffing Level to Remain Open**

If Polk County public health officials allow public facilities to remain open during or reopen following a public health emergency, the Library must maintain a minimal level of staff in order to be open to the public. Minimal level staffing will be determined by the library director.

An inability to maintain a temporary minimal level will result in reduced hours or closing of the library.

The absence of healthy library staff will determine the ability to carry out services and maintain open hours. At the library director's discretion, the following may occur:

1. Cancelling programs, special events, and meeting room reservations.
2. Reassignment of employee duties and shifts.
3. Reducing open hours if the number of employees falls below minimum levels.
4. Closing of the library for one or more days.

If the library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled. In the event of sudden closure and healthy library employees are sent home from work, those employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.

#### **V. Communication**

In the event of closure library staff should follow the Library's Emergency Closure Policy. Any changes in the library's open hours to the public will be communicated via the library's website, social media accounts, media contacts, and telephone answering machine message.

#### **VI. Prioritization of Services**

If reduced staffing, hours, or services are required, employees shall perform priority responsibilities that most directly impact patrons prior to any other work tasks.

Priority responsibilities shall follow this order, with safety being a priority:

1. Communicate with patrons, stakeholders, local officials, and vendors about changes to library services.
2. Submission of payroll, processing bills for payment, preparing for and holding Library Board meetings.
3. Secure ability for staff to work remotely.
4. Ensure online and digital resources are accessible.
5. Process incoming and outgoing holds.
6. Direct customer assistance, e.g. check out, issuing library cards, computer and information assistance. This may include the scheduling of appointments to limit the number of people in the library at one time.

Individual responsibilities outside of those described shall be completed after prioritized tasks if time permits. Those tasks with a deadline or significant impact shall be performed first. Employees should consult with the Director or designated administrative authority to determine staffing area assignment and which individual work tasks should take priority, or in the event that they feel a responsibility not listed here requires urgent attention.

#### **VII. Responsibility for Library Operations**

If, for any reason, the Library Director is unable or unavailable to perform the responsibilities and decisions outlined in this policy, administrative authority for this policy and all library operations shall be determined by the Library Board. The Library Director will provide a current breakdown of staff responsibilities to help the Board make informed decisions concerning the operation of the Library.



*Approved July 8, 2020 by the scfpl library board*