

Rusk County Community Library

Health Emergency/Epidemic Policy

I. Purpose

This policy establishes the 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 disease outbreak. Further, during an epidemic or health emergency the library 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 Rusk 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 specifically addresses health emergency conditions in the community. If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for several weeks or more. This plan covers both epidemic and library health emergencies.

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.

Library health emergency – The state of affairs in which there are not enough healthy library staff to maintain normal hours of operation.

Employees and staffing level – Part time and full time library staff as defined in the Rusk County Community Library's Employment Handbook. This does not include volunteers.

III. Library Closure

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

- A. The City of Ladysmith offices close because of a health emergency.
- B. The County of Rusk offices close because of a health emergency.
- C. A mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by the state library division, public health, or other government officials.
- D. At least two of the three school districts in Rusk County close schools because of an epidemic.

At the discretion of the Library Director, the Rusk County Community Library may temporarily close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services in the event that there is insufficient staff to maintain basic service levels.

In the event of closure, due dates and holds pickup dates for library materials will be adjusted so that no overdue charges are assessed and holds do not expire on dates that the library is closed. The exterior book drop may be kept open and cleared periodically as long as possible.

The Library may reopen to the public even if the schools in Rusk County remain closed if cleared to do so by the Wisconsin Health Department or Rusk County Health department.

IV. Minimum Staffing Level to Remain Open

If government or 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. Minimum staffing level for a temporary period of time is defined as a minimum of three (3) healthy staff available to be present at the library during all open hours with a maximum of eight (8) hour workday and 40 hour workweek per employee. Thus, at least four (4) healthy staff must be available to keep the library open for its regular daily hours Monday – Friday, and at least three (3) available for regular Saturday hours.

An inability to maintain this temporary minimal level will result in reduced hours or closing the library. Also, the necessity to maintain this temporary minimal level for more than five consecutive days will also result in reduced hours or closing 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, this may include:

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

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the Library's personnel policies. 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 a closure library staff should follow the library's standard emergency closure protocols. Any changes in the library's open hours to the public will be communicated via the library's website, social media accounts, and media contacts. Staff will be contacted via phone.

VI. Prioritization of Services

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

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

1. Communicate with customers, 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. Processing incoming and outgoing holds.
6. Direct customer assistance, e.g. check out, issuing library cards, computer and information assistance.

Individual responsibilities outside of those described shall be completed after prioritized tasks if time permits, performing those duties with a deadline or significant impact 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. Employee Absences

The Rusk County Community Library's Employee Handbook outlines the sick leave policy. This policy shall continue to be followed in the event of an epidemic or library health emergency.

VIII. 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 follow the library staff succession plan.

IX. Library Staff Mask/Shield Requirement Policy

This policy will be in effect during any health emergency caused by an airborne, or suspected airborne, virus or other disease. The director or the designated staff member will inform staff when this will be effective. The library will strive to provide masks or shields for staff, but staff are encouraged to provide their own protective gear.

All library staff are required to wear a face covering while at work when they have direct contact with members of the public or co-workers and are unable to maintain a six-foot distance. If staff are using a shared workspace or working in a common area of the library they must wear masks or face shields at all times. Shared work spaces include a shared computer station, phones, and other equipment that multiple staff use.

Masks or face shields must be worn when working at personal workstations that are within six feet of another work station, or when another staff member approaches their workstation. Common areas of the library include such spaces as the collection, stairwells, and offices.

Masks are strongly encouraged as protective gear for any staff member who uses a shared phone. This ensures greater protection from aerosol and droplet contamination.

X. Patron Behavior Expectations

- capacity limits--dependent on health dept/gov't restrictions; currently estimated at 1 person per 250 sq. ft.
- time limits---encourage 15 minutes, up to 30 minutes; dependent on hours open
- limit to browsing, checking out and returning material, and computer use
- computer time restrictions--30 min's to 60 min's depending on hours open
- observe social distancing---recommend/request 6 feet
- wear a mask properly-- request only
- use hand sanitizer--request/ recommend
- wash hands, if restrooms are open to public

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