

Epidemic/Pandemic Policy

Introduction

As a public institution and widely used community space, Walter E. Olson Memorial Library (“OML” or “the Library”) has put the following policy into place in order to protect the safety and health of those in the OML service area and limit the potential for the transmission of infection disease in the event of a public health emergency. This policy is intended to be implemented in the event that there is a confirmed case of an epidemic/pandemic illness within or near to the 6-municipality service area of OML. This policy also takes into account staffing considerations that will allow the Library to maintain essential operations in the event of closure or reduced hours of operation. It also prioritizes the health of our users and the continuation of Library services as far as is practical in the event of an epidemic/pandemic.

Because of the often undefined and rapidly changing nature of epidemic/pandemic illnesses, the Director, in consultation with staff and the Library Board of Trustees, may need to implement additional measures in order to respond to on-the-ground and/or unforeseen situations related to such illness.

Preventative Measures

Public Education

In advance of an anticipated epidemic/pandemic illness, the Library will take the following steps in order to raise awareness of health risks and practices for reducing transmission of illness:

- Signage
- Online resource and communication page

Cleaning Standards

Disinfecting and/or cleaning procedures issued by public health officials will be followed as possible. As possible, an adequate supply of tissues, hand sanitizing gels, soap and water, and standard cleaning supplies shall be available for employees and the public. The disinfecting of shared areas, counters, computer workstations, and doors should be performed more frequently. Volunteers and staff will avoid sharing workspaces, computers, and telephones to minimize exposure.

Social Distancing Measures

If it is deemed advisable, the Library will also institute social distancing measures to reduce the possibility of transmission. These may include, but are not limited to:

- The cancellation or suspension of Library programs and special events
- Removal of toys and refreshments from public areas
- Asking patrons to perform self-checkout to minimize potential transmission between staff/volunteers and patrons during checkout
- Rearranging of or removal of furniture and/or equipment to create distance between patrons
- Cancellation of room reservations

Library Closures/Reduced Hours of Operation

Olson Memorial Library will close due to epidemic/pandemic in the event that a mandate or recommendation for closure is issued by public health or government officials on the local, county, or state level.

At the discretion of the Director, in consultation with the President of the Library Board of Trustees, OML may close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services temporarily (e.g. programming) if there is not enough staff to maintain basic Library service levels or if these seem to be reasonable measures for social distancing.

Communication

The Library Director will monitor news and communication from relevant health authorities, including the [World Health Organization](#), the [Centers for Disease Control](#), the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#), and the [Vilas County Public Health Department](#). The Director will be the primary point of communication regarding the status of the Library to ensure consistent, clear, and comprehensive information is being shared. If the Library closes or reduces hours, the Director will initiate communication with the staff and public as laid out in the [Emergency Closing Policy](#).

Employees who are well but who have a family member sick at home with an epidemic/pandemic illness should notify the Director. If an employee is confirmed to have an epidemic/pandemic illness, employers should inform fellow staff/volunteers of their possible exposure in the workplace but maintain confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Staffing Issues

In the event of an epidemic/pandemic-related closure to the public, the Director will determine whether staff can still work from the Library and/or whether remote work is feasible and assign hours as appropriate. Staff pay will be governed by existing policy in the [Employee Handbook](#) and [Emergency Closing Policy](#) – i.e. staff will be paid for time that they would have been scheduled during normal operation.

During the duration of a health emergency, OML will offer unlimited sick leave for staff members experiencing symptoms in line with epidemic/pandemic illness, and/or who are at high risk for severe impact and/or are caring for family members with epidemic/pandemic-like symptoms. Similarly, staff members who are unable to return to work due to travel restriction or quarantine will be eligible for unlimited sick leave for the duration of these restrictions.

Staff members and volunteers who experience any illness are expected to stay at home or leave the Library to avoid transmission. If experiencing symptoms in line with an epidemic/pandemic illness diagnosis, and testing is available, staff members must test negative before returning to work. If testing has not been developed or is not widely available, quarantining practices recommended by public health experts must be followed. If staff members or volunteers have

had contact with an individual who tests positive, they must quarantine and/or test in accordance with public health recommendations before returning to the Library.

Staff who travel to/through places deemed by the Board and/or Director to be hot spots are required to self-quarantine at home for a period in line with current public health recommendations following their return. This time will be deducted from PTO hours. If PTO is exhausted, this time will be unpaid leave.

In the event of school closures, staff members may take paid time off (PTO) if they need to provide care for children who are home from school. Additional unpaid time off may be taken if available PTO is exhausted.

Essential Library Operations

Services essential to operating the Library are payroll, processing bills for payments, Library board meetings, and facility maintenance. In the event of closure, the Director will coordinate these operations, at minimum on a weekly basis. In the event of reduced hours of operation, after essential operating tasks have been managed, tasks that most directly impact delivery of services to patrons shall be prioritized over any other regular Library workflows.

In the event that those responsible for signing checks become ill or are otherwise unavailable, accounts will have multiple signatories to ensure payroll and bill payment continues.

Service Delivery

Because we know that patrons rely on our services and resources, in the event of a closure, the OML will continue to offer the following services:

- Online Resources such as digital items through the [Wisconsin Digital Public Library/Libby App](#), [BadgerLink databases](#), [Gale Courses](#), etc. will remain available.
- As possible, Library staff will continue to provide general assistance and reference service via email.
- Wifi will remain on and accessible from outside the Library building.

School Closures

If any school in the OML service area is closed due to epidemic/pandemic illness, OML may remain open unless one of the aforementioned requirements for closing are also met. However, social distancing measures will be taken, if they have not already been implemented as part of early risk reduction. The Library will cancel all public programs when schools are closed in order to reduce contact between members of the community. When schools are closed due to an epidemic, we will continue to enforce the [Childrens' Safety Policy](#), which governs rules for the supervision of children.