

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY POLICY

The Needham Free Public Library Board of Trustees adopts the following policy to:

Provide for the well-being of both the public and the library staff

Maintain a safe and healthy workplace

Minimize the transmission of contagious diseases or other emergent threats to public health

When this Policy is in effect: This policy will be called upon in the event of an epidemic, pandemic, or other public health emergency. It may be activated by the library director in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Library Trustees.

Effect of this policy on other library policies: When in effect, this policy will override all other library policies in case of conflict.

Library services while this policy is in effect: Communication with the public about changes in library services will be a high priority, and the library website will serve as the front door to services should the library building close for public safety precautions. While this policy is in effect, it will be the goal of library staff to provide as many of the usual library services as is safely possible, perhaps in new or changed ways, to respond to the needs of the community during a public health emergency. Due to the Needham Free Public Library interconnectedness with the Minuteman Library Network, its ability to provide certain circulation services may be limited by the network's operation. It may be necessary to suspend some services (placing reserves, obtaining items from other libraries).

Criteria for closing the library: The library building will be closed when ordered by the State authorities, the Needham Public Health Department, or by the Town Manager or an Assistant Town Manager. In absence of closing orders at those levels, the library director, in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Library Trustees, may make the decision to close the library building for public health reasons and/or to institute extraordinary precautions.

While the library building is closed: If the library building is closed to the public and staff, reasonable efforts will be made by staff, working remotely, to provide library services that respond to the needs of the community that do not require staff or patron entry into the building.

Employee policies for sick leave, payroll, and working from home, are governed by the Town's Personnel Policies and not this library policy.

If the building is closed for an extended period of time, Building Maintenance will continue to be responsible for protecting the building (boilers, book drops, security). Provision will also be made for performing essential tasks such as payroll, mail collection, and bill payment.

Regarding circulation of physical materials, a judgment will be made as to whether or how to allow materials return via the return slots at the Rosemary Street parking lot entrance. During a contagion that can be spread by touching items that have been touched by infected people, the return slots will be closed, or may be left open but returned materials quarantined until safe to handle.

When the library building remains or becomes partially open: If the library building is closed to the public but is (or becomes) open to staff, or is partially open to staff or is open to both staff and public on a limited basis, public health measures will be implemented for everyone's safety. Staff will be responsible for enforcing social distancing among staff members, among patrons, and between staff and patrons. Depending on the seriousness of the public health event, the number of people who are permitted in the library at any one time may be limited, often in accordance with state or local mandates. In an effort to keep people separated, some seating may be removed or made otherwise unavailable, some services may be suspended or reduced, and both adult and children's programs may be canceled, moved online, or possibly moved outdoors.

A statewide, Town Select Board, Town Manager, or Board of Health "wear a mask in public places" directive will be enforced as to both staff and the public. Unless a person has a medical reason for not wearing a mask, everyone two years or older will be required to wear a mask to enter the library, and those excused from wearing a mask may be required to take additional precautions. Anyone who, without a legitimate reason, refuses to observe the face-covering rule will not be allowed in the library building. Noncompliance may result in a call to the police.

For their own protection, as well as that of the public, library staff will be required to wear gloves as well as face coverings during a public health emergency. Staff will be trained in proper glove removal and disposal.

To avoid cross-contamination during a partial closure, the library staff will work in set shifts, where staff will always be working with the same subset of staff. When a work shift is finished, staff members will thoroughly clean and sanitize their work areas.

The Building Maintenance Division may set an increased custodial cleaning and sanitizing schedule for the library's bathrooms and other common areas.

Communication will be an essential component both with the staff and with the public. The website and social media will be used to their fullest to adjust to new ways of providing services. Staff inter-communication will be via telephone, email, or virtual meetings.

Approved October 13, 2020