

Kensington Public Library Pandemic Policy

Purpose: To establish the protocol to be used in the event of a pandemic. A pandemic is defined as a worldwide spread of a new disease (World Health Organization <https://www.who.int>). If there is a local 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.

A 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 outage). Recovery from a pandemic may be slow, and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for an extended period of time.

Discretionary Service Level Changes: Prior to a public health mandated closure, and at the discretion of the Library Director, 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.

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 Administrator.

Public Health Mandated Library Closure: The Kensington Public Library will close to the public due to a pandemic if closing is mandated, or if a recommendation for closure is issued by public health or government officials on the local, county, or state level. If there is evidence of community transmission of the disease, and especially if community transmission is occurring within Rockingham County, it is expected that the library will be ordered to close until such time that re-opening can safely begin.

Expected changes to service:

- The library will be closed to the public
- Interlibrary Loan service will be cancelled
- Curbside pickup or delivery of disinfected books will be considered
- All regular library programs and special events will be cancelled

- Online resources will be announced to the public, and may include regular programs that are now available online (e.g. story hour, book club meetings, knitting club)

During the library's closure, the Library Director will monitor the phases of the pandemic as reported by public health and government officials. He or she will also maintain ongoing communication with Kensington's Town Administrator, Emergency Preparedness Director, the Library Board of Trustees, and the library staff. As soon as feasible, planning will begin on how to safely re-open the Kensington Public Library. This will include appropriate measures for disinfecting surfaces and books, and storing or removing items that are difficult to disinfect (e.g. children's toys and puzzles).

Staffing: During initial phases of the pandemic and if the library is still open, staff will be asked not to come to work if they are exhibiting symptoms of the illness, as defined by public health officials. In the event that no one is able to work, the library will close.

In the event the library becomes closed, staff will be expected to work their regular hours remotely from home. If staff hours are cut, or staff are unable to work due to risk factors or illness due to the pandemic, staff will continue to be paid for their regularly scheduled hours.

If there is a wide-spread pandemic and public health officials recommend home isolation to avoid risk of infection, staff will be allowed to make their own decisions about risk to the health of themselves and their families, and will not be penalized if they decide that it is unsafe for them to come to work even if the library has not yet decided to close.

If the Kensington Public Library is closed or hours reduced, the Library Director will monitor email on all days that the library would ordinarily be open and do other work from home as necessary, such as publicizing available online resources.

Communication with the Public: In the event of service level changes or closure necessitated by a pandemic, effective communication about these changes must be announced in a timely manner. Library staff should follow the normal procedure used for any unexpected closure/program cancellation, which includes posting on wmur.com, Facebook, the e-newsletter and the library website.

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Adopted by Library Board of Trustees May 2020