

Pandemic Policy

I: Purpose

To establish the protocol to be used in the event of a pandemic. If there is a pandemic, 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 by order of local public health officials. Recovery from a pandemic may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or other physical crises. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the library can be maintained for several weeks or more with limited staff and reduced hours due to a pandemic.

II: Definitions

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

Pandemic A pandemic is the worldwide spread of a new disease. (World Health Organization <https://www.who.int>)

Appropriate Staffing Level For the purposes of this policy, Appropriate Staffing Level refers to the minimum number of qualified staff necessary to provide service safely and efficiently, as determined by the Library Director or his/her designee.

III: Library Closure

Public Health Mandate

The Southeast Arkansas Regional Library will close due to pandemic in the event of a mandate order or recommendation for closure issued by public health or government officials on the local, county, or state level.

Discretionary Service Level Changes

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 or if unable to maintain adequate social distancing for health and safety.

In the event of closure or reduction in operating hours, the Library Director or designee will maintain communication with staff, Library Board, and the County Officials.

IV: School Closure Due to Pandemic

In the event that any of the region's public schools are closed due to pandemic illness, SEARL will remain open. Hours will be reduced and services will be restricted on any day any Regional public schools are closed due to pandemic-related illness.

V: Staffing

Minimum staffing level for a temporary period of time will be determined by the Director on a branch-by-branch basis.

In providing service safely and efficiently, the following actions may be taken at the discretion of the Library Director or designee.

- Increased health/safety measures for staff (e.g., wearing of gloves, wiping down work areas, etc.);
- Restricted access to areas in the library (e.g., closing floors or unmonitored areas for safety);
- Social distancing practices in public areas;
- Reduction of open hours;
- Cancellation of all programs, special events, and meeting room reservations;
- Reallocation of employee responsibilities and shift/schedule changes to provide coverage during open hours;
- Closure of the library.

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the established Personnel policy. In the event of closure, employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.

If the Library is closed to the public or hours reduced, healthy employees may be assigned work-at-home tasks to be completed in their compensated hours or continue to work at library. The Director will work with each Branch Manager on determining the best course of action for each individual branch.

VI: Communication

In the event of closure necessitated by pandemic, effective communication about any reduction in services or open hours must be announced in a timely manner. Library staff should follow the normal procedure used for any unexpected closure/program cancellation, which includes posting Regional website, Facebook, and Branch Facebook accounts.

VII: Prioritization of Services

Priority will be given to the following essential services:

- Information services for the public, both in-person and online;
- Payroll;
- Accounts Payable;
- Facility Maintenance.

In the case of reduced staffing or reduced hours of operation, the Library Director or designee will prioritize service-related tasks and assign the daily work plan to staff.

Regional Guidelines to Pandemic

Level 1: Do Nothing. Normal Operations

(Threat Level: Low)

1. Make no changes to current operations and procedures.

Level 2: Enhance Sanitation

(Threat Level: Elevated)

1. Provide additional hand sanitizer, soap and towels throughout library buildings
2. Wipe down all horizontal surfaces and high contact items (doorknobs, phones, keyboards, coffee makers) at midday and at the end of the day
3. Spray soft furnishings with disinfectant spray at the end of each day
4. Weekly deep clean of children's area (toys, etc., with antibacterial solution)
5. Remove soft toys from children's areas (run in hot dryer, then bag up)
6. Stop serving food at programs unless individually packaged

Level 3: Rigorous Sanitation

(Threat Level: High)

1. In addition to Level 2 actions, add:
2. Hourly hand sanitizing or handwashing for all staff
3. Wipe/disinfect all returned materials before shelving
4. Hold all returned materials for 24 hours after disinfecting before recirculating
5. Remove all toys and manipulatives from children's areas
6. Stop serving food and drink at programs.

Level 4: Restrict Activities

(Threat Level: Emergency)

1. In addition to Levels 2 and 3, add:
2. Cancel passive programs to reduce spread of contact infection
3. Cancel all library programs to reduce person-to-person infection

Level 5: Building Closures

(Threat Level: Critical)

1. Reduce hours or close individual branches if staffing falls to specified levels for each branch: This will be determined by the Director as a Branch to Branch decision.
2. Close library system if required by State Health Department or other health authority

Staff Illnesses

(Threat Level: High +)

1. Staff should absolutely stay home at earliest signs of possible infection or if family member is infected
2. Staff should remain home for until infectious period is past, following CDC or Health Department guidelines