



Maine Public Library Consideration List for Re-Opening

The Maine State Library recognizes the important work our local libraries around the state do for their communities. Under Maine's structure of governance, local municipalities and governing boards will make the final decision when, and to what extent, public libraries in Maine will reopen and that your governing authority adheres to the governor's guidance.

The Maine State Library's role is to provide points of consideration to guide conversations between librarians and their governing bodies. These points of consideration are compiled from our librarians around the state and their regional representatives on the Maine Library Advisory Council, and they are combined with research and directives from state and federal government agencies: primarily from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [U.S. CDC], Maine Centers for Disease Control [Maine CDC], the DECD [Maine Department of Economic and Community Development], WHO [World Health Organization], EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], and the State of Maine's Governor's office.

These considerations might be helpful to local libraries as they plan for re-establishment of core services when determined safe to do so. This document *is not* an exhaustive list of everything you will want to consider. It is not a directive to Maine libraries. It is not to be construed as legal or medical advice.

We do strongly suggest that any action your library decides to take is accompanied by the following:

- a. Adherence to CDC guidelines and Governor's executive orders for low-transmission and high-transmission counties.
- b. A record of review or approval [e.g. meeting minutes] by your governing board of your policies and procedures as they apply to COVID 19.
- c. Clear, concise communication - including media and signage - to your patrons about changes in policies and procedures [b].
- d. Regular revisions and updates as needed to both [b] and [c], based on CDC guidelines and Governor's Executive Orders pertaining to COVID-19.

This document is a list of important considerations for libraries and their governing bodies to answer the question:

To what degree, during the COVID 19 pandemic, can we safely serve our community as a public library?

Considerations for the Health and Safety of Staff and Visitors

Staff Considerations

How many *staff members* are from the high-risk population or live with someone from the high-risk population? The high-risk population is defined by the CDC as:

- People 65 years and older
- People who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility

People of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, including:

- People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- People who have serious heart conditions
- People who are immunocompromised
 - Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications
- People with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher)
- People with diabetes
- People with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis
- People with liver disease

Can some employees work from home?

Can some employees be re-assigned duties to lessen contact with others?

Will the shift leader conduct daily health checks of the staff, inquiring about general health and relevant symptoms to coronavirus infection? Symptoms may include:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell

Can staff work in staggered shifts, keeping teams together?

Will the library be able to supply employees and volunteers with face coverings, gloves, and any other PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) needed per shift?

Visitor Considerations

Are clear barriers such as needed between staff and visitors at service desks?

Will all staff and visitors be required or encouraged to wear face coverings in the library?

Will library space and services be re-designed for physical distancing of at least 6 feet [2 metres] between people at all times?

Will staff and visitors be instructed on proper handwashing procedure and mask and glove usage?

Will high-touch surfaces such as countertops, door handles, toilets, sinks, computer keyboards, and mice be cleaned and disinfected regularly throughout the work shift?

Will items returned by patrons be set aside and quarantined for at least 72 hours before being shelved or re-circulated?

Will signage and floor markings be used to guide visitors on expected safety behaviors on library grounds and in the building?

Have carts been set up to allow visitors to place materials they have touched but do not wish to check out? These can be quarantined for 72 hours before returning to the shelves.

Have library policies (patron conduct, HR, lending, gifts, etc.) been updated to reflect changes necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic?

Prioritizing services from least physical contact to full public operations

The Maine State Library recommends libraries take a gradual staged approach to the re-establishment of services.

Considerations for Virtual Services

Do enough staff members have equipment and connectivity to offer virtual services to the community, such as reference service and/or informational updates via email, social media, telephone, and/or video conferencing?

Do enough *staff members* have equipment, connectivity, and training to offer virtual services to the community, such as programming via social media platforms [e.g. Facebook Live, YouTube, or Zoom]? If not, can the library partner with another library offering these services and share links to their programming?

Is there enough internet connectivity for *community members* to be able to meaningfully engage with virtual programs and reference services? Is the connection too poor or the bandwidth too low to use these services?

Does your library provide access to digital books, magazines, and/or databases?

Is the library's internet connection and wireless capability strong enough to offer wireless access to people via the parking lot? [In most MSLN libraries, the answer will be "yes."]

Considerations for Curbside/Remote Checkout Services

Are patrons able to browse the catalog remotely or contact a librarian via secure email or phone to request materials?

Do materials have a place where they can be stored untouched for 72 hours before being re-shelved or re-circulated?

Are staff healthy and comfortable enough to deliver materials to a pickup point outside the library or at curbside?

Can the number of items checked out be increased and due dates be extended to avoid extra trips to the library?

Can fines and fees be eliminated or waived to avoid handling of money?

If applicable, have protocols been developed for safe home delivery services?

Has the library's attorney or insurance agent been consulted regarding potential liability concerns related to remote check-out services?

Considerations for Limited Building Services

Has your building been closed to the public for more than seven (7) days?

If the building has been unattended, has staff done a walk-through to check for recent building damage?

Is the library building able to accommodate staff and visitors under the current directives from the Governor and the Maine CDC?

Will the library post exterior signage for visitors to read before entering the building? This signage may include language covering:

- Not entering if feeling ill [curbside assistance available]
- Visits limited to _____ minutes, once per day

- Maintaining physical distance from others
- Governor's mandate requiring face coverings
- Visitors are entering at their own risk

Will the amended patron usage protocols reflect recommended six feet of social distancing and restrict the number of people allowed to gather in one space by implementing

- a limited time [for example: no more than 30 minutes];
- one (1) visit per day; and/or
- appointments or reservations.

Will the library clearly communicate its amended COVID 19 policies via signage, by posting on its social media/website, and at the service desk?

Will COVID 19 policies be applied equitably and fairly to all patrons?

Will the library continue to offer services such as virtual or curbside to patrons unable to access the building?

Can the staff area and some public areas of the library such as meeting spaces be blocked off?

Can children's section usage be limited to one family unit at a time?

Will the high-touch surfaces be regularly cleaned or disinfected with EPA-approved cleaning supplies?

Will the library maintain access to at least one regularly cleaned public restroom?

Will the library provide instruction to guide patrons in the safe handling of books and other materials?

Does the library have adequate ventilation [e.g. air exchangers or windows] for airborne particles from the virus and from disinfectants?

As you work through these considerations, we ask that you keep the following *two core library concepts* in mind:

1. Confidentiality of patron records regarding use of library materials and services
2. Fair and equitable access to materials for education, edification, and/or entertainment and to trusted sources of information

What to do if...

Someone on the staff tests positive for COVID-19:

- Contact your local Public Health Officials. They will be able to provide the best guidance regarding the procedures to follow with staff, the building, notifications, etc.
Maine has 8 Public health Districts plus one Tribal District:
<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/lphd/index.shtml>
Find your Local Health Officers via this search tool:
<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/public-health-systems/lho/lho-contact.shtml>
- If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees of their possible exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace but must adhere to HIPAA guidelines. This is a good article - <https://hbr.org/2020/03/your-employee-tested-positive-for-covid-19-what-do-you-do>. Also review the [CDC Public Health Recommendations for Community-Related Exposure](#). The criteria is Individual who has had close contact (< 6 feet)** for a prolonged period of time *** See the website for details.
- Sick employees should follow the [CDC recommendations](#) and employers should consult with the local health department for additional guidance.
- Alert anyone that came into contact with the infected person, maintaining the person's privacy.
- Be prepared to close for 1-2 days while building is deep cleaned.
- Prepare communications for press and community.

There is an outbreak in your community or at your library

- Follow the guidance of Maine CDC and Public Health officials
- Be prepared to close immediately and communicate with staff, governing agency, and the public.
- Participate in community mitigation action plan
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>
- Before re-opening, consider REOPENING WORKPLACES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
<https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/6883736/CDC-documents.pdf>

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/public-health-recommendations.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf>

Managing stress- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/mental-health-non-healthcare.html>

Legal: <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/covid-19-considerations-employee-testing>

FAQ: <https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/documents/Public-COVID19-FAQ-8May2020.pdf>

CDC COVID-19 website <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Maine DECD COVID Prevention Business Checklist
<https://www.maine.gov/decd/covid-19-prevention-checklists>

Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers Responding to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), May 2020

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

Disclaimer: This guidance is an evolving document subject to change as new information and government recommendations become available.