

Maine State Library Statement on Curbside and Home Delivery Lending

We all recognize the importance of libraries in people's lives. We can all agree that libraries provide essential services to their communities. During the pandemic that we are facing now, we must recognize that the definition of essential services changes dramatically. Essential services are now hospitals, healthcare workers, grocery workers, trash collectors, etc. At this point in our state's fight to control the spread of COVID-19, we must recognize that we may be endangering people in our community and library staff if we continue to lend materials. The materials aren't really where the high risk is. The risk is in the contact and the movement of people. Traditional library services are non-essential in a pandemic.

When Governor Mills issued her Executive Order on March 5, she mandated that "all non-essential businesses and operations in Maine close their physical locations that are public facing, meaning those that allow customer, vendor or other in-person contact. The Order also closes non-essential business sites that require more than ten workers to convene in a space where physical distancing is not possible. Non-essential businesses and operations may continue activities that do not involve these types of in-person contact and convenings - and should facilitate the maximum number of employees working remotely."

Libraries should follow that mandate and cease any lending activities that involve people coming to the library or library workers or volunteers going out into the community.

Use the Internet, mailed newsletters and phone calls to keep in close touch with your patrons. Librarians are one of the most trusted professionals, and we must use this trust wisely. We will weather this viral storm together and we can be the best community anchor – and trusted professional -- by encouraging everyone to stay at home as much as possible and physically distance themselves