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COVID-19 Prevention Checklist Public Library Guidance

May 21, 2020

On May 18, 2020, the Maine Library Commission unanimously adopted the attached Public Library Checklist for safe reopening and operations of Maine libraries. The checklist was formally submitted to Commissioner Heather Johnson of the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development and to Hannah Pingree, Director of the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future.

On May 20, 2020, the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development issued a Stage 2 checklist for [Public and Community Buildings](#). Within this checklist, DECD stated:

Public and community settings include, but are not limited to, municipal and county offices and libraries. As local communities and governing bodies determine the best way to safely re-open services, this document and the COVID-19 Prevention Checklist General Guidance reflect baseline steps. Other governing bodies and associations may release further guidance for specific types of public and community buildings. Libraries, in particular, should refer to the checklist published by the Maine Library Commission for further guidance: COVID-19 Prevention Checklist –Public Library Guidance.

The process for public libraries to safely open is:

1. Review the [Public and Community Buildings Checklist](#) (all municipal, county, libraries, etc.)
2. Review the [General Guidance Checklist](#) (all businesses)
3. Review the [Public Library Checklist](#) adopted by the Maine Library Commission.
4. Prepare a plan to open safely that is approved by your governing body
5. Fill out the [COVID-19 Prevention Form](#) (select Public and Community Buildings)
6. Download a sign/badge to post on your door or in your library (optional)

Please contact your [Maine State Library Regional Liaison](#) if you need any assistance or have any questions.

COVID-19 Prevention Checklist

Public Library Guidance

As the number of COVID-19 cases begins to decrease, the State of Maine is adopting a staged approach, supported by science, public health expertise and industry collaboration, to allow Maine businesses to safely open when the time is right.

This is a guidance checklist document that has been approved by the Maine Library Commission and recommended as guidance by the Maine DECD as part of their [Public and Community Building Guidance Checklist](#). Both checklists have been prepared for public libraries so they can meet minimum health guidelines and reopen safely when they choose. Please make sure you pair this document with the [general guidance document](#) that applies to all institutions in Maine.

*Please note: This document may be updated as additional information and resources become available. Additionally, your **local communities and governing bodies** approve plans to safely reopen to the public, this document reflects **minimum** steps a library must consider. Libraries may certainly go beyond the guidance in this outline.*

Public Libraries Alignment with Maine's Staged Reopening

Summary of Stages

Stage 2 (June – Public Libraries may reopen in accordance with all checklists)

Public libraries assess the following as plans for opening buildings to the public and staff are developed with the health and safety of library staff and visitors as the primary objective.

Libraries should use this checklist to develop implementation plans.

Plans should be revised regularly based upon emerging public health guidance and presence of community spread.

Libraries should use appropriate square footage and building configuration (size of rooms) in the planning process. Use only library spaces where 6 ft. physical distancing between people can be maintained.

Libraries determine what services they offer in Stage 2.

Stage 3 (July-August)

Public libraries utilize plans developed to open library buildings to the public and offer services that conform to social distancing, proper utilization of PPE plus the library's ability to follow their approved plans by their appropriate governing authorities (municipalities and/or governing boards) with the **health and safety of library staff and visitors as the primary objective**.

Local public health guidance and presence of community spread are considered.

Libraries should use appropriate square footage and building configuration (size of rooms) to allow for continued social distancing for patrons and staff.

Library Specific Guidance

***Approved by the Maine Library Commission 2020, May 18, 2020
Public and Community Building Checklist published, May 20, 2020
Library may open on June 1, 2020 if they are in compliance with all checklists.
No library is required to open.***

Library Staff: Personal Protective Gear, Supplies, and Clothing

- Require employees and patrons to wear face coverings
- Provide gloves to employees for contact with high-touch surfaces, cleaning and disinfecting, and direct contact with patron handled library materials that have not been quarantined for 72 hours. Gloves should be changed when library staff move between tasks (shelving, handling returned materials, checking books out, etc.)
 - Wear gloves when handling any patron library card or patron or ILL library materials.
 - Wear gloves when returning library cards, books, other library materials or cash to patrons. Libraries may use bags for this purpose as well.
- Provide workers with up-to-date COVID -19 information and training on safe donning, doffing, and disposal of personal protective equipment such as gloves and face coverings.
 - COVID-19 Information: [Maine CDC](#), [National CDC](#)
 - Masks: [National CDC](#); [Maine CDC](#)
 - Gloves: [Project 3D](#); [Montana State Library](#)

Patrons

Inform your patrons of your COVID-19 policies and procedures in advance, if possible, via website, newsletters, newspaper, signage, etc.

- **Post on library doors:**
 - Don't come to the library if you feel sick
 - Limit time in the library to 30 minutes
 - Maintain physical distance in all areas of the library
 - Follow signage and library staff instructions in library for accessing library materials
 - Face coverings are required for staff and patron safety (following the Governor's order).
- Use posters and signage in the library to remind patrons and staff of physical distancing at entrance, checkout areas, computers, counters, etc.
- Encourage patrons to limit who they bring into the library, particularly children.
- Consider limiting time patrons can spend in the library to reduce possible transmission of COVID-19
- Support physical distance between patrons and library staff by taping off 6 feet distance from counter.

- Use of plexiglass barriers
 - Minimum: a temporary easy to install plexiglass barrier to maximize physical distancing where appropriate in the library based on procedures for check-out and circulation desk configuration.
 - Maximum: more permanent glass or plexiglass barriers that the library will most likely keep in place beyond Stage 4.
- Do not let patrons in library staff areas.
- Minimize shared touch surfaces such as tablets, pens, library cards, receipts, etc.
- Consider going fine free to limit cash transactions
- Consider free printing to limit contact and cash transactions depending on your local printer access and policies.

Library Buildings

Understand the square footage of the library facility. Use MSL PDF or library measurements. ([download the PDF of Maine libraries sq./ft.](#)) and limit the number of people in the library to no more than the maximum allowable under Governor Mills' Stage 2 and Stage 3 guidance. Libraries should also take in account the layout and size of rooms as well as seek guidance from local building code and fire officials.

People in the library must be able to appropriately social distance. (i.e. if Stage 2 allows for no more than 50 people in a business at one time, but also requires 6 feet social distancing, the library facility must be able to accommodate the social distancing requirement. If unable, then reduce the number of people allowed in the library facility to accomplish the social distancing requirement.

- Make it very clear to patrons if certain areas of the library are off limits.
- Arrange furniture and any seating to ensure social distancing.
- Based upon room size, consider opening Children's area for one family at a time
- Consider special hours for high-risk individuals to make appointments to use the library.
- Signage – prepare signage relating to patron behavior
- Doors/Entrances – signage and counters for # of people
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces (e.g. counter tops, door handles, keyboard covers, phones) in the work place, often. See [general guidance. CDC Workplace Guidance.](#)
- Parking lot and spaces – clearly designate areas for curbside pickup. Institute a practice for patrons to call.
- Policies for Staff physical distancing in work areas, lunchrooms, kitchens, etc.
- CDC - [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)

Restrooms

- Minimum: Create signage on the restroom door that indicates when the restroom was last cleaned. Clean on a regular and scheduled basis.
- Maximum: Establish separate restrooms for staff and patrons and use minimum guidance.
- Install signage promoting proper handwashing.
- Consider installing touch-free fixtures if possible (faucets, soap dispensers, paper towels).
- Check with health officials for local ordinances and building codes if you intend to close public access to bathrooms in early stages.

Safe Handling of Library Materials

When federal guidance is received from the REALM Research project (IMLS/Battelle) this guidance may change and will be updated after Maine CDC review.

Quarantine returned library materials for a minimum of 72 hours and up to 7 days until further guidance is received from the IMLS/Battelle national study. See: <https://www.ims.gov/news/covid-19-research-partnership-inform-safe-handling-collections-reopening-practices-libraries>.

- Library lendable items are made of a variety of materials and the latest studies indicate that the coronavirus can live on surfaces for up to 72 hours under laboratory conditions. Other studies point to up to 7 days.
- Let library materials quarantine for 72 hours to 7 days rather than trying to clean/disinfect. [Time is the best sanitizer](#).
- Continue to remind library workers to not touch their face and practice hand hygiene, especially after handling materials handled by others.
- Books and other library materials that have been on library shelves, in a drop box, in a bag or in a tote and not touched in the 72 hours to 7-day span should be safe to handle.

Quarantining of library materials should be done when:

- Materials are returned to the book drop or by drop off appointment or left in a designated area.
- Handled by patrons in the library
 - Note: Library materials (CD cased, acetate book covers, etc.) **may** be cleaned/disinfected using [approved cleaning/disinfecting products](#) but **quarantine** is a safer option, as it reduces library staff exposure and uses less PPE (gloves)

Lending Services - Curbside

- Curbside Services can begin based upon library readiness in June 2020. Schedule appointments and materials for pick up by phone or email or by utilizing your library's ILS/LMS functions.
- Have patrons stay in their vehicles if library staff will be delivering materials curbside.
- If patrons are picking up designated bags of materials, ensure they are clearly marked and inform patrons that only one person is allowed in the materials pick up area. Patrons are not to congregate or linger when picking up materials.
- Create a designated "touch-free" drop spot for library materials if a book drop is not available for materials return

Lending Services – In Library

- Support physical distance between patrons and library staff by taping off a counter checkout area and waiting line with 6-foot intervals marked.
- Follow a closed stack versus an open stack model for lending materials
- For open stacks, create signage and guided paths through library stacks (one-way signs, floor stickers, arrows, etc.) to maintain physical distancing in all areas of the library.
- Don't serve coffee, food or snacks. Libraries working with other community organizations to provide social services should consider providing these services curbside.
- Consider circulation desks, checkout scanning equipment, tables, and public access computers

as “hot spots” with high touch surfaces in confined areas. Staff checking out library materials should wear gloves and clean barcode scanners when finishing tasks. Equipment should be cleaned in between each staff use.

- Patrons should bring minimal items into the library.
- Limit the number of patrons in the library at any one time to [library square footage guidance](#) or the library’s ability to staff and manage patrons
- Do not share pens, paper or other materials.

Public Access Computing

- Ensure computers are updated and in good working order to minimize close contact during patron use
- Ensure social distancing while computers are in use. Remove computers, chairs, desks to accomplish this. Access to other public technology resources like scanning stations, photocopiers, printers should also be reviewed for social distancing, cleaning, and practicality purposes.
- Larger libraries with public access computer areas should establish perimeters around areas of normal congregation, indicate start of queue, etc.)
- Libraries can adopt scheduling computer use by appointment. Laptops and tablets can allow for easier cleaning.
- Exchangeable keyboard covers may provide easier disinfecting routines.

Reference Services and/or Other In-person Library Consultations

- Provide services virtually by utilizing online video conferencing, or via phone or email to minimize face-to-face interactions. Reference and other consultation services can be done remotely.
- In library services should be arranged by appointment or call ahead to minimize time for staff and patron are together
- In library services should be provided in areas with chairs, desks arranged for appropriate social distancing and privacy for patrons.
- Limit patrons in the library at any one time to library square footage guidance or library room specific calculations.
- Reference Desks and other service areas are high-touch surfaces and need regular wiping down.
- Operate with reduced number of reference and other staff.
- Conduct all reference work with books, paper and other items in a spacious area for patron to review. Reduce back and forth handling of materials. Maintain physical distance of 6 feet.
- Do not share pens.

Library Programming

- Avoid special events/promotions that could draw large numbers of library patrons to your building or property at one time. If [large gatherings are planned, follow state guidance](#).
- Consider outside versus inside events so social distancing is possible and under control
- Continue or initiate virtual programming as an alternative to in-library programs.

- Adhere to all current guidance as it relates to maximum number of people that can gather in a physical space at one time.

Important Note Regarding Children Services

Children find it difficult to maintain physical distancing. It is recommended that children's programming be suspended until at least Stage 3 or Stage 4 of the Stay Safer at Home Order while the state tracks spread of COVID-19 and makes assessments about gathering of children. Libraries may follow future guidance issued for summer camps

- Story time, summer reading in the library, children's craft and programming should not be planned unless a library is assured that parents can control children's movements in the library. Libraries may look to future guidance issued for summer camps
- Children count in the number of people allowable in your building.
- Singing is a high-risk activity and may spread the virus, therefore, refrain from singing during face to face story time until the virus is well under control and public health guidance has been provided.

National resource for the library community

<https://www.webjunction.org/news/webjunction/libraries-and-the-coronavirus.html>

OSHA Guidance

[Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for COVID-19](#)