

## KNOXVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY PANDEMIC POLICY

### **I: Purpose**

This policy is written to establish the protocol that will be used in the event of a pandemic. If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, the library must plan for staff being unable to report to work. In addition, during a pandemic, businesses, social organizations or schools may be required to take unique measures to help slow the spread of the illness including closing down by order of local public health officials. Other public health measures may include limiting or canceling social and public gatherings, requiring quarantines and/or other social distancing measures. Recovery from a pandemic may be slow, as compared to a natural disaster or some 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). If there is a serious infectious disease outbreak, recovery may be slow and limited staff, services, and hours may be necessary for several weeks or more.

“Pandemic” A disease epidemic occurs when there are more cases of that disease than normal. A pandemic is a worldwide epidemic of a disease and may occur when a new virus appears against which the human population has no immunity. If a pandemic were to occur today, we could expect the virus to spread rapidly due to the interconnected nature of the world and the high level of global travel. During a pandemic, up to 35% of employees may be absent at one time due to their own illness. Additional number may be absent for other reasons, as covered in the Knoxville Public Library/City of Knoxville Employee Manual.

(Sources: World Health Organization: <http://www.who.int> and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <http://www.cdc.gov> )

“Employees” and “Staffing Level” For the purposes of this policy in the sections Minimum Staffing Level, Prioritization of Services and Responsibility for Library Operations, the terms employees and staffing level pertain to permanent part time and permanent full time library staff as defined in the Knoxville Public Library/City of Knoxville Employee Manual.

### **III: Library Closure**

The Knoxville Public Library will close due to pandemic in the event that

- a) The City of Knoxville closes following the City of Knoxville Emergency Closing Policy or
- b) a mandate order or recommendation for closure is issued by public health or government officials on the local, county, or state level.

At the discretion of the Library Director or the Library Board President, the Knoxville Public Library may close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services temporarily (e.g. programming) in the event that there is not sufficient staff to maintain basic library service levels.

In the event of closure, it is imperative that the Library Director or designee follow the communication procedures and submit payroll. Due dates and holds pickup dates for library materials will be adjusted so that no overdue charges are assessed and holds do not expire on dates in which the library is closed. The exterior book drop will be kept open and cleared periodically as long as possible.

#### **IV: School Closure Due to Pandemic**

In the event that any Knoxville Area School District school is closed due to pandemic illness, the Knoxville Public Library will remain open unless one of the aforementioned requirements for closing are also met. However, all library programs and special events will be canceled on any day in which any or all of Knoxville Area schools are closed due to pandemic-related illness.

Should school be canceled due to a pandemic, non-circulating children's materials will be removed from public areas during the duration of the school closure to minimize spread through surfaces frequently touched by children. Kits will be placed into storage and temporarily unavailable for circulation.

Disinfecting and/or cleaning procedures issued by public health officials will be followed as possible.

#### **V: Minimum Staffing Level**

Minimum staffing level for a temporary period of time is defined as two healthy employees available to be present at the library during all open hours with a maximum 8 hour workday and 40 hour workweek per employee.

An inability to maintain this temporary minimal level or a necessity to maintain this temporary minimal level for more than five consecutive days will result in reduced hours or closing the library.

The level of excused absence of library staff will determine the ability to carry out services and maintain open hours. Phases may include:

1. Cancellation of all programs, special events, and meeting room reservations.
2. Staff Library at minimum staffing level for a temporary period of time; employees may be reallocated and have shifts reassigned and lengthened to provide coverage of first and second floors during open hours.
3. Reduce open hours if number of employees falls below temporary minimum level.
4. Close the library for one or more days if number of employees further declines or only minimum level can be met for five or more days.

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following the Knoxville Public Library/City of Knoxville Employee Manual sick leave policy. In the event of closure and healthy library employees are sent home, those employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.

## **VI: Communication**

In the event of closure necessitated by pandemic, effective communication about any reduction in services or open hours is of the utmost importance. Local media must be notified as soon as possible. Library staff should immediately follow the Emergency Communication Procedures.

## **VII: Prioritization of Services**

If reduced staffing, open hours or services are required, employees shall perform priority responsibilities that most directly impact patrons prior to any other work tasks. A minimum of one healthy employee will be assigned to staff the first floor and one healthy employee to staff the second floor of the building regardless if this is their typically assigned department, schedule or responsibilities.

Priority responsibilities shall follow this order:

1. Direct patron assistance: check out; issuing library cards; computer and reference assistance; facility and collection supervision/safety.
2. Patron related-tasks: check in; incoming delivery; shelving.
3. Workflow tasks: holds shelf action list; pick list.
4. Essential services: payroll; processing bills for payment; Library Board meetings.

Individual responsibilities outside of those described shall be completed after these prioritized tasks, if time permits, performing those duties with a deadline or significant impact first. Employees should consult with the Director or designated administrative authority to determine staffing area assignment and which individual work tasks should take priority, or in the event that they feel a responsibility not listed here requires urgent attention.

## **VIII: Employee Absences**

The Knoxville Public Library/City of Knoxville Employee Manual outlines the sick leave policy; this policy shall be followed in the event of a pandemic outbreak.

The library will follow the latest CDC guidelines regarding the safe return or resumption of duties for staff. Please note that these guidelines are subject to change as conditions evolve, but every attempt will be made to follow the general guidelines issued by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control). Employees who refuse to comply with the policy will be subject to reprimand and possible dismissal.

## **IX: Responsibility for Library Operations**

If, for any reason, the Library Director is unable or unavailable to perform the responsibilities and decisions outlined in this policy, administrative authority for this policy and all library operations shall be assigned to the Library Board President or interim director, if there is one.

Approved by the Library Board of Trustees  
Date: November 15, 2022