

La Porte County Public Library Epidemic Response Policy

During an epidemic, pandemic, or other serious disease outbreak, the La Porte County Public Library will be a very important public service provider, as a source of reliable information and an institution that improves the quality of life during difficult times. The Library is not a vital institution, such as police or medical services. Since epidemics generally spread through contact and proximity, the Library must be careful to balance the need for our services against the potential of becoming a place where pathogens can be transmitted and spread.

Essential Staff consists of individuals with the following job descriptions: Executive Director, Administrative Managers, Circulation Librarian, PR Professional, UX Professional, IT Professional, HR Professional, Accounting Professional, Purchasing Professional and Head of Maintenance. Other staff may be designated as essential in appropriate circumstances determined by the Executive Director. Essential Staff will have work related responsibilities during a Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 determination.

Levels of Public Services and Staff Response:

- **Level 1:** If Library administration determines that concern about possible spread of epidemic is growing, staff and public are kept educated and informed about the risks and how to avoid them. Information and reliable sites are posted on Library website and the Library's social media. Otherwise, it's daily business as usual.

Staff will be alerted that the level of public service has been elevated. Safeguard supplies, such as cleaning and sanitizing supplies, are distributed with instructions for how and when they are to be used without being wasted. Searching out reliable information from sources such as the CDC, keeping staff informed and educated, making certain staff has clear and reliable information and not acting on rumors becomes an administrative priority. The Executive Director convenes the essential staff to confer regularly to assess risk and appropriate response. Staff report to work as usual.

A Level 1 determination will be made by the Executive Director subject to review of the Library Board at its next meeting

- **Level 2:** On the recommendation of public officials or after consultation between Library administration and the President of the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director closes Library facilities to assemblies, meetings, programs or prolonged use of any kind, including study, reading, and extended computer use (more than 30 minutes). The Library becomes checkout, return, quick browsing and quick reference locations. Overdue fines are suspended immediately and the public informed. Outreach services to nursing homes and the homebound are suspended. Outreach services customers may arrange for pick-up of materials at the Library.

All Library events are suspended until the Library returns to Level 1 services. Resources are dedicated to helping staff transform the building to a quick browsing, circulation model. In an effort to provide for social distancing, chairs will be removed and spaced so

people are not sitting close to each other. To limit congregating, all children under the age of eighteen (18) must be accompanied by an adult to enter the building. Staff will post a warning on the door identifying symptoms and asking sick patrons to not come in and endanger the health of others.

Increased efforts are made to supply staff with protective supplies and make certain they are aware of how to avoid catching/spreading illness. Cleaning and sanitization protocols of bathrooms, railings and doorknobs, telephones, keyboards, counters, and cleaning of workstations/offices of employees who go home sick will be strictly followed.

The same information is made available in summary form to the public. Increased efforts are made to keep the staff informed of changes. The Library website and social media accounts will be updated to emphasize the new rules of operation and feature links to reliable sites. Administration weighs the benefits/risks of and resources available for changed services (books by mail; reserves online; curbside delivery). Staff reports to work as scheduled. Staff absences are handled according to regular sick leave/vacation procedures. Staff may expect to be shifted and responsibilities to change temporarily.

A Level 2 determination will be made by Executive Director after consultation with the Board President subject to review by the Library Board at its next meeting.

- **Level 3:** On the recommendation of public officials or after consultation between Executive Director and the President of the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director closes Library buildings to all public use. Library administration decides, depending on the situation and staff available, whether to maintain phone and virtual reference, or to institute special services such as pickup/drop off of Library materials or to assign special project work to staff. The Executive Director may expand electronic services during the closure.

All Library buildings are closed to the public. Non-essential staff will report when notified with 24-hour notice of work schedules. Essential employees confer regularly, by meeting in person, by telephone or by other electronic means, to decide what support services and changed public services can be maintained, and if or when vendors should be informed to stop delivering to the Library. Essential employees may be required to report to work, and other employees may be requested to fill the duties of ill essential employees.

A Level 3 determination will be made by Executive Director after consultation with Board President, subject to review by the Library Board at its next meeting.

The above level declarations may be overridden or vacated by actions of State, local, or federal government edicts.

Key Issues of Concern:

Communication is always a prime need during an emergency. All staff members are responsible for making certain the business office has accurate contact information. The Library has no responsibility for getting information to staff members who are not at their emergency contact number.

Even in emergency situations the Library and the citizens of La Porte County have the right to expect conscientious performance from Library staff. Staff members will need to make every effort to stay in communication with the administration, support them and follow their directions.

Any absences resulting from a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 declaration will be addressed by Library's existing policies, subject to any applicable State, local, or federal laws and regulations. However, no such absences will result in any attendance points being assessed against an absent employee.

Library employees who work during a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 declaration will be paid their regular wages for all work performed. Library employees who do not work during a Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3 declaration will be required to use existing paid time off and will not be paid for time not worked except to the extent then required by existing law.