

Epidemic and Health Emergency Policy

Approved by Library Board 06-19-24



I. Purpose

To establish a protocol that will be used in the event of an epidemic or library health emergency. The Library should plan for staff being unable to report to work in the event of a serious infectious disease outbreak. In addition, during an epidemic or health emergency organizations may be required to take measures to help slow the spread of illness such as closing by order of Dane County public health officials. It is important to ensure that core business activities of the Library can be maintained with limited staff and reduced hours as determined by the Library Director.

II. Definitions

This 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 recovery work almost immediately after the event or crisis (such as after a fire or storm). 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.

Epidemic – A disease affecting many persons in a specific locality at the same time, and spreading from person to person in a locality where the disease is not permanently prevalent. A pandemic, defined as a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease over a whole country or the world at a particular time, also qualifies as a health emergency under this policy.

Library health emergency – The state of affairs in which there are not enough healthy library staff to maintain normal hours of operation.

III. Library Closure

The Stoughton Public Library may temporarily close because of an epidemic or library health emergency in the event that either of the following occur:

- A. The City of Stoughton offices close because of a health emergency.
- B. A mandate, order, or recommendation for closure is issued by Dane County public health or other government officials.

At the discretion of the Library Director, the Stoughton Public Library may temporarily close, reduce its operating hours, or limit services in the event that there is insufficient staff to maintain basic service levels.

In the event of closure, due dates and holds pickup dates for library materials will be adjusted so that no 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 Because of an Epidemic

In the event that the Stoughton Area School District is closed because of an epidemic, the Stoughton Public Library will remain open unless one of the above requirements for closing are also met. However, library programs and special events may be canceled on any day on which Stoughton Area schools are closed because of illness.

V. Minimum Staffing Level

Minimum staffing level is defined as three healthy desk staff available to be present at the library during all open hours with a maximum 8-hour workday and 40 hour workweek per employee. A minimum of six healthy desk staff must be available to keep the library open for its regular daily hours Monday – Thursday, and at least three available for regular Friday and weekend hours.

An inability to maintain this minimal level will result in reduced hours or closing the library. If this minimal level is required for more than 5 consecutive days, the library may reduce staff or close to the public.

The absence of healthy library staff will determine the ability to carry out services and maintain open hours. At the library director's discretion, this may include:

1. Cancelling programs, special events, and meeting room reservations.
2. Reassigning employee duties and shifts.
3. Reducing open hours if the number of employees falls below minimum levels.
4. Closing the library for one or more days.

If the Library is open, employees are expected to report to work on time as scheduled, excluding any excused absences following City of Stoughton Work Rules sick leave policy. In the event of closure requiring library employees to be sent home, those employees shall be compensated for their regularly scheduled hours.

VI. Communication

In the event of closure Library staff should follow the Library's Emergency Closing Policy.

VII. Prioritization of Services

If reduced staffing, hours, or services are required, employees shall perform their responsibilities that most directly impact patrons prior to any other tasks, subject to the safety of patrons and staff.

Staff shall provide services in the following order:

1. Direct patron assistance, e.g. check out, issuing library cards, computer and information assistance.
2. Processing incoming holds, check in, incoming delivery returns, shelving.
3. Processing holds, shelf action lists, pick lists.
4. All other clerical and administrative functions.

Services outside of those described above shall be provided if time permits. Employees shall consult with the Director or designated administrative authority to determine staffing area assignment and priority of work tasks.

VIII: Employee Absences

The City of Stoughton Work Rules outline the sick leave policy. This policy shall continue to be followed in the event of an epidemic or library health emergency.

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 follow the Responsibility for Library Operations Policy.

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